

Chapter Five: Case Study

Methven: the gateway community

5.1 Introduction

Methven is the second case study, selected as a *gateway community* in the travel circuit model. The town of Methven is not a primary tourist destination in and of itself, but provides the accommodation, food, and support facilities for the snow sport industry at the nearby internationally recognised ski field Mt Hutt, and also hosts other tourism related events and functions (e.g. rodeo). Methven was investigated through a combination of participant observation and a studio design experiment, in which student designers tested the use and helpfulness of the performance metaphor in designing stages for tourism. In applying the performance metaphor, students were found to bring along and use distinctive assumptions about attributes that relate to local everyday (*tasksapes*) and attributes that focus on travel and tourism (*touristscapes*). The chapter is divided into two parts. The first will describe Methven in relation to the performance perspective, and the second reports on the results of the design studio.

5.2 Methven / Mt Hutt

Methven is an agricultural service town that has become a gateway for Mt Hutt ski field Gateway communities provide support infrastructure and access to a nearby natural or naturally based tourism resource. Tourist attractions are not necessarily found within the town. However, anecdotal evidence suggests many gateway communities see a need to create attractions that encourage visitors to spend more time in the gateway community. Shaw and Williams (2004) explain this as the ‘commodification of local communities’ where touristic images and myths are first created to market place and form tourist expectations, and then there is a need to build these images to meet these expectations.

The powerful expectations of tourists, as created by the tourism marketing machine, can only be fulfilled by concrete investments in particular developments. These may be large, Western-type hotels, theme parks and other elements of familiarity or – in a different form- locally run backpacker hostels... but, in varying degrees, they all help to create new economic and cultural exchanges. Furthermore, in the face of mass tourism, and its post-Fordist forms ... many destinations start to lose their original identities, becoming ‘placeless and quite indistinct from other tourists places’ (Williams 1998:178) and unrepresentative of their original cultures (Shaw and Williams 2004:169).

This may also be used in an attempt to extend a seasonal tourism activity throughout the year. Methven is like many agricultural service towns where local spaces (*tasksapes*) have, until recently, evolved from everyday functions. A new ‘tourist layer’ or using the performance metaphor – ‘stages’ – have been added in response to tourism. Tourist spaces are often ‘marked’ or identified as ‘tourist places’ for visitors by creating tourism specific stages with appropriate signs (including flags

and banners), engaging themes and town ‘improvements’ and ‘advancements’. For the purpose of this research, town *improvements* are changes made to the townscape, such as more direct road access, better toilet facilities and streetscape ‘beautification’ and planting trees or flowers, which implies ‘tidying up’. Studies have shown that respondents prefer certain values such as sites that appear managed, safe and ‘tidy’ and ‘in character’ with the surrounding area/region (Wilson and Swaffield 2010; Fairweather, Maslin, Swaffield and Simmons 2003) and are appreciated more where the landscape communicates human intention of the landscape (Nassauer 1995). ‘Advancements’ are changes to the town which are considered to ‘modernize’ or ‘update’ the facilities or processes with the most contemporary means and materials. However while ‘improvements and advancements’ are intended to improve a townscape they may have negative consequences. In particular, as the area designed and defined as a tourist space (providing touristscape services and attractions) increases, the town’s character changes, and becomes what has been described by respondents as ‘touristy’ and less authentic as a ‘real’ New Zealand rural town. There is an on going tension between designing towns with ‘systems’ of ‘quality urban design’ as depicted in the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol (Ministry for the Environment 2005) and designing ‘improvements’ of townscales.

5.2.1 *Evolving Methven- a brief history*

This section describes the history of Methven, and draws particularly upon Campbell and Fairweather (1991). Methven has been a service town since its origin in 1879. Originally a farm of the same name, the town was created when a private railway was established whose terminus was at a six-way crossroads on the Ashburton-Upper Rakia road.

This site was near a farm owned by R. Patton called 'Methven' and the name stuck to the locality. Patton had encouraged a blacksmith to set up his foundry on the crossroads and a saddlery and post office had also been established. The subsequent arrival of the railway line saw the establishment of a small community (Campbell and Fairweather 1991: 4).

Over the next 130 years the town of Methven has adapted to economic and social changes according to the needs of a changing agricultural industry. The Methven area initially serviced large sheep runs on estates and privately-owned land, along with grain production in the area. The town not only provided sales and services for the sheep and grain farms, but also catered to the labourers used by the large farms.

Many histories have documented that farm labour in New Zealand was very transient, with the average length of stay on a station being about five months. ... The transient labour force either resided in Methven in its search for work or congregated in Methven after working hours or, in the case of more remote stations, during the transportation of wool out to Methven railway station. The presence of this pool of labour led to a demand for grocery and clothing retailers, but to a much greater extent labourers used the pubs, billiard halls, brothels, and boarding houses that were present in Methven in the early days of the town (Campbell and Fairweather 1991: 7).

Technological changes in the 1920s, primarily farm machinery and the automobile, brought changes to the town and to life in Methven.

...business records in Methven (McCausland, 1979) show a change from livery stables and smithies to garages and engineering firms, and there was an increase in the number of motorcars. This gave greater

access for farmers both to nearby small towns and to Christchurch, but it also greatly decreased the costs involved in transporting goods out to rural areas. Therefore the 1920s saw the arrival in Methven of outlets of larger companies such as Dalgety's and Wright Stevenson and Co. Alongside these, transport firms began to compete with the railroad in the transportation of farm goods. Enhanced transport was possibly one of the most significant factors in establishing Methven as a prime location for family farming. The arrival of electricity would rank as another major factor in increasing the spare time of family farmers and allowing both farmers and their wives the luxury of visiting town more frequently and participating in community life (Campbell and Fairweather 1991: 7).

The increase of family farming and the transition of labouring to small holding saw a new focus on leisure activities at home rather than the use of pubs, boarding houses and billiard rooms. Methven however was an exception, where there were still large estates that required farm labour so the two pubs in Methven survived even during prohibition (Campbell and Fairweather 1991). Methven even had a reputation as an 'uncivilised town', where "(t)he best efforts of the 'respectable' locals to promote a 'community' image to Methven could not hide the fact that labourers still used Methven as a place to congregate and 'blow their pay'" (Campbell and Fairweather 1991:8).

It is important to note here that the transient labourers used accommodation that was dispersed throughout the town. This accommodation pattern is also evident today, however skiers and snowboarders and tourist rentals have replaced the farm workers. This pattern of mixing residential and tourism facilities expresses a unique aspect of Methven and sets it apart as a particular place. The right hand image below indicates the ongoing 'taskscape'-ness in the town where opportunists use space that best serves their everyday needs, for example grazing sheep in a vacant residential lot.



Figure 5.1 1) Residential area: Beluga Lodge, directly in front of the car, and other visitor accommodation are mixed within local residential areas 2) Not far away, an empty lot is used to graze sheep. Photos were taken during summer, not during the peak (winter snow sport) tourist season

Changing economic and technological advances continued to influence the nature of farming and rural life in New Zealand, to the extent that economic alternatives were considered. For Methven, it was the ski fields at Mt Hutt that provided the opportunity to diversify their economy.

The development of farming-related businesses in Methven proceeded unchecked from the 1920s until 1970. However, local records of businesses show that during the 1960s there was an increasing reliance on branches or agencies of national companies and a decline in locally-controlled industries. As roads and transport became more developed farmers began to travel to Ashburton and Christchurch for their

purchases. This trend has continued and whereas five major stock and station firms jostled alongside many local units in Methven during the 1960s, now only two firms tenuously remain with their retail outlets serving principally as a base for farm advisors and grain and wool buyers. Centralisation reflects not only the decline in demand for farm inputs in Methven itself, but also the change in national-level control of stock and station companies. With the changing demographic characteristics of rural life, only the major firms have managed to straddle the gap between rural outlets and urban head offices.

The decline in rural business demand paralleled the decline of Methven as a thriving rural service centre, however the economic direction of the town took a new direction after the Methven Lions Club initiate a feasibility study into the possibility of Mt. Hutt operating as a ski field. This 1971 study led to the opening of Mt. Hutt in 1973 as a commercial venture.

The ski field proved itself to be viable, and while most skiers made the journey to Mt. Hutt from Christchurch on a daily basis, a number of tourists began seeking accommodation and services in Methven. This demand was met with the establishment of a number of accommodation facilities, restaurants, and tourist activities. The town underwent considerable renovation in the main shopping area to facilitate the arrival of new businesses, and the sites for 14 new shops were built in 1975. Some of these sites were not filled until recently. However by 1989 Methven had five hotels, three motels, twenty ski lodges, two camping grounds, nine licensed restaurants, six bring-your-own (alcohol) restaurants and a host of shops catering to the ski industry (Campbell and Fairweather 1991: 11-12).

