

09

Searching for the promised land of **Public Space**

The key to an equitable African city



Durban
June 2014



Foreword

I believe the strategic vision and development of the eThekweni Municipality will create Africa's most caring and liveable city. In striving to achieve this vision, the city must address challenges created by a fragmented, racially-based apartheid planning system. eThekweni Municipality, like other South African municipalities, has largely concentrated on the delivery of basic services and given public space limited attention.

It is not uncommon to see poorly designed and managed public spaces in most deprived urban areas that fail to improve the quality of life for local citizens. However, whilst poorly maintained public spaces worsen the perception of physical and social decline, well-designed and well-managed public spaces can generate an image and perception of vibrant and regenerated city areas.

As city leaders, we need to champion the development of public space policies at city, regional, national and global levels. As cities, we have a very small window of opportunity to influence global and national public space policies and so must take up every chance we have to promote public space as a key structuring element of cities.

The UCLG Urban Strategic Planning Committee, of which I am Co-Chair, has taken the opportunity to network, learn and develop a body of knowledge on public space. Its goal is to influence global policy debates on the Post-2015 Agenda. As a Committee, we support the UN-Habitat toolkit and related policy guidance for public spaces. We also welcome the involvement of African urban planners and architects in advocating for public space and rethinking the methodologies of the design response.

The 'Reimagining Public Spaces' learning event, held in partnership with United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), UCLG Africa, KZN Provincial, CoGTA and UN-Habitat, has provided the eThekweni Municipality with the opportunity to reimagine its public spaces in the light of global developments. Jointly with my Co-Chair of the Urban Strategic Planning Committee, Mayor Jose Fortunati of Porto Alegre, Brazil, we will revisit the public space strategies of our municipalities and promote public space as a key structuring element of city development, both within and beyond UCLG. We hope that this publication will act as a catalyst to change thinking on this issue at all levels.

James Nxumalo, Mayor of Durban-eThekweni, South Africa

In Mozambique, at least 80% of our settlements are informal. Generally, the understanding of the concept of public space is limited to markets, roads, parking areas, and sports fields. In Africa as a whole, urban development centred on public space is quite a new concept, and requires a variety of stakeholders to work together. It's about a shift in the strategy and focusing priorities around people's needs, in particular community ideas, to finally overcome the legacy of exclusion.

Mr Luis Perreira

Head of Cadaster Nampula, Mozambique

The aim of this publication is to demonstrate the need for learning exchanges between municipal, regional and international practitioners in order to drive the debate on rethinking and reimagining public spaces.

Public space as a resource has been undervalued.
Public space = Right to the city
WE NEED TO ACT NOW!

This publication captures the main highlights, conclusions and learning outcomes of the event ‘Reimagining Public Spaces’ that was held from 4th-6th, June 2014 in Durban-eThekweni, South Africa.

The event was jointly hosted by eThekweni Municipality (Durban), through the ‘Imagine Durban – Long Term Development Strategy’, CoGTA (Provincial Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs), UCLG, UCLG Africa, and UN-Habitat.

The three-day event attracted over 200 participants including practitioners, NGOs and councillors. The commitment of the city’s politicians, officials and partners was outstanding, and the learning exchange was a milestone for the UCLG South-South exchange, widening recognition of the issue of public space and enabling the city to enter into a new era of commitment.

The following topics will be explored with the aim of providing recommendations to develop an African public space agenda:

1. Why are we interested in public space?
2. Africa and its public spaces
3. International aspirations
4. Public spaces: a strategy to achieve the equitable city
5. Action learning: my public space
6. Lessons learnt
7. The way ahead



I am an architect who uses contemporary art to engage the issue of people in public spaces in South Africa. I believe “freedom has failed us” in our country, due to a completely foreign approach to development which focused on quantity rather than quality. With a qualitative imperative we can start to create meaning in our city. Durban is perfectly poised to become an experimental city in this regard.

