Public Space is a Fundamental Human Right

Luisa Bravo

Despite its broad, cross-disciplinary, and context-specific meaning, public space is a common good, meant to be open, inclusive, and democratic. It is the social glue that can contribute to advancing mutual trust, cooperation, and solidarity among individuals, groups and communities. It is the key urban feature that is able to create a sense of security and human well-being, promoting equity and inclusion, empowering women, and providing opportunities for youth. Well-designed and well-managed public spaces can support diverse economies and services, both formal and so-called informal, endowing urban environments with human vibrancy and livelihood, encouraging walking, cycling, and playing, while improving both physical and mental health (Bravo, 2020). For communities living in extreme poverty, outdoor space serves as an extension of small homes; there, social interaction and mutual support can be established; it promotes community bonds, provides children with playing space, and can also host informal economic activities along streets and sidewalks, such as those of street vendors and markets traders, making cities more vibrant, secure, and affordable for all (Wiego, 2020).

Public space is a network, a system, a complex infrastructure made of fully accessible outdoor and indoor areas, forming a continuous publicly available urban commons, for encounter, transit, and permanence—since urban environments are primarily human environments. In Europe and most of the Western world, there is a consensus that public space quality has social, but also economic, environmental, and cultural impacts (Ibeling, 2015). In the Global South, that awareness is not yet fully established: Public space is often poorly designed, maintained or managed as a leftover space, while publicness is jeopardized by private interests, a political regime, or massive urbanization.

Nowadays, public space is found near the bottom of many cities' urban agenda, including in the Global North, and is not properly addressed by politicians and local governments. Too often, public space is not listed as a primary question but, rather, as a collateral component, mostly intended as a design activity related to landscape urbanism or infrastructure facilities. In addition, public space is increasingly linked to a complex urban setting made up of socio-spa-

tial discrimination and exclusion, increasing inequality, and the neglect of civil rights, owing to globalization phenomena and the neoliberal political system. In many countries, particularly those with rapidly urbanizing areas and a low-income population, the proliferation of so-called informal settlements—and their exclusion from basic services and opportunities—makes communities vulnerable; they are more exposed to the risks of crime and violence, which seriously impact social cohesion and civic identity. While economic recession, rising unemployment, and homelessness are becoming realities in most developed countries, the lingering global financial crisis, increasing privatization of the public domain, and unprecedented migration are all redefining the public realm as a politicized and contested space (Hou and Knierbein 2017), often isolating communities and limiting their freedom to engage with the public sphere.

I strongly believe that future cities will desperately need public space: As a key enabler of human rights, public space is the crucial instrument to promote a human-oriented approach to cities. That means a proper understanding and consciousness based on human development, a different system of education based on public space culture for the activists, innovators, and leaders of the future and, most importantly, investment in the human capital embedded in our cities.

So how are we to design quality public spaces? Success will depend on the overall quantity of public areas and also on the ability to develop a city-wide strategy (UN-Habitat, 2020) involving street networks, connectivity, walkability, and efficient public transportation—for the ability to access a space is just as important as the space itself. At the same time, the quality of public space lies not only in good design solutions but also, and especially, in the process that produces it, that is to say, in the opportunities to share perspectives, dialogue with diverse stakeholders, and find common ground for co-design and co-creation. The design and management of quality public spaces is the result of a collaborative effort that is able to define the conditions for a top-down approach that will meet the bottom-up needs and aspirations expressed by different groups of people. The active contribution of these people, either through co-design or co-production (or both), is necessary to achieve inclusive and equitable spaces, because they foster tolerance, conviviality, dialogue, and democratic exchange.

A human-oriented vision is imperative for public space culture. The UN's commitment to inclusive development is oriented toward people and, therefore,

toward public space; it is a call for country leaders to prioritize the needs of the most marginalized and disadvantaged, of those facing dire poverty and discrimination. It is increasingly important to "underscore the urgent political priority of constructing cities that correspond to human social needs rather than to the capitalist imperative of profit-making and spatial enclosure" (Brenner at al, 2012).