Becoming the gateway for Mt Hutt in the 1970s has transformed Methven with the addition of tourist services and additional retail space. This transformation as a gateway to a ski field- in effect a 'ski town' - continued in 2003 with a redevelopment of the CBD. As the following article indicates (Fig 5.2), the redevelopment of the CBD comprised introducing a central courtyard (town square), new bespoke street furniture: benches, rubbish bins and street lighting, and new coloured pavers. One of the original six roads that radiated from the centre of Methven was (controversially) closed and made into a pedestrian walkway and seating space in front of the Blue Pub. The colour of the furniture and pavers were inspired by Mt Hutt and the surrounding agricultural fields (Ashburton District Council 2004:1). These changes are focused on the CBD and help to define this space. This development was considered to be 'art work' and entered into an 'art in the constructed environment' competition. In the end Methven's town centre redevelopment did not win a prize.

Methven continues the town 'redevelopment' with additions to Mt Hutt Memorial Hall making "a new unique facility in the heart of Mid-Canterbury" (Methven Heritage Centre 2010). The new facility houses extensive upgrades to the existing auditorium and function rooms, and the creation of "NZs Alpine and Agriculture Encounter"- an attraction providing interactive exhibitions of "snow-sports history and culture, and an agricultural education centre" (Methven Heritage Centre 2010). The complex also houses the Methven i-SITE and visitor centre which includes a cafe. When completed the centre will also include the NZ Snow Heritage Collection and theatre, and house a 'Hall of Memories' (honouring war veterans), a cinema, conference facilities, and gallery space (Methven Heritage Centre 2010).

Methven's artistic merits to be judged

Methven's new town centre has been entered in a competition recognising art in the constructed environment.

The first stage of the ski town's central redevelopment was completed in March last year and is seen as part of a long-term strategy to make the town more attractive for locals and visitors.

The annual Creative Places Awards recognise the investment local government makes in the arts and celebrates innovative, arts-based initiatives by local authorities.

In the Local Government Act 2002, local authorities are required "to promote the social, economic, environmental and cultural well being of communities". Creative New Zealand has aligned the Creative Places Awards with the Act to ensure that its complements the Act's focus.

The awards give local authorities, large and small, an excellent opportunity to profile their innovative arts projects.

There are five categories and an overall premier award will be chosen from the category winners. The winners will be announced at the Local Government New Zealand Conference in Auckland on July 26-28.

Methven's new central courtyard was designed by Wellington urban design expert John Achari in consultation with the community. A project committee involving Methven people and the Ashburton District Council ensured the needs of the town were married to the designer's vision.

The need for redevelopment was identified when council called on Methven people to think about their future needs as part of a long-term strategic plan.

The new town centre has many unique art features. Achari was inspired by Mt Hutt when he designed the street lights and furniture and he drew on the colours of crops surrounding the town for the designs on the paved footpaths and central courtyard area.

Though controversial, the closing of the road outside Methven's icon Blue Pub gave greater area for the redevelopment and helped fix a problem intersection.

The work has given Methven locals and visitors a central meeting place, an outdoor entertainment area and helped Methven become a town to stop in, not just drive through.



Figure 5.2 Article entitled: '*Methven's artistic merits to be judged*' on page 1 of Issue 29, June 8, 2004 of Ashburton District Council: District Diary. The redevelopment is seen as a place to provide "locals and visitors a central meeting place, an outdoor entertainment area, and helped Methven become a town to stop in, not just drive through"

Outdoor space has also been considered with this development, as stated on the Methven Heritage Centre's website: "The landscaped grounds will open out to the town centre and provide a gathering place for locals and visitors alike, and a venue for outdoor events in what is set to be an exciting new hub for the district" (Methven Heritage Centre 2010). As demonstrated by these most recent developments the vision of the new Methven retains the agricultural history but emphasises the importance of snow sports for Methven's future.



Figure 5.3 1) New Methven Heritage Centre, housing the new i-SITE, 2010 2) “Bob’s Rock” from Cleardale Station is used in the gardens to tell the story of glaciation and as a ‘sculptural feature in its own right’ (Methven Heritage Centre 2010)

The relocation of the i-SITE occurred in June, 2010. The original location was across the main street from the small parking area that services the public toilets and playground area. The new location is in the new Methven Heritage Centre near the Blue Pub. Unlike the original location, the Heritage Centre is separate from the everyday routines of local people and intended specifically for visitors, education purposes and special events.



Figure 5.4 1) Old i-SITE was located across the street from the parking lot from the public toilets (image taken from the parking lot). This site was mixed with local businesses as it was located beside a local take-away and real-estate office, across from a pharmacy and at the entrance to the CBD shopping mall 2) The new i-SITE location is beside the tourist friendly Blue Pub, separated from businesses frequented by locals. The Methven Heritage Centre is the building in the background. The Blue Pub is the building on the right with picnic tables out-front

The i-SITE move from being integrated into the local fabric to a standalone ‘tourist’ oriented structure could be considered ‘advancement’ as defined earlier. What this means for the town and the character of the town will be developed in the discussion chapter.

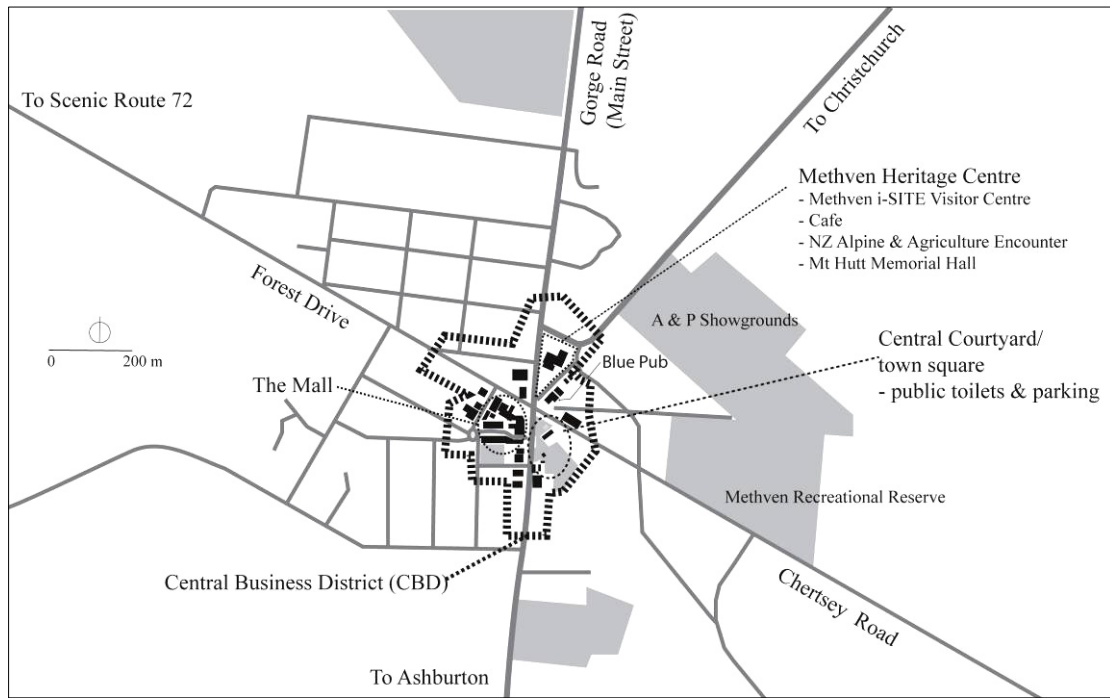


Figure 5.5 Plan of Methven with an emphasis on town centre. The city centre is compact and central to the rest of the town's development. Outside of the CBD is a mix of residential, accommodation and light industrial. This plan is intended for orientation and provides a general layout of this community.



Figure 5.6 Sketch: Methven main street: Traditional taskscape on left side of street while the new courtyard/square has been developed on the right side of this image

5.3 Scripting Methven

Local people know how to perform Methven from daily everyday practice. Visitors, on the other hand, are informed how to use or perform Methven through commodification and constructed themes (Shaw and Williams 2004) or images (Gran 2010) by the tourism industry; from previous experiences (and negotiations) in similar towns or tourist situations (Edensor 2001); from the informal feedback they receive from their social audiences (Goffman 1959), and from information sources such as the websites, as already mentioned, brochures and guide books (Harrison 2003; Moore, Fairweather and Simmons 2000; Moore, Simmons and Fairweather 2001). Guide books have been an important source

of information in this regard where Methven is noted as Canterbury’s winter sports capital, but quiet and uninspiring in summer.