*Thought leader Doung Anwar Jahangeer
from NPO dala*

01 WHY ARE WE INTERESTED IN PUBLIC SPACE?



Photo: Doung Anwar Jahangeer from NGO dala

The UCLG Committee on Urban Strategic Planning (USP) is a network for the sharing, application and evaluation of city practices.

In recent years, the Committee has been exploring development strategies for its members with the aim of addressing the strategic elements of urban development and growth (integrated planning). Over the last year, urban form and planning have gained importance, particularly with African members. After the first African walking audit had been held in Rabat and the Walking Charter signed by seven mayors, all members of the Committee, a public space campaign was the next step. Public space was identified as a useful and enriching agenda for the Committee and has been made the priority topic for 2014 and 2015.

In UCLG, we believe that public space policies can be a means to both reshape cities and to improve the quality of life of citizens. Public spaces can make urban areas more attractive and create employment (e.g. through public markets); they can be a tool for inclusion (well-lit streets can contribute to women's sense of safety and freedom to move around the city); and they can also be a space for organizing communities, as well as for cultural expression and diversity. For these reasons, we must stop looking at public space as merely a land use application and advocate for its recognition as a cross-cutting issue of global relevance.

UCLG recalls and subscribes to the fact that:

- Public spaces are a public service and must be accessible and affordable to all citizens.
- The public space debate needs to include a strong participatory approach.
- The public space debate must be included in our global agenda.
- The public space debate must also be included in the global urban agenda and the processes towards Habitat III
- Public space can be a springboard for innovative and creative initiatives by communities and governments. Many ideas and projects on public space are carried out jointly by communities and local governments.



Photo: The Committee's mobilization team (left to right): Thulani Bhengu, Charles Patsika, Puvendra Akkiah, Sara Höflich, and Maria Regina Souza

The learning exchange in Durban has been an encouraging start to overcoming the challenges we face in shifting the public space strategy, bringing about a change in mind-set on the issue, seeing people's needs, rights and duties as a priority and, in particular, focusing on the ideas of the communities we serve.

Driving the public space agenda

UCLG will continue to debate the issue of public space and advocate for its importance in the global agenda. The USP Committee sees this event in Durban as a first step towards further advocacy action, which will be centred on the following points:

- We will address the spatial and social dimensions of managing public space, inspired by the UN-Habitat urban design and planning guidelines (i.e. quantity, quality, access) and the UN-Habitat global toolkit, in which we will highlight the role of local governments.
- We will stress the participatory approaches of “placemaking” and “appropriation” (the use of public spaces, walking, street vending, community actions and health benefits), with particular emphasis on African needs and opportunities.
- We will raise the topic in other regions, in particular in South America and Asia, to foster learning and cooperate with other knowledge platforms. (see also chapter 6)
- We will explore and promote peer-to-peer learning formats on public space between cities and with communities.

We will stress public spaces as part of our [Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City](#)

The *Mayor of Mandimba, Mozambique, Victor Sinoia*, and *Councillor Alexandre Papusseco*, highlighted the challenges that small cities and towns are exposed to with regards to urban growth and public space: “At our level, we only think about roads. People that have arrived recently from rural areas do not consider the importance of parks, pavements, and other elements such as health and well-being. Once the city has grown bigger, this becomes more complicated. I am convinced that if we include the topic in new development or re-development plans people will respond positively.”

UCLG Africa champions and advocates good practices among local governments in Africa. In line with UCLG, it regards the incorporation of public space in urban planning as an essential component in the improvement of living conditions in cities.