Public space is not an individual right, since it is shaped by collective factors that can influence urbanization processes. As stated by the Barcelona Declaration, which addressed public spaces, the right to the city is "a new paradigm that provides an alternative framework to re-think cities and urbanization" (Habitat III 2016, 1). Thinking about public space means being a humanist and unfolding a new, human-oriented vision while making cities more resilient and sustainable. ◐

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Participatory Planning is Key to Truly Transforming Urban Spaces

Horacio Terraza

Today, some 56% of the world's population—4.4 billion inhabitants—live in cities. By 2050, with the urban population more than double its current size, nearly seven out of ten people in the world will live in cities and, according to World Bank Group projections, by 2035 most of the world's extreme poor will live in urban areas. As a result of this rapid urbanization rate, cities face issues such as overcrowding, accelerated demand for affordable housing, disorderly urban planning, and lack of public spaces, all of which disproportionately affect the urban poor. Indeed, this population group has the greatest stake in urban planning yet its voice is the weakest of all, which is why World Bank operations seek to empower marginalized groups through a participatory design approach so that they can help shape the urban environment in which they live.

Thanks to the Participatory Urban Design Project, supported by the Federal Ministry of Finance of Austria, the Bank is promoting open and usable public spaces designed by local residents in underserved urban areas. The Project's first phase was implemented in Dhaka (Bangladesh), Maputo (Mozambique), and Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic), where it will contribute to improved livability and health outcomes, social inclusion, civic participation, local economic activity, and environmental sustainability among the beneficiary community. Each Participatory Design Approach was adapted to best fit the local context of the three case-study cities by using a wide-ranging set of innovative tools. The three key lessons learned, detailed below, can be applied in future Bank activities.

Cities need a comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach involving all stakeholders when envisioning and creating urban spaces

Involving all stakeholders was one of the greatest challenges. However, by using innovative tools—specifically developed to address a number of target groups—it was possible to include the voices of all key groups as part of the urban design. In the case of women in Santo Domingo and Dhaka, this was achieved by paying attention to their specific needs, choosing convenient meeting times when they could participate, and opening safe spaces where they felt comfortable enough to talk. In Santo Domingo, an urban accessibility walk conducted with people with disabilities made it possible to identify accessibility issues or barriers, which were then taken into account during the design process. Other important groups, such as children or the informal sector, were also deliberately sought out to make sure that their views were included.

Putting technology at the service of participatory design

A large aerial map of Shahjahanpur Jheel in Dhaka was used as a basis for discussion during the workshops. In this way, a Cartography of Social Perception emerged and was used to understand which places women (among other stakeholders) specifically liked, which places they did not enjoy, and which places needed change. In Maputo, an innovative GIS analysis, including qualitative data that was gathered in the bairros, was used to select twenty public spaces; these will be converted into new centralities accessible to around 250,000 people living in informal neighborhoods.

A multi-faceted methodology

Following a proven methodological approach was key to the success of the Project. The applied methodology—dialogue-oriented planning and integrated urban development—draws on the team's vast practical experience. It was discussed over the course of seven webinars with World Bank specialists, municipalities, and urban practitioners such as placemakers, architects, and urbanists. As a result, we now have a sound toolbox of over forty tools that can be used in any informal or formal urban planning setting. In addition, this approach facilitates the replicability of the research, along with the comparison and evaluation of case studies.

All these creative and innovative elements, deployed across three different urban settings, made it possible to include all stakeholders and develop a shared vision, thus ensuring the sustainability and ownership of the Project at local level. It is our hope that its results will now serve as an inspiration for future Bank activities and as a vindication that a well-thought-out participatory approach is key to truly transforming urban spaces. For it is only through such innovation and with the support of people—both individuals and groups—at the heart of urban planning and design that resilience can be built, and social and environmental capital maximized, while creating more equitable and enjoyable places, as illustrated by the three case studies in Dhaka, Maputo, and Santo Domingo.