Methven is Canterbury’s winter sport capital and the accommodation and refuelling centre for the Mount Hutt ski field during the June to October ski season. In summer the town is quiet and fairly uninspiring, but makes a good base for exploring the nearby Rakaia Gorge, Mount Somers and doing a handful of activities (Harper, Mudd and Whitfield, 2004: 683-684).

5.3.1 Methven/ Mt. Hutt identity

Methven identifies itself with Mt Hutt, and uses the term ‘Mt Hutt Village’ interchangeably with the town’s name of Methven. Both names, Mt Hutt and Methven, are used to identify the area on brochures and websites. Mt Hutt provides the appeal of the winter sport destination while the town of Methven has the appeal of the small country town. Christchurch and Canterbury tourism (www.christchurchnz.com/) website describes this town as “This alpine-themed village nestled close to the Southern Alps offers either high octane excitement or a tranquil country escape”.



Figure 5.7 1) Use of Methven/Mt Hutt names to identity place - Amazing Space website uses Methven Mt Hutt to identify one place. 2) A sign in Methven refers to itself as Methven and Mt. Hutt Village

The ski town or snow sport image of Methven is not only symbolically represented in names on signs and in advertising on the internet, but the snow sport ‘stage’ is also reinforced with ‘stage’ props, both functional and aesthetic, in the town of Methven, such as the ‘I Skied Mount Hutt’ photo board and fences made from old skis.



Figure 5.8 1) Tourist photograph opportunities beside the pharmacy; 2) Locals use old skis as fence. 3) Transport up to the ski fields are parked not far from the CBD

Methven also continues to maintain a historical script as a place for rural folk to be entertained (as family entertainment and as a place to ‘party’), with an annual rodeo. This weekend event held in October provides family entertainment during the day and is quite famous in the region for the drinking and nightlife that occurs during the rodeo weekend.

Rodeo aftermath turns up in court; METHVEN DISORDER

The broncos were bucking in the main ring but there was plenty of action elsewhere at last month's Methven rodeo.

More than half the list at the Ashburton District Court yesterday was made up of offending before, during or after the Mid-Canterbury draw card.

Offences included drink-driving (some picked up the day after), driving while disqualified, streaking, and a punch-up after a woman kissed another woman's boyfriend.

Also drinking in an area where liquor was banned, and publicly exposing themselves to passing motorists were among the offences.

Judge Brian Callaghan said: "The rodeo (is) responsible for half the list today" (Keast, 2007).

The changes made in Methven, the streetscape and heritage centre redevelopment, are stage changes which work with scripts to tempt people to the township of Methven. The official visitor information website for Methven scripts the Methven experience:

With Mt Hutt Ski Area on our doorstep, some of the world's finest heliskiing country and six Canterbury ski fields all within close distance; Methven is a snow sports magnet over winter.

Over summer people head to Methven to interact with the outdoors, attend local events or to simply refresh and relax in our Amazing Space which is rural and rustic, yet funky and modern (<http://www.amazingspace.co.nz>, accessed Sept 20, 2010).

In summary, the scripts for Methven are built on historical uses, the everyday activities of local people, and the marketing of the town both for summer visitors and for international winter sports. There is not a single ‘official’ script used to perform Methven, but multiple scripts, as the town is presented differently to locals and both domestic and international visitors. The range of scripts also widens as the range of tourists increases, each bringing with them their own ideas of how to perform Methven.

5.4 Methven Stages

Observations of the town of Methven were made from a number of visits during summer and winter, during the day and at night. They are visual and experiential in nature, and provide the basis for an interpretation of the town from a performance perspective, highlighting the ‘stages’ in the town.

5.4.1 Access to Methven

Located on the Canterbury plains, Methven is approximately an hour and twenty five minute drive west of Christchurch from Christchurch International Airport. The drive to Methven requires travelling through the Canterbury plains. These plains are relatively flat agricultural land with scenic views of the Southern Alps, the mountain range to the west. Pasture for dairy cows, sheep, and occasional deer farms, as well as manicured wind rows are characteristic of the surrounding landscape. Travel to Methven is pleasant yet uneventful. The scenic Rakaia Gorge and Inland Scenic Route that runs to the west of Methven are exceptions.



Figure 5.9 1) The Canterbury plains: hedgerows and 2) livestock

A number of roads access Methven Township. The entry into town is marked by generic road signs. Depending upon which route you take, the entry into town is a mix of residential and over night accommodation or light industrial. The centre of town is more defined as the central business district (CBD) where most business and services are concentrated. What would be typically be residential in most small towns, in Methven is intermixed with seasonal homes, rental homes and other forms of accommodation. The town’s radial form is unique.

5.4.2 Residential/accommodation and town centre

Using the performance metaphor to identify stages in Methven suggests there are two primary stages: the residential/accommodation and the town centre. The residential/accommodation stage is like any residential area in any small town. However in contrast to what would normally be all residential houses in Methven, some houses have been converted or replaced as tourist accommodation. There are various accommodation types ranging from vernacular houses used as bed and breakfast, to small

lodges and motels. While most tourist accommodation is inconspicuous and fits within the surrounding residential context, they are not completely integrated as they use signs to promote their presence, and some have parking lots indicating the site as tourist accommodation.

For visitors staying overnight in Methven the town is small enough to walk from their accommodation to the CBD. The experience of being in the residential/accommodation stage of Methven is a mix of small town New Zealand and of a town transitioning to tourism. The town centre also has this feeling of transition. The town centre is mainly comprised of a shopping mall space creating a court yard/parking space. The shopping mall has a veranda (covered walkway) and works/looks like many malls found elsewhere in New Zealand. The town centre is more defined with a high concentration of retail and service industries. The shopping mall is a taskscape, providing retail shopping and services (including a church) that could be anywhere in the world, but also fits in with local practices for everyday life in Methven.



Figure 5.10 1) Methven CBD shopping mall; 2) Typical shopping area found throughout New Zealand

However, the town centre differs from traditional small New Zealand towns in the way it has been marked with street furniture, which is unique and has a highly visible bespoke aesthetic. The street furniture located only in the town centre, commands attention with its bright blue colour and ‘mountain’ theme style. The furniture, as well as brightly coloured pavers, also configured in ‘mountain’ and ‘agricultural’ patterns, change the identity of the place from ‘local’ small town, to a representation of tourist space, a ‘universal cultural space’, which could be located anywhere in the world. The benches and stairs on the square have also been ‘skateboard proofed’ discouraging ‘grinding’ and using this space for skateboarding. The furniture and paving is relatively new (6 years old) but shows signs of wear from misuse (erosion) and vandalism as graffiti (deposition).



Figure 5.11 1& 2) Methven street furniture and paving; Mountain and agricultural themes

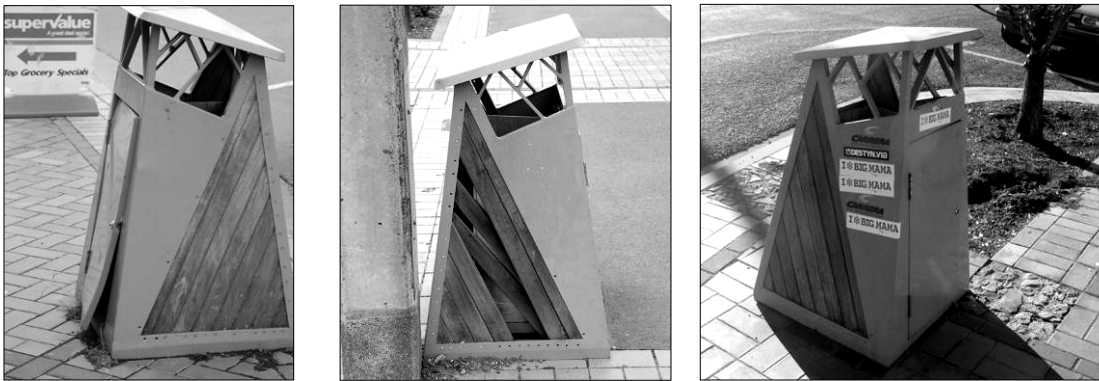


Figure 5.12 1& 2) Trash bins have been poorly treated; 2) Graffiti also suggests a lack to acceptance from some people

There is an irony in the town's attempt to create a new local identity, as by adopting overtly themed artefacts; Methven has become part of a globalised aesthetic. The vandalism and graffiti targeted toward the street furniture would indicate the new identity is not well received by everyone.