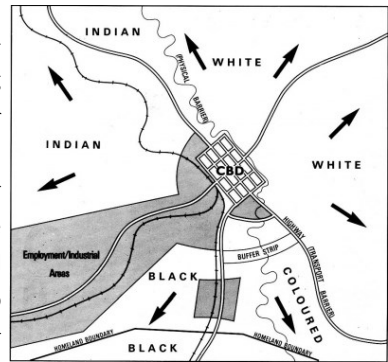
02 AFRICA AND ITS PUBLIC SPACES

Reimagining public spaces – contributing to the African debate

The growing realization of the importance of public space provision and design, especially in urban areas in Africa, is a welcome development. The next 15 years will be crucial for Sub-Saharan Africa, as its urban population is expected to double. This requires immediate reflection and foresight to inform urban planning, especially in light of the sporadic and unplanned nature in which it is likely to occur. African cities are ill-prepared for large population growth in terms of their ability to provide basic services such as housing, water and sanitation. However, the discourse on how African cities can effectively respond to the need for public space cannot be complete without a reflection on their history and how this has affected today's urban settlement patterns.

The historical legacy

As highlighted by Charles Patiska, the historical background of most African cities is similar in that, during colonial times, urban areas were primarily reserved for white ruling minorities. Black Africans were expected to return to their rural homes after the expiry of their physical usefulness as workers in factories, white homes, and farms. African “locations” were designed for temporary occupation and were not expected to be comfortable or encourage over-staying. Hostels for male labourers constructed during colonial times remain in some African countries, notably in South Africa and Zimbabwe. On independence,



http://www.pmbhistory.co.za/?showcontent&global%5B_id%5D=143

most African countries inherited a massive housing backlog as increasing numbers of Africans opted to remain in urban areas rather than retire in their rural homes. The high expectations of a new life after independence, the promise of jobs, and the freedom to live without harassment in the more comfortable central areas drew even more Africans into urban zones.

The response of the post-independence African governments was to accelerate housing construction to meet the ever-growing demand, but unfortunately this was generally a failure, leading to the growth of crowded informal settlements and illegal slums. The accelerated housing programmes, in many instances, lacked good planning strategies that included the provision of public spaces. Moreover, austerity measures promoted by donor countries tended to encourage high-density settlements and gave very little attention to open spaces, which were considered to be too expensive. Streets were designed for vehicles, ignoring the needs of pedestrians. The debate on how to improve quality of life while meeting basic housing needs rarely took centre stage.

Where are we now?

Local (and national) governments need to review their policies on how to deal with slums and informal settlements. As highlighted by colleagues from CoGTA, South Africa has an opportunity to link public space strategies to urban planning policies and promote their development at municipal level.

Having listened to examples from Cape Town, Tshwane and Johannesburg, we encourage efforts to include public spaces in urban planning policies. However, we also recognize that the financial limitations of African cities are an issue. The demand for services must always be matched by the ability to provide them. Due to the paucity of local government resources, the costs of the maintenance of public spaces may increasingly have to be decentralized to communities. This could increase the sense of ownership of public spaces by communities and improve their maintenance and safety, but this is an area that requires further appraisal.

Another important factor is the relationship between informal settlements and informal economic activities. The informal sector has grown at an unprecedented pace and has become the main source of employment in many African urban areas. Such informal economic activities “crowd-out” public spaces even further, depleting the citizens’ enjoyment of these areas. Local governments require foresight in planning for the implications of these informal business activities.

The problem of the so-called “white elephants”, such as markets that are no longer used, must also be tackled, as they are becoming an eyesore in some African cities. This problem reflects a lack of consultation with the intended users of the services.

The Warwick example is an interesting case of how the community organization of vendors can combat this. This market is made up of both formal and informal vendors and lies at the entrance to the main transport hub. It is visited by half a million to a million people daily.

Photo: Doung Anwar Jahangeer from NGO dala



The settlement we focus on is positioned close to the railway station. In the morning, it is a *crèche*, in the afternoon it is an *aftercare* and in the evening a *shebeen*. There is a clash in uses. We have to allow for a little bit of informality in our approach.