Now this accumulated knowledge has been turned into the book in your hands, Future Public Spaces, to stimulate reflection and help generate the motivation to go the extra mile, namely, involve local people in the design of urban projects and make them more relevant for all residents. ◐

Real-life Laboratories for Urban Development

Anselmo Cani

The Urban Maputo project partnership between Universidade Eduardo lane (UEM) in Maputo and superwien in Vienna was very positive in m spects. For our students, in particular, it was a unique experience to wo real-life project in the city of Maputo with the support of a local and an i tional team. Not only did two students participate as interns during the process, but a total of 35 architecture and urban planning students also to in the Urban Lab in Maputo, where they actively encountered the reality mal settlements in the city and developed solutions for this setting.

As academics, it is our role to encourage discussions about how better cities and future public spaces for all. It is also our role to prepar tects and urban planners to be aware of their responsibilities and be ab derstand the complexity of these spaces. The balance between theory a tice is crucial for the training of competent young architects, and thei participation in real-life projects with strong theoretical foundations ca a major difference to the journeys of these young people.

It was with great satisfaction that we saw our students work wit spaces in all their physical and social complexity, as well as meet local nities in their own city and grapple with the needs of these communitie spaces are essential in urban development, especially for low-income Although facing the reality of such spaces in informal neighborhoods ma easy, it is key to building a more inclusive city.

A project dealing with public spaces such as Urban Maputo bring ous benefits to local communities and fosters the right to the city for beyond this, the context in which Urban Maputo is set and presented her for a deeper discussion of our role in developing public spaces from a gl local level.

The UEM's Faculdade de Arquitectura e Planeamento Físico (FA longstanding experience in the analysis, implementation, and/or moni processes of urban public appropriation and has already published sev tributions on the subject; in particular, these have focused on decoding in order to explain and enhance the present structure and shape of sp should also consider "negative" areas, or urban voids, where the daily lif of users are manifested. Indeed, in the curriculum plan of the FAPF, ther areas of intervention: landscape treatment and planning the use of urb

Urban space is an indicator of quality of life. The profile of urban public space in Maputo City is multifaceted and is influenced positively and negatively by various factors, about which little in-depth study is available. First of all, it should be noted that population dynamics play a determining factor in the use of a space, especially in relation to the survival mechanisms adopted by the most vulnerable families who live in the city or earn their livelihood there. Secondly, insufficient means of administrative control by the institutions in charge of managing urban space is another determining factor in defining the profile of spatial use. Finally, we must point out that population mobility influences the appropriation of public space in urban areas.

In Maputo, we are faced with interesting manifestations of the use of public space that should be valued. On the one hand, for example, one can observe the extension of domestic uses into public space (use of the space next to the house as a storage area for building materials or for family ceremonies when the backyard is not sufficient for these purposes). On the other hand, it is possible to observe democracy and diversity on each square meter and, also, a great level of improvisation.

We also highlight the effects of degradation and the progressive disappearance of collective urban spaces owing to the catastrophic increase in road traffic and informal commerce. In this regard, we must refer to the existing filters that highlight the various domains of space addressed. Here, one can also explore a huge variety of solutions that stand out and give shape to the city, among others: formal materials, vegetation, and other, more symbolic materials that should be examined in greater depth in the future.

In a way, it can be said that the recycling of public domain spaces is necessary and a reality to be prioritized. Among the various issues that the study raises, it is important not to neglect environmental pollution, especially when caused by poor solid waste management systems, contaminated air, and noise. However, positive spaces can also be observed, such as Chamanculo C and Mafalala; artistically shaped in an original way, these places of the collective domain have become successful spaces.

The perception of insecurity and the marginalization of a considerable number of urban spaces is a characteristic of these places, especially as we move away from urban centers. Although the core and periphery share the same urban genesis and are interconnected, they are analytically distinct.

To conclude, the study is important in that it reveals many hidden aspects of the architecture of urban public space in Maputo. In this way, it breathes life into many everyday manifestations, that may sometimes be referred to as banal. ◐