5.5 *Script and Stage Summary*

Methven is at a cross roads. For the first time visitor Methven appears to be a rural service town dressed up to accommodate the modern world of tourists. It hasn't been a total transition, as remnants of the town's past are still found in historical buildings and outdoor spaces that are used for local everyday activities, including grazing sheep in residential areas. The modernisation, or what could be rightfully called globalisation, is expressed in the new touristscape where new street furniture and outdoor spaces have been added to attract tourists to the town. The courtyard takes centre stage at the town's historic intersection and visually stands out with coloured pavers and bespoke benches, rubbish bins and street lighting. The new Heritage Centre outdoor spaces extend this theme with a similar script, as the streetscape provides an ordered, modern representation of urban space. Although this in and of itself is one way to 'develop for tourism', it becomes problematic when a town is scripted and performed in other ways. The new streetscape or 'tourist staging' is primarily a visual experience

which provides an initial stimulus to suggest event space. This space however, especially in summer, is not well used for events or as everyday space and therefore is void of people. The stage does not provide for a range of performances. The courtyard is something to gaze at but not use. The exception to this is the biweekly farmer's market that occurs on Sundays during the warmer summer months.

The town doesn't appear to be content with a gateway community role to which it is well suited, and which can also be attractive to tourists looking for an 'authentic' small town experience. The town's identity is in transition from a typical New Zealand rural service centre to a 'funky and modern' snow sport magnet, and the addition of 'improvements' and 'advancements' to outdoor space has changed the CBD stage. This transition to be more of a destination, rather than a gateway can be problematic as the changes do not coincide with some people's perceptions of appropriate stages and scripts, and ultimately their perceptions of desired performances. The next section will explore this further through observations of the performances (my own and of others) on the various stages in Methven.

5.6 *Performing Methven*

First impressions of the CBD are of the bold and atypical nature of the streetscape design, which is disconcerting and gives mixed messages of 'event space' in an otherwise ordinary and 'uneventful' town centre. Town buildings are a mix of historic and more modern albeit plain building types. The street light structures with their top-heavy 'mountain' shapes and pale blue colour are unrestrained, command attention, and are accentuated with their abundance. These structures however do physically define the CBD as separate from the 'residential' areas and are helpful in way finding.



Figure 5.13 1) Light fixtures define the CBD. 2) The paving pattern, found only in the CBD reflects the colours and patterns found in the surrounding agricultural fields

The CBD/mall is the central stage in Methven for shopping and services and stimulates a range of taskscape performances. Young mothers and fathers were observed pushing prams, often conversing

with another adult as they walk along the main street sidewalks. Their destination was often the playground or to run an errand in the town mall area. The parking area in front of the toilets, which also services the playground, is used by visitor and local alike. Locals in their vehicles often stop on the street or in this parking lot for a quick chat with a friend or neighbour. This parking lot was important for not only stopping to use the toilets or to visit the i-SITE, but appeared to be an important place to organize the car, switch drivers, read a map, or simply take a break.

A number of car and motorcycle clubs were observed, at different times, making the Methven pubs their destination for a day outing. Recreational motorcyclists, not on a club ride, were also observed travelling through and stopping at a cafe or pub in town. These motorcyclists demonstrated performances of arriving travellers, such as gathering outside their vehicles and using their vehicles as props forming social space. These performances were also observed elsewhere in other towns.



Figure 5.14 1) Stroll towards the CBD; 2) Young adults 'hang out' around the pizza place at the mall in the early evening. The youth in the right image is retrieving a rugby ball from the roof



Figure 5.15 1) Public parking for public toilets and playground across from first i-SITE location; 2) Locals have a five minute chat in the parking lot, after a Saturday afternoon rugby game. Locals were using the public toilets therefore parking in this lot

5.6.1 Night time Methven

The dual nature of Methven as a rural service and snow sport town results in daily movement, a rhythm or flows of people that are accentuated by the seasonal visitors using the town. During the snow sport season, from June to October, the town is manipulated by Mt Hutt's operational hours, where visitors and workers leave Methven in the morning and return late afternoon or evening. During day light hours the CBD was primarily a taskscape where locals shopped and used the playground facilities near the central courtyard. The evening hours in winter were more active as a touristscape for visitors, where people returning from Mt Hutt were spotted getting money from bank machines on Main Street and moving between restaurants and the pubs. The Last Post, a restaurant/bar had a large (approximately 15) group of people standing outside their establishment to drink and smoke. These people basically were standing on the sidewalk beside the main street and socializing with few amenities for comfort. They were 'performing' as there was a deliberate choice to spend their leisure time standing outside (there was room inside) socializing with other people. The sidewalk was not altered or staged in any way for this performance. Many of these people were smoking which is no longer allowed inside.



Figure 5.16 Methven at night. 1) People gather outside the "Last Post" restaurant and bar. 2) In front of the Blue Pub in early evening prior to patrons using the outdoor picnic tables

It is notable that few people were seen performing in the central and expensively staged square, located across from the CBD's shopping centre, either at night or during the day. The occasional person would sit on a bench for a few minutes before moving on. Most people walked through the courtyard as a short cut to somewhere else. One night, two or three people, on separate occasions, were spotted wandering away from the adjacent Blue Pub into the courtyard while they were smoking and talking on a mobile phone. They spent only a few minutes strolling through this space, concentrating on the phone conversation. Unlike the public space in Akaroa where locals and tourists use public space during the day, and have a range of natural stages which make the town a destination, Methven does not have those natural features and is mostly experienced in the evening after Mt Hutt is closed for the day. The square appears as empty event space, which has limited use by locals and tourists.

It is also noticeable that although all the public spaces in Methven are shared between residents and visitors, the performances are scheduled at different times of the day. In Akaroa people would have a choice to experience the more typical small town street, recreational spaces or a touristscape where there is tourist specific shopping and food services. Methven is attempting to provide similar staging by developing a tourist space with the Methven Heritage Centre beside the town square and popular pubs. As a gateway community however, the attraction is outside of town, therefore the town should be supporting spaces that compliment the daily flows of people, and focus on opportunities for tourists at night and other peak tourist times. From the performance perspective, the public spaces should then focus on local needs and scale outside of tourism peak times. The scale and open spaces of the heritage centre and town square is relatively new and how these spaces are used by locals performing their everyday is still in question. These spaces do not provide cues for possible use or comfortable spaces for everyday life. The scripts are ambiguous and the resulting performances disjointed and unresolved.

5.7 *Design Studio: Performing Methven*

In addition to participant observations, and reflections testing the performance perspective, a design studio was conducted where students used and applied the performance metaphor to analyse and design for Methven as a tourist gateway community. This section will first give a brief description of the design studio, and then describe student's observations, their first impressions and site analysis. This will be followed by descriptions and examples of the student's proposed designs and an interpretation of their significance for understanding Methven and the results of student interviews explaining their work and use of the performance perspective.

Student designers come from varied backgrounds which are helpful in understanding the range of perceptions that people may have towards tourism development, whilst their design education provides insight into the process and assumptions involved in creating stages.

The two week project addressed four questions. They were:

1. What are the main issues in providing public space for tourists and locals in a small town?
2. How do you resolve the main issues?
3. How do you bring tourists and locals together?
4. How does the performance perspective help the understanding and analysis of the issues and opportunities?

Students were asked to use the performance metaphor, considering stages and scripts to assist with developing Methven's tourism potential for specific tourist types. Students were also asked to consider public space and performing place as physical space, symbolic space and phenomenological

or' used' space. It was up to the student to determine what types of development and design features were important, how much change was necessary for tourism development and what were the desired 'scripts' and 'stages' needed to fulfil the expectations of their tourist group and local residents.

There were 30 students enrolled in the studio, and of those students, 11 students agreed to be interviewed about their designs and process after the studio was completed.

This section will identify what all student designers in this two week studio considered important. Students submitted their analysis and design solutions as written and graphic submissions. Explanations of their design decisions, obtained from interviews, are also presented. The following are the main themes that emerged from the student's work.