Michael Krause, Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) programme, Cape Town

Relevance of public space and the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) in the South African context

All municipalities in South Africa are required by the Municipal Systems Act of 2000 to produce and adopt an IDP. The IDP is the strategic document that details the programmes, projects, associated budgets, and monitoring and evaluation tools for the municipality. Although there are guiding principles, IDP strategies vary between municipalities; therefore, it is increasingly important to review IDPs and create an overarching public space strategy that informs the IDP, in order to ensure consistency with long-term municipal development goals. The assistance of provincial or regional governments is crucial in this regard.

The Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) is responsible for municipal strategic planning and IDPs. By partnering in the learning exchange, **CoGTA** is in a good position to influence the outcomes of the project and to assist other municipalities in the province to create, develop and inform public space policies, which in turn, will inform municipal IDPs. **CoGTA** is also best-placed to ensure that there is a spatial component to public space strategies, and that this is included in the Spatial Development Frameworks (SDF)

Highlighting this example and recalling that many African cities that were founded at cross-roads, participants were reminded by Richard Dobson, Head of NGO *Asiye e Tafuleni Supporting Warwick Market*, that African public spaces should:

- be sensitive to dietary preferences
- encourage urban social cohesion and safety
- showcase creative livelihood strategies
- expand post-apartheid urban transformation
- embrace diverse urban preferences nurturing endemic purpose and aesthetic curiosity

We really enjoyed the learning experience and wish such events were held more often and so accommodating. We have already started sharing some of the good practices we learnt through the interactions and observations. The market and public space policies are of relevance for Malawi's new urban agenda. We will intensify our role in the committee and partnerships.

Dr. Macloud D.A Kadam'manja (PhD)



Photo: Market at Warwick Junction, Durban

Africa's public space agenda and sustainable development

Based on a holistic approach that integrates the four dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social, environmental and cultural), and building on the African historical context, we can view public space as both a spatial and a political issue. Discussions concluded that a new public space agenda must take into account the following elements:

1. Public space and the environment

Parks, among other open green areas, are essential spaces that link the environment and public space. However, insufficient maintenance can become an environmental issue, due to pollution caused by the inappropriate disposal of waste, which can also cause health problems.

Public space is about land and is about **promise!**

Parks and leisure are key elements of the city's quality of life and of the city's economy!

Christo Swart, Deputy Head of Parks, Durban

2. Public space and the economy

Well-developed public spaces play an important role in the increasing competition between southern African cities to attract economic investment. Well-designed and well-managed public spaces have a positive impact on land values and attracts consumers to commercial and retail areas. In the African context, the market is “the historic and original form of economic development”; hence, there should be a focus on public spaces such as streets and squares, train stations and public markets as centres for economic trade, production and consumption.

3. Public space and culture

Culture plays an important role in building inclusive cities and public spaces. Cultural practices also define the nature of public spaces: in the African examples, cultural practices

We should not approach the issue of safety from the top down. If people who inhabit or work in a space are given respect for who they are and what they do, that pride of place is the start of creating safe spaces. Creative initiatives can help to do this. **The poor are creative, it is how they survive.**
Doung Anwar Jahangeer, Thought leader from NPO Dala



Photo: Doung Anwar Jahangeer from NGO dala

such as festivities, leisure activities, gatherings, indigenous medicines and dietary preferences have informed the design of markets and public areas. Public space should thus be viewed as an opportunity to celebrate heritage and culture.

4. Public space, social cohesion and safety

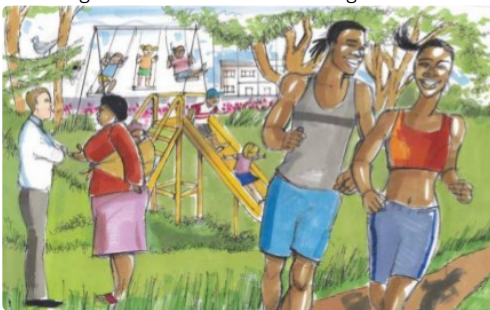
In the post-apartheid context, the social value of public spaces cannot be dismissed. High-quality public spaces also have the potential to host social events that can draw communities together, as well as bring financial, social and environmental benefits. Safety (living without threat or fear) is a fundamental attribute of quality public spaces. Public spaces can be designed in a way that reduces the likelihood of crime or violence, which is particularly important for young people.

Knowledge exchanges are important in order to think strategically about safety, and not only about security. **The UN-Habitat Global Network on Safer Cities was created in 2012 to support cities in the prevention of crime and the enhancement of safety.** As highlighted by Gulelat Kelebe from UN-Habitat, leadership from municipalities is essential in guiding local safety policies.

The experience reported by **Bulumko Nelana** from Johannesburg's 'Corridors of Freedom' project illustrates the new vision of making public space an asset accessible to every citizen, in particular the poor. As a result of the legacy of apartheid, parks and facilities were concentrated in higher income or "white" neighbourhoods and suburbs, while townships were densified

To feel safer, most citizens want to see surveillance, police presence, and people arrested for wrong-doing. Our public space strategy, therefore, has to include the obvious responses to this (patrols, park rangers, police presence and so on). Yet, while citizens have the right to a safe public space: who decides who is undesirable? Those responsible for the development of the city have a greater interest in the marginalized. It comes down to the issue of respect, and whether surveillance plays a limited role in crime prevention. Looking into other uses for parks, such as to promote artistic activities, should mean that spaces are fully utilised by communities, and this will reduce negative influences.

Mr Bulumko Nelana, Johannesburg



with almost no parks or green areas. The 'corridors of freedom' are an attempt to restructure the urban landscape and provide connected green public areas that are accessible to the whole population.



Corridors of Freedom, Johannesburg

03 INTERNATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

In 1950, a third of the world's population lived in cities. Just 50 years later, this proportion rose to half, and is expected to continue to grow to two-thirds, or six billion people, by 2050. In many cities, especially in developing countries, streets, squares, and parks, in particular in the informal city, are chaotic, poorly planned and maintained, if they exist at all. In this context, there are multiple global challenges:

- Lack of public space, especially in informal settlements, increases tension and stress for people who live in crowded and inadequate conditions.
- Lack of planning for public spaces. All over the world, urban sprawl lacking public spaces is occurring. Sometimes builders create “public” spaces that are actually private.
- Lack of public spaces that bring people together. Lack of social diversity can lead to the domination of public spaces by a specific social group. This leads to unwelcoming and unsafe spaces.
- Lack of decision-orientated projects with well-managed multi-stakeholder participation. Public spaces cannot be designed by planners and bureaucrats in a void.

The UN-Habitat toolkit

The UN-Habitat toolkit is based on the **Charter of Public Space** developed by the *Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica* [Italian National Institute of Urbanism] using a participatory approach. It was adopted at the 2013 Biennale of Public Space and has since been applied by the city of Naples. The Charter is aligned with the United Nations 2016 Sustainable Development Goals (previously the MDGs) and the findings of the 2012 State of the World Cities Report, as well as international planning guidelines. The UCLG USP Committee is involved in the processes to develop and implement the public space toolkit and guidelines

The Biennale of Public Space

A Charter of Public Space was signed at the 2013 Biennale of Public Space, a gathering held in Rome every two years in the former municipal abattoir, now converted into a vast public space, and hosted by the Faculty of Architecture of Rome's (*Studi Roma Tre*)

The 2013 Biennale, with the theme “City Experiments”, functioned as a virtual public space. It opened its doors free of charge to about 2,000 participants, such as associations and committees, scholars, students, professionals, entrepreneurs and citizens.