The predominant themes that emerged from the four main questions are as follows:

1. Main issues in providing public space for tourists and locals:

- Need to provide things for people to do; need more active spaces
- Tourists want 'holiday things' to stay longer; also want 'hidden' and intimate places
- Locals want everyday things; places to interact; social places (to sit) and conduct business
 - Limit the number of tourists spaces
 - Need to encourage growth; attract people to move to Methven
- Need to develop the identity of the town, as it draws visitors
 - Therefore need to understand place and key characteristics
 - Localness is important; global tourists are here to experience NZ country towns
 - Towns need a central focal point, and organised routes
- Spaces need to accommodate mixed groups as well as intimate space
 - Spaces need to expand and contract with the tourism season
- Needs better connections between spaces
 - Direct circulation, legible (visible) and comfortable

2. Resolve main issues by:

- Enhance identity – based on rural/agricultural themes and separate and combine local /tourist spaces
- Create beautiful places
 - Ephemeral colour changes; accessible and friendly town square; more logical organisation- need visual connections to 'read' town layout

3. How do you bring tourists and locals together? (Also, is it necessary to bring them together?)

4. How does the performance perspective help the understanding and analysis of the issues and opportunities?

As noted below, the use of students as ‘surrogate’ decision makers, and the short duration of the project, both impose limitations on the nature of the findings, However students proved to be useful in providing insight into the nature of ‘design’ thinking that might be expected from a range of stakeholders who had some exposure to design but were not experienced professionals (as is the case with most ‘small town’ citizens and decision makers). It thus ‘scopes’ the design issues that are examined in more detail in the final case study.

5.7.1 *Movement from the Global to the Local*

Students recognised that visitors were looking for specific types of places. However they did not specifically identify that there was a transition, gradual or sudden, between a visitor’s home region and the visited location. Their attention focused on the immediacy of the town and of the town’s features. Impressions were varied and based on the broad range of experience students had with Methven. For some, Methven was a familiar small town

They have a really good high school there, and an outdoor pursuits programme that brings people in. Otherwise they would be studying at different colleges. They have a lot of active people there (B.R. 20s New Zealand student).

Others had connections or memories associated with the activities and events of skiing/ snowboarding and with the rodeo.

I am attracted to the rodeo... (I) have been there a few times, with family and with friends. I’m not a big skier or snowboarder so Mt Hutt doesn’t matter. With my family we would go for the day and get something to eat after. Now, we (with friends) would go to the rodeo, get something to eat, then to the pubs. And stay overnight at the campground. ... Where ever is cheapest, usually the campground by the rodeo... The campground is quite run down. The rodeo is quite a party at night. Some people just go there to party; they don’t even go to the rodeo. I wouldn’t go there if the rodeo wasn’t there. I don’t know of any other events that work like the rodeo ... that occurs every year (A.M. 20s New Zealand student).

For some international students, Methven was a new experience, and an unfamiliar town. The international students in the class, from China, Singapore, Russia and the USA, drew on first impressions and/or their experience of small town and rural life in New Zealand.

... it looks the same as anywhere in the world... it has already lost its sense of place (E.H. 20s International Student).

For tourists, Methven is a base for actives, all the activities happen around the town. In providing that base ... for tourists to spend money and have fun. ... Most important is comfort... traffic, access ...road must not be very busy, quiet, and also ... for Methven, is quite different from other big cities... people from cities want quiet in the small towns. So looking for less noise and a natural setting because the activity is based on the mountains, the rivers, and nature things (L.X. 20s International Student).

Right from the studio’s onset the students were drawing on their past experiences and/or perceptions of ‘small rural towns in New Zealand’ and what they perceive ‘tourism’ to be. No two student visions

of tourism in Methven were exactly the same, but they all drew on preconceived ‘scripts’ to frame the staging and performance.

5.7.2 *What Methven needs for Tourism?*

Students identified several issues relevant to providing public space for tourism. There was a need to provide ‘things to do’ (valid taskscapes and touristscapes). They argued that the town needs more active space and to provide “holiday things to do, which will keep tourists in the town longer”. In addition to providing activities and providing an entertainment area, the town needs an identity to draw people there. Ideally, the students suggested a need to attract people year round and give tourists ‘a reason to stay more than one night or they will simply ‘pass through’ the area.

They believed that tourists see the identity of the town as the attraction; they are here (in New Zealand) to experience the local New Zealand country town.

My (focus was on) tourists (who) were the golfers. Since they are always in these global spaces, that’s the reason they come to this town is to experience the localness of it, watch local people. They don’t want the global surrounding anyway. They go there for something different than what they have already seen (KC. 20s New Zealand student).

Locals, on the other hand, were believed to want ‘everyday things’, comfort and ‘business related’ spaces, which include: places to interact, sit and watch other people, such as the social spaces found in cafés. It was also identified that there should not be too many tourist spaces, and, a need to encourage growth and attract people to move there.

...needs to provide something different than somewhere else. ...Methven’s atmosphere, the small town, with the two pubs, the relaxed atmosphere. Locals would want facilities to get supplies and their own place to relax. They would live in Methven because they like small towns or they like skiing. Or close activities at hand. (Is there anything unique about Methven?) It is a close knit community; everyone knows each other... it seems more cheerful, since they know each other. I’m from between Oxford and Methven, and you’re likely to want to live in Methven over Oxford... not much going on in Oxford. Tourism in Methven would give you different options. Oxford is more of a working town (AM 20s New Zealand student).

There was mixed thinking regarding public spaces as: a) shared or separated between the locals and tourists, b) large public spaces or small intimate spaces, c) well connected (direct, legible and easy access) or separated and even hidden spaces that were isolated and required local knowledge for its location.

It depends on the kind of tourist. When I first started travelling I would go to the tourist place to get information, because it was easy and you could get the information you wanted, but now, I’m sick of staying at backpackers and asked the same questions of me... if going to an English speaking place I’d avoid the tourist places, but overseas, go some place where they speak English, likely the tourist places. In New Zealand I don’t like staying at backpackers, I’d go camp. One removed from the other tourists. Buy food and do it myself. (Did you consider this when designing)... I considered how I am now, rather than when I first started travelling. I thought I’d like to intermingle with them... that was the intent (LS 20s New Zealand student).

Locals want things for their life; while tourists want more interesting things, like some focal points, have some special characteristics. (They want) some kind of entertainment (WZ 20s International Student).

We can combine both groups; they both need shopping and entertainment. They should create all space... No reason to separate, it's a small town, too few citizens to separate (AK 20s International Student).

Put tourists into one spot... they don't have to go elsewhere in the community. ... Geraldine for example has the one place that people go to. They stop in one place, and spend their money. It does benefit the community by having the visitor go to one area, but not everyone in the community benefits (TW 20s New Zealand student).

In order to 'stage' the above script the design students identified a range of actions. These included enhancing the identity of the town, creating themes, placemaking, staging, and a range of 'improvements'.

They considered that the current 'identity' seems 'forced' and out of sorts with the rest of the town. The new (2003) street furniture and sidewalk paving was specifically singled out:

The paving is too much, the blue things, the toilets, the doctor's office they are all shaped like mountains.... way too much. But then what would you do to create sense of place, if you remove it you lose sense of place (BR 20s New Zealand student).

I didn't want a place with cheesy mountain signs...but at the same time.... it was already there, but if you destroy what is there, that is what creates that sense of placelessness. But if it's not working.... those signs are quite ugly, but the locals might like them (LS 20s New Zealand student).

However others still wanted to create an overall theme based on agriculture setting, the mountains, or a tourist town is focused on shopping and entertainment, highlighting the importance of a coherent script to guide design intervention.

Others emphasised the importance of attracting attention by providing information, directional signage, repeating symbols, and, by making space simplified and organized.

(W)e should provide something or they wont stop.... I added paving to get people to stop.... current place is not so interesting.... paving is visible as you walk along.... cars stopping at the square and toilet ... make special paving at the square (EH 20s International Student).

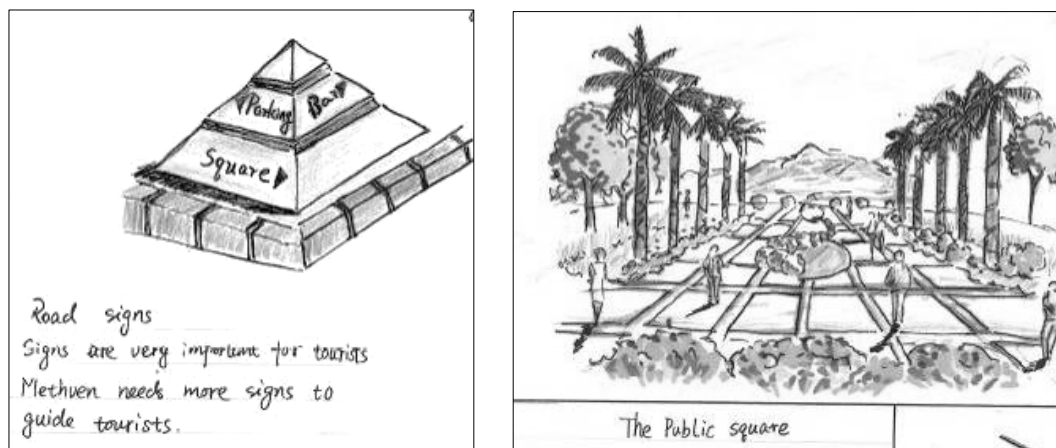


Figure 5.17 Students defaulted to more urban solutions in their designs to provide tourists stages. Asian international students provided the most 'urban' strategies as their proposed solutions. Both examples here are from Chinese international students. 1) Example of a proposed road sign. 2) Proposed public square

Some aimed to create ‘beautiful’ places, which suggest an ‘upgrading’, ‘cleaning up’ (removal of ‘eye sores’), and reorganising, as well as making spaces convenient to see and access- expressing the widely shared preferences for cared for and tidy places.

We need to put in order and mediate, so visitors can understand (HZ 20s International Student).

Staged areas... become theatrical productions, not like the everyday (HZ 20s International Student).

Others recognised the need to create different ‘stages’: a variety of places for different activities and experiences based on: providing choice; things to do (magnets) and separating tourism and ‘local’ places.

The tourists need somewhere to hang out, their own little place to relax and were not on show. When I was travelling, I'd go to the botanical gardens or something like that. When you stay at backpackers you don't have places to be by yourself (LS 20s New Zealand student).

Different needs for tourists with global needs, and local needs. It is very difficult. I was talking to my friend about this project.... we cook together (in the university accommodation), people from many different countries, we have different kinds of food, from different countries, this works very well... we like to try different foods. The local can join... and tourists share (SM 20s International Student).

Provision of basic tourist facilities: toilets, food, souvenirs, accommodation, as well as more developed tourist facilities (using technology and contemporary design theories such as electronic information kiosks, video screens) was important, as was convenient parking and activity specific infrastructure such as amphitheatres, skate parks). However too much ‘advancement’ is also a problem:

If you become more modernized you become another city. So tourists will lose their interest... the tourists come from the city, they have that experience, so they won't come here. Locals want more money every year (LX 20s International Student).

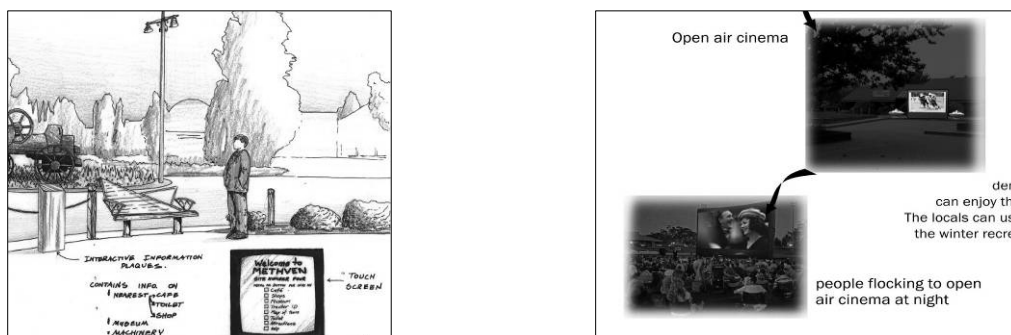


Figure 5.18 The use of technology was considered important in some solutions to provide for tourists. The use of ‘advanced technology’ was a strategy used primarily in the information and entertainment services. 1) Proposed LCD screens provide information. 2) Proposed open air cinema using video technology

One student recognised the importance of the performance of walking, that is so notable in Akaroa, providing a ‘walk’ (promenade) to move through the town and have people spend more time in town:

I tried to pull people around the town with plaques and specialized features around the town. I used sculptures, of the tractors, that related to the history of the area, to attract people. The intent was to get people out of the one place and move them around the town, rather than back onto the bus and going again. Have a wee walk... almost guided. You see the next one from the last one (TW 20s New Zealand student).

Others explicitly drew on spatial ideas from other contexts (precedence) as found in urban settings or other countries.

I compared Methven to towns in central Otago; (where) people came for the outdoor activities. Are there towns that have the outdoor, up and coming atmosphere.... Cromwell, (however) they are all on the water. And they have old buildings, a historic layer (BR 20s New Zealand student).

Some places just won't attract people to stay overnight. you could develop the snow... Hanmer has the hot pools ... develop spas in the snow (BR 20s New Zealand student).

The modern art centre.... aesthetic... being natural wood and stone, and brightly coloured, so it was warm feel, so not old and run down. A combination.... I'm not describing it very well. The western feel could be old and rundown, weathered.... did not really want that... wanted old but not run down... also the orange, red and blue, and the cabbage trees.... Do locals appreciate this? -- it fits, its more appropriate than what is there now.... than the modern mountains.... i think a nice attractive aesthetic... people would like that... What is it drawn from? The town I live in, (in the United States) it has always been nice, just added more public space, parks, put in small spaces, and benches (SM 20s International Student).

Students were explicitly asked to identify the main issues in providing public space for tourists and locals in a small town, and highlighted a range of factors. Prominent among these were the need to create taskscapes that are unattractive to visitors (17). For example, students indicated that parts of the town centre were 'dead space' (nothing was occurring there) or that they were noticeable empty of people; were 'dark'; were 'difficult to access'; or were confusing. In other words, the town needs to add interest to generate people's interest (12) or there needs to be 'something' for travellers (10).

The outdoor spaces were considered not to be meeting the expectations of what it means to provide for tourism. For example, the park needs to be changed to encourage use (12). The playground area was considered to be 'hidden'; the toilets were considered poor quality; and the park did not have features that were attractive for use.

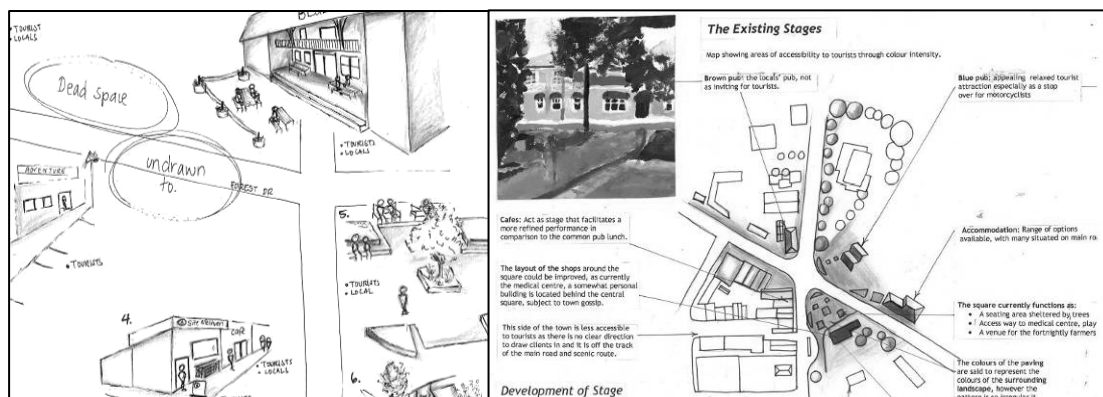


Figure 5.19 Student site analysis: 1) spaces were empty or uneventful therefore they were 'dead space'. 2) Considering separate spaces as stages where some are working well while others are not

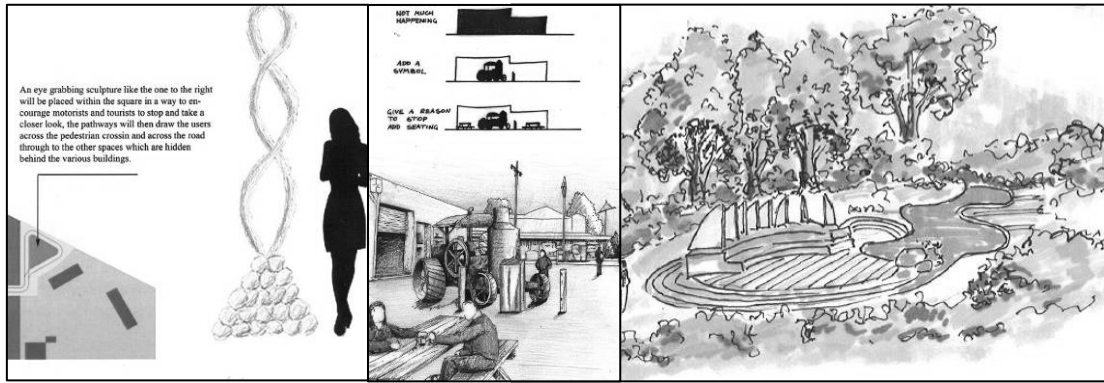


Figure 5.20 Students propose objects placed into spaces to provide ‘interest’ and make the spaces attractive. 1) Proposed ‘art’ in the town square. 2) Proposed tractor as sculpture and agricultural reference. 3) Proposed garden, amphitheatre and water feature

The uniqueness of New Zealand towns was considered important (6) and the uniqueness of New Zealand was also identified and developed with references to the surrounding landscape and using ‘local’ or indigenous materials and species.