The 2015 Biennale will follow the same open approach. It will conclude in Rome on 21st-24th May 2015. All wishing to take part can consult the website <http://www.biennalespaziopubblico.it>

processes. The creation of the toolkit responds to the fact that, while UN-Habitat has worked on the issue of public space for over 15 years, it has often done so as part of larger programmes on environmental management, urban safety or basic service delivery. Laura Petrella from UN-Habitat recalled that public space has seldom been given the attention it deserves, particularly at local level. As a result, knowledge and tools are not readily available. For this reason, UN-Habitat, in partnership with the *Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica*, among others, has embarked upon developing a 'Resource on Public Space Principles and Practice:

Towards a Global Toolkit', which will contain a set of globally agreed upon principles, defines the public space approach, and is complemented by a selection of case studies and a list of tools. It will be an online resource aimed at local government practitioners and other key stakeholders. UN-Habitat is also mobilizing partners to work with cities around the globe in improving the quality, supply and reach of public spaces. UCLG provided a key contribution to this process by actively participating in an international expert group meeting held in Rome in January 2014.

Interest and expectations

As cities grow and densify, access to well-designed and pleasant public spaces is becoming increasingly important, especially for the most marginalized communities and neighbourhoods, where the importance of communal spaces for health, recreation and socialization is vital. Improving access to good public spaces in vulnerable areas is a powerful tool to improve equity in the city and combat discrimination. Public spaces can also be places where informal commerce can take place in an orderly and legitimate way, providing poorer citizens with precious opportunities to make a living. Public space serves all urban residents, particularly the most vulnerable. In addition, a well-planned, city-wide public space system can create a green network to generate ecological systems and restore environmental connectivity, as well as support bio-diversity in urban areas. Public spaces are generators of income, investment and

The UN-Habitat toolkit is an important instrument that shows urban planners and practitioners the possibility of people-centred development in our cities and towns.

The toolkit is a positive starting point for interaction on the topic, and is open for collaboration from all actors. International standards are important, even if many cities have difficulties meeting them. **However, some questions require further consideration:**

Who are the **key stakeholders** and main actors? Governments, community organizations, universities, networks, professionals?

What happens to **safety, management, maintenance**, etc.? Some issues are not included in the toolkit.

Public space is a **public service**, and should be considered and **budgeted** for as such.

The current version of the toolkit is available on UN-Habitat's Urban Gateway website.

wealth creation, increasing property values, generating additional municipal revenue, promoting environmental and social resilience, as well as contributing added value to the city's cultural, historical and architectural legacy.

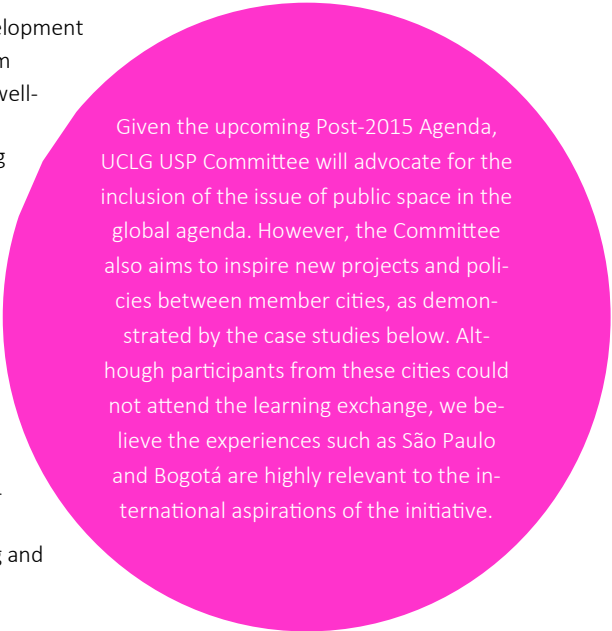
Each city is unique. It has its own identity and characteristics that respond to the particularities of the territory and dwellers. In the same way, geographical, cultural, legal, and economic factors influence the creation and usage of public spaces. UN-Habitat studies have demonstrated that the amount of land allocated to public spaces in developing countries is limited. In many cases, there are no proper mechanisms to ensure its creation, protection and maintenance. The encroachment on existing public spaces aggravates the problem of their limited availability. The privatization of public spaces is a common trend in many countries. This is often an attempt to prevent crime, but ends up creating an even more segregated and fragmented city. Some existing public spaces need to be enhanced and revitalised or modified, while new public spaces will have to be planned and designed as part of new urban extension plans.