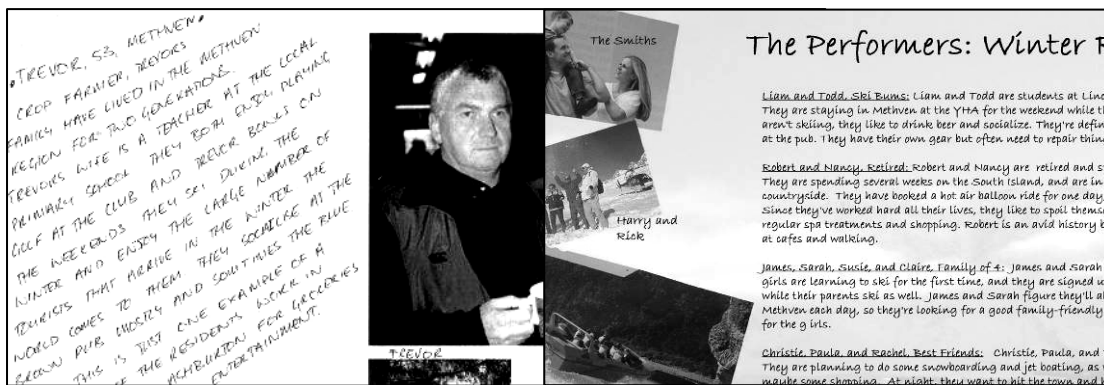


Figure 5.21 Students explained the market groups with scripts of who the people are and what they expected from Methven. These two students saw the uniqueness of small towns as important attractions for the people using Methven. 1 & 2) proposed designs consider expanding the performance metaphor with hypothetical scripts for specific performers and performances

Eight students highlighted the tension between locals and visitors. When speaking to local residents, the students found a need for ‘local only space’. This was reinforced with what happens at the town’s two pubs, where locals are separated from visitors by using the Brown Pub, and visitors primarily use the Blue Pub. The Brown Pub doesn’t turn people away but provides them with their own separate dining room. However few students indicated seasonality was a ‘problem’. Site analysis was focused mostly on the current season and day time use, and only three highlighted the seasonal nature of the town which is unattractive where businesses are closed.

Overall, the student’s site analyses followed a standard process of inventorying infrastructure and using a SWOT analysis identifying strengths weaknesses opportunities and threats. Many students applied the performance perspective by describing the ‘characters’ staging, and scripts of people currently using the spaces and people they hoped to attract.

5.7.3 *Staging for Tourism: Bringing Tourists and Locals together*

In addition to asking the students to identify the main issues associated with tourism in small towns, and how to resolve these issues, the students were also to consider how to bring tourists and locals together. They were to consider if these groups should be provided for separately or together, or a combination of the two. The students expressed a range of opinions. First, each group has basic needs as humans (toilets, food, and place to rest) therefore these needs should be shared between the two groups (locals and tourists) - that is, a common taskscape. Furthermore, to bring these two groups together, a sense of place was required, where a sense of 'home' was important. Creating a theme from the surrounding physical context or from history wasn't necessary. Although this was identified by a few students (5), most students (11) chose to develop themes that modified the 'local' or 'home' setting with a 'tourist' stage that included a tourist information centre, shopping facilities (resembling a pedestrian shopping mall) and 'attractive' landscaping.

It was believed that different groups would come together if there were 'spaces for all', including different ages, for all seasons, and, according to one student, a range of spaces from 'intimate' (assuming solitude) to social spaces. One intuitive student contemplated the need to consider "large enough spaces to hold large numbers (of people) in the peak season". This idea was not developed any further than this, but given time it would have likely evolved to challenge the design of spaces where they could adapt or change with the numbers of visitors according to daily and seasonal flows. The two groups would also interact if spaces are developed that were comfortable, safe and relaxing spaces. Exactly how to make spaces 'comfortable', 'safe' and 'relaxing' are unclear, except that direct sight lines and being open (as opposed to being enclosed) makes spaces 'safe'.

Improving and increasing the communication (interaction) between locals and tourists was also considered important, since "tourists want to know local people". This is accomplished by providing attractions in close proximity for both locals and visitors. Most students suggested placing the information centre near amenities that locals would use such as a cafe, bakery or other shopping experiences (11), and it was considered important to cluster shopping and attractions (10) and add more restaurants and shopping (11) to attract visitors and locals into this space. On the other hand, eight students considered it important to separate the two groups and keep local necessities free of tourist access and influence.

In summary the students found that existing space and streetscape is not working for tourists or locals. They perceived the current streetscape and public spaces were not providing for the needs of tourists or locals. This was determined by the poor use of existing spaces. All New Zealand students thought this way while 4 of the 11 international students thought the existing outdoor space was appropriate and could be developed further.

There is a need to provide things to do (active spaces). There was a general belief that to provide for tourism, visitors need activities 'to do' while in the town or there needs something to be added for interest and to 'generate people's interest to visit'. Therefore the town as gateway community was not enough and the town needs to develop more as a destination. Since the students were asked to consider specific types of users, there was a range of activities that were suggested. This included intimate spaces where tourists could consider their own. Another way it was expressed was that *Tourists need 'holiday things' for them to stay longer*. Such spaces should provide for both local and visitor, and some identified a need for separating them and local only spaces. Locals want everyday things: business related; social places to interact (like cafes); not too many tourist spaces; attract people to move and invest in the town. Finally spaces need to accommodate mixed groups and intimate space, and a need to expand and contract with the tourism season

It was believed that the identity of town will draw visitors. The town's character and identity are important as it is chosen as the place where tourists want spend their leisure time. Students identified that they need to understand place and key characteristics that make it a *certain kind* of place. Some students suggested *localness* is important; the global tourist is here to experience a New Zealand country town. Identity, according to the student work can be created and they identified this as a central focal point and organised routes.

Finally, the town needs better connections between spaces, improved circulation, and make the spaces more legible and comfortable. The focus of many students was to structure the town by ordering and connecting spaces. There was a general belief that making circulation in the town safer, with zebra crossings, narrower streets, and using plantings to 'direct' movement was an important contribution to staging the town. Improving comfort was primarily an aspect of being able to visually see the space from the road, and providing seating and easy access (close proximity and ample car parking).

5.8 Using the Performance Perspective to understand tourism issues and solutions

This section looks specifically at the use of the performance metaphor in the design process. Students were asked to comment on this perspective of understanding space as stages, scripts and performance. Students found this perspective helpful in that it required them to think more about what people were doing in a space and what features are required for them to be there:

I like the idea of performance.... I think of the two sets of performers... spectators and competitors... it's a way of categorizing, I think. And predicting people's movements because of why they are there ... and what role they are in (BR 20s New Zealand student).

For some students the metaphor was at first confusing. However over the course of the studio it became clear that this metaphor helped with the design of not only space(s) but as places where people do things.

At the time it took time to understand the concept, but after I caught on, it helped me with other projects. You have to think what people should be doing in that space and give them cues for what they should be doing there (LS 20s New Zealand student).

Categorized roles, the non-scripted performance, the skateboarders, you can design for it.... design the square so kids do hang out there... allowing people to interpret differently...hint at, or suggest other uses (BR 20s New Zealand student).

I like it a lot. The third project... the idea of performance is more active and more interesting... it works better when I talk to other people, reading books isn't working very well. We talked as a group after being in Methven; we shared our ideas, like we were tourists. We were a part of it, like we were a tourist, and we also tried to be like a local (EH 20s International student).

Students started to see that people use spaces differently which may be culturally based:

In China we would like to spend more time and be more local, but in international trips, we spend shorter amount of time, that is what we do (HZ 20s International student).

Students found this perspective a bit confusing at first, thinking the performance had to be dramatic or theatrical,

It confused a lot of people, in trying to understand the performance because performance was something that people had to go and do... like a game of rugby, ... you are doing something, ... then thinking about a space, is a stage, or performance, it didn't really make much sense, to me., how would someone perform when there is nothing here, no one is doing anything... there's two pubs, a cafe and a shop, it didn't really seem like much going on (TW 20s New Zealand student).

Later this student realized that performance was what people did:

The performance is very subtle... mother walking a pram down the street (TW 20s New Zealand student).

(Talking about the performance perspective) Trying to understand why you do something, for what reason, and visualise it as an end result and how does it affect you, is it (the designed space) too big, too small, is it comfortable, is it closed off, open, there are so many options, you can create that by just moving something around and close the space off, it's so simple (TW 20s New Zealand student).

(Talking about the performance perspective) It was good to image going there, getting out of my car, walking ... sort of thought about it, all the way through, ... and if I was a horse rider (relating to another design project) I had to consider what they would do, ... pull up, get some water, whatever for the horse, warm up, do your thing, put the horse away.... you have to get into that zone... just associate, become that person, through the process, how it feels and fits, it's probably my biggest learn this semester (TW 20s New Zealand student).

Another, this time an international student, relates the importance of what people do:

Yes, it did help. you need to know what the tourists or the locals want, you have to know their performance activities, what they actually do, then design to meet their demands. Not just what they ask for, or say, but what they do (WZ 20s International student).

Spaces were considered for what they offer to the person occupying the space:

Made me think what the purposes of the space were and if they are used as intended (KC 20s New Zealand student).

And the performances that occur may prevent other performances from happening:

You can imagine yourself in the space, or watch how people use the space... In Methven there were a lot of mothers out with their kids and taking the dog for walks, and lots of kids when they got out from school, just walking down in big heaps and sitting on the seats, staring at people. ... I interpreted that they were wandering around the streets probably because they had no where better to go, and so I

decided to make the skate park or the skate slash children's park for them. They would probably be a big deterrent for tourists ... maybe they may scare people off (KC 20s New Zealand student).

The stage was important for performances to occur:

Performance perspective was very helpful because it is what people do in a special place. It gives people things to do, things they want and like to do. If you are in one place and if there is nothing to do, you leave, it's boring (LX 20s International student).

Interviewed students found the performance perspective useful in the design process. For one student this was a good way of perceiving the spatial problem:

(It) forced (me) to think about individual characters; instead of types of people ... (I) envision specific performances that people would do... With the different stages, I considered what props are needed for each stage, and then translate the prop into design features. It was a good perspective to identify what was needed both physically and spatially. Having a theatre background, using this perspective was also fun for me (SM international student 20s).

Another student identified that he started to question how people use space and this may include 'unscripted' or improvised uses of designed space. The performance perspective "made me think of the purpose of spaces and if the spaces are used as intended. And if not, what can be done. For example school kids loitering on the street are not a planned performance... what can I make (design) somewhere so they can hang out and enjoy themselves and not be in the way of others?" (KC 20s New Zealand student).

Although students did not express problems with the performance perspective, some (3 interviews) expressed that it took some time to understand how this metaphor could be applied to the design process. One domestic student found that this perspective 'changed people as individuals to having roles and playing a part', this way I 'was able to predict how they will act by categories, then creating stages for them'. This student however 'found the idea of creating a stage for characters "hard" '.

It was a bit hard to understand but helpful once you got it. ... you notice there are people there, but you don't really notice what they are doing and why they are there. So that definitely helped (KC 20s New Zealand student).

People go to places to do something, not just to be there. (KC 20s New Zealand student)

I found it easy to understand, I've done a lot of theatre, so it was an easy analogy to make in my mind... It was a really good way to think more in-depth about an individual character, usually we think, of... mothers, we don't picture only one mom, I don't normally, picture somebody and exactly what they are going to do... in each space... it was a good way to get into detail. What props and what the props need to be, I think it relates well to design (SM 20s International student).

5.9 What does the design studio contribute?

Although the design studio was limited in time and by the experience of the student designers, it resulted in some important insights into designing for tourism. The studio experiment highlighted the way that student designers rely on preconceived notions of design and tourism in their work. Many students worked from a preconceived script and preconceived notions of props which were, in their

understanding, needed to ‘improve’ the town for tourism. They had a sense that design should do a number of things to make a town more attractive for tourism. These design attributes include: adding objects with symbolic reference to context or history; adding trees and ‘green’ vegetation; connect and define spaces with paving, street furniture and entry ways; spaces need to be easily accessible; increasing scale and becoming more urban; to name a few.

What some students missed in their design presentations was that although the focus was on creating space for targeted tourist groups, locals also have to use this space and they also have certain expectations. Methven has a unique town layout and with the exception of the new town square and street furniture still has a local town (taskscape) character. Although using the performance perspective is intended to prevent homogenisation from global processes (ski town scripts), it was noticed that design homogenisation was occurring with many students perceiving similar design solutions. These solutions are what the students consider as appropriate tourism development and included symbols that are were considered tourism necessities. As will be seen in the following chapters on the third case, Geraldine, the tendency to homogenise character through the application of a tourism script is a critical dynamic in small town transitions.

5.10 Chapter Summary

Methven as a gateway community provides a number of insights into the travel model, touristscapes, and the unique aspects of this seasonal rural town. First, Methven is highly seasonal, well scripted (in the imagination) for the winter ski season. There are few outdoor tourist performances beyond moving from one building to another in the winter climate. Secondly, as a gateway community it does not have or need an attraction and lacks the views and recreational features such as waterfront activities. The third point is, like Akaroa, it is within a few hours drive from Christchurch, and while Methven does not have such an interesting driving experience it does receive day trip excursions. Fourthly, Methven does not have the range of stage options for people to wander, play or find personal spaces. Fifth, the ski town script, as well as the rodeo event reinforces the youth drinking performances that are currently (and have been historically) popular. The sidewalks are still social spaces where locals meet but the purposely built square is poorly used outside of the farmer’s market events. Sixth, the streetscaping does identity the CBD, and more so at night, the design however is less appealing during the day and summer season this space and nature of the props do not prompt the performances that tourists and locals desire in a small town setting.

The Methven studio also provided some insights upon the nature of staging, of the performance metaphor and touristscapes. First, it was found that many student designers work from *touristscape archetypes* which resulted in a homogenisation of public space. Applying a tourist layer to a rural taskscape defaulted to urban precedence and focused on visual consumption. It appeared students

were not intentionally designing with this prejudice, but it was more of ‘how we design’ – that designers feel the need *to do something*. Many students follow a design process which formalises and objectifies a desired script. In other words they place objects which signal a new tourism script. A new and different ‘authenticity’ is introduced. Methven’s tourism needs are being ‘solved’ by embodying scripts symbolically into particular objects that will stimulate economic performances. Their belief is to make spaces, script the space and this will make it become a tourist place. The experience of examining Methven’s new square and streetscape however shows it doesn’t actually happen in the way it is being scripted. Just scripting and expressing that script in objects doesn’t actually make it happen.

It was also revealed that changing a taskscape to a touristscape is fraught with problems of seasonality, sense of identity and scale issues associated with increased numbers of visitors. Touristscapes are not particularly useful as taskscapes, and for small towns the faults of these spaces are emphasised and experienced on an everyday basis. Touristscapes based on scripting for tourists hasn’t worked. It also doesn’t work for locals as it doesn’t fulfil their needs either. The key point is that there is a relationship between scripts, staging and performance and the different types of staging, taskscape, touristscape and the designer’s intention.

The touristscape of a gateway community in particular became problematic with the seasonal and diurnal use of the town. How spaces are used or not used during non-peak times needs to be considered when designing for tourism in small towns. Large parking lots and open spaces were suggested, like the current town square, which would be left empty during much of the year. The strength of the gateway theme (ski town) and public spaces may also conflict with other performances (family, off season). Methven’s radial town pattern, although potentially unique and interesting, offers few options for pedestrians to experience the town. During the off season the town acts more like a stop along the way (with intermittent flows), with few stages and performances to interact with the local population.

In conclusion, the Methven case study contributed five key insights to the overall project. First it provided an example of a gateway community which provides stages quite differently than a destination community. Second it provided a contrasting case to explore and test the performance metaphor. The third contribution was a design studio using Methven as a context for tourism development, which was helpful in understanding how interested and informed but relatively inexperienced design/decision makers perceive and use the performance metaphor and issues of transitioning from theory to configuring space. Fourth, the Methven case study further emphasised that travel spaces are not consistently used, as they are diurnal and seasonal, and this impacts the perceptions and use of designed space. A fifth contribution to this research is endorsement of the

travel circuit model, highlighting differences between a destination and gateway, and designs should reflect those differences.

Methven is a gateway community, wanting to be a destination, but due to seasonality and limited 'natural' destination attributes functions mostly as a stop along the route.

The next chapter will look at the last type of tourist town on the travel circuit, the stop along the way. Geraldine Township, as case study, will build on the insights found in this chapter and use key informants to test what town features contribute and influence a tourist stage in a small town.