There are three broad categories of public space development:

- Urban extension: definition and protection of public space
- Slum-upgrading, urban transformation and densification
- City-wide strategies

Recommendations from the 'Resource on Public Space Principles and Practice: Towards a Global Toolkit' to achieve more, better and more evenly-distributed public spaces in the city include:

- Promoting public space-led development
- Planning public space as a system
- Ensuring that public spaces are well-managed and enjoyed
- Ensuring participation in creating and managing public spaces (i.e. openness, access and sharing)
- Viewing public spaces as a resource
- Adopting city-wide public space strategies and policies for fast-growing and resource-poor cities
- Integrating public spaces as a slum-upgrading strategy
- Incorporating public space in national urban policies
- Promoting peer-to-peer learning and collaboration



Given the upcoming Post-2015 Agenda, UCLG USP Committee will advocate for the inclusion of the issue of public space in the global agenda. However, the Committee also aims to inspire new projects and policies between member cities, as demonstrated by the case studies below. Although participants from these cities could not attend the learning exchange, we believe the experiences such as São Paulo and Bogotá are highly relevant to the international aspirations of the initiative.

Case study: São Paulo transforms its public policy with neighbourhood equipment and new parklets

São Paulo, Brazil, is partnering with Durban, South Africa, in an initiative to renew and apply social housing policies in neighbourhoods. The partnership enables Durban to use São Paulo's experience of upgrading slums and neighbourhoods, and build on their innovative planning and design perspective. New examples of socially-rooted designs emerge every day in this metropolis, where outdoor cinemas, public meeting points and public spaces are created and are accessible to the entire population. Due to social inclusion and participation processes, the sense of ownership of the spaces by communities is high. A main lesson from the partnership is that projects that only provide housing are inadequate; investments in community services and public spaces are also required to improve neighbourhood life.




Another example of São Paulo's urban transformation is their innovative use of the spaces assigned for parking in front of shops. Shop owners who build a parklet outside their premises have priority with regards to its usage, but they can be used by anyone. Signals are provided to make it clear that the parklet is a public space, which attracts people, not cars.



Case study: Bogotá, Colombia

In the Colombian city of Bogotá the division between rich and poor had long been ingrained in the city's fabric, with many parts of the city suffering from economic and geographic isolation. Over the last 20 years, the city's mayors have built on an educational urban strategy and embarked on a city-wide campaign to use public space and transportation systems to bridge the social gap and create opportunities for all citizens. Some central policies and activities of the strategy are:

- An educational campaign around the philosophy “public space is sacred - RES PUBLICA” that counted on ground-breaking innovative communication and “team building” with citizens.
- Transforming streets into Ciclovías. Each Sunday and on holidays, for several hours, most of the city's main avenues are closed to cars and open to cycling, walking, and recreation activities. City leaders also cracked down on pavement parking: they pedestrianized two of the main streets in the city centre.
- Developing the TransMilenio bus rapid transit system, aiding the 1.4 million people that use the system daily.
- Increasing green space and playing fields in neighbourhoods. The result has been a decrease in crime and gang activity and an increase in healthy outdoor activities.



The *Parque de la Reconciliación* is an example of new public space created within a focus of inclusion in the city of Bogotá.



Inspired by our Latin American and European counterparts, we recognize that it is imperative to reflect on public space in African cities, where rapid urban development is taking place. As local government practitioners, we see that there has been a growing recognition of the need to begin to explore new and more creative ways of thinking about planning for and implementing public space management.

Yusuf Patel, South African Planning Institute

Institutionally, the city has a public space department that is responsible for policies and designer and user guidelines for public space. Their Institute of Urban Development (IDU) has the mission to develop sustainable projects to improve mobility in terms of equity, integration, safety and access for the inhabitants of Bogotá. This helps to link public space projects to the infrastructure strategies in addition to the traditional land-use and environmental agendas.

The new territorial development plan (POT), besides “transit-oriented development”, foresees measures for mitigating climate change. The key objectives are to consolidate a compact city and reduce the pressure of urbanization along the urban borders and areas that are essential to ecosystem. Regulations are planned to:

- Develop and implement actions and projects associated with the Integrated Public Transport System (SITP) in order to accelerate a positive urban transformation process in coordination with systems that support public space.
- Give priority to sustainable non-motorized transport systems, strengthening the cycle routes and constructing new walkway networks that encourage safety.
- Impose a system of impact fees for new developments in central areas to ensure that densification accompanies the generation of new public spaces, parks and urban services financed by private projects, under the principle of co-responsibility.

UCLG recalls that public space strategies can also be part of **decentralized cooperation** processes. Examples of this include:



Photo: Liaisons Urbaines,
http://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2014/05/29/liaisons_urbaines.html

The Reemdgogo Music Garden, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

This project focuses on the artistic and professional education of the city's youth. It links culture to the social cohesion and urban construction of the city. This project is an illustration of the interaction between public space, participation and culture.



Photo: Liaisons Urbaines,
http://www.domusweb.it/en/architecture/2014/05/29/liaisons_urbaines.html

Liaisons Urbaines, Porto-Novo, Benin

This programme is focused on the improvement and transformation of public spaces through site-specific, rapid and inexpensive interventions involving local communities, cultural operators and local governments in conjunction with designers and visual artists.

It focuses on small-scale operations, such as neighbourhood interventions, aiming to improve and reintegrate everyday spaces that play a central role in the social, economic and cultural activities by promoting their collective uses and practices and their cultural heritage.

04 PUBLIC SPACES: A STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE THE EQUITABLE CITY

Public space and the equitable city - a new, public-space-led style of urban governance

UCLG asked Pietro Garau, International Curator of the Biennale of Public Space and INU Project Leader for the INU/UN-HABITAT partnership on public space, to contribute a “think piece” for the eThekweni event and to deliver it in the form of a keynote address on the “Equitable City”. The full speech is available on the UCLG website, with highlights below.

The concept of inequality has achieved increased attention since leading economists (Lansley, 2012; Stiglitz, 2013) demonstrated the positive relationship between equity and economic growth. We also know that, in an increasingly urban world, any change in our cities will determine our planet’s liveability. Therefore, equity in our cities is a fundamental driver of sustainable development.

Pietro Garau argued that equity, besides being a powerful driver of sustainability, is also a fundamental goal in itself; and that a good way of achieving the “equitable city” is to adopt a public-space-centred urban strategy. Public space is where all citizens, regardless of their income and personal circumstances, can feel equal and cared for. Unfortunately, the quality and supply of public spaces varies dramatically between and within most cities

The use of public spaces as an organizing principle for urban form and well-being can inspire positive opportunities for a new style of urban governance. This new urban governance can be nurtured and supported by a host of useful tools. Among them are city-wide surveys of the supply, quality and distribution of public spaces, in order to determine priority areas and sectors of intervention. Possible policies include: city-wide urban plans with a clear focus on public space; advance public purchase of land for future urban development, reserving fair shares of public space for various uses; mechanisms for land and building rights trade-offs; maintenance-oriented design; encouragement of temporary public space uses of idle land; participation of citizens in all aspects of public space development, such as planning, design, resourcing, maintenance and enjoyment (the “citifier” concept); mobilization of resources through fair and efficient taxation of private property; the capture of unearned land value rises due to public investment and incentives for private sector involvement in public space development and management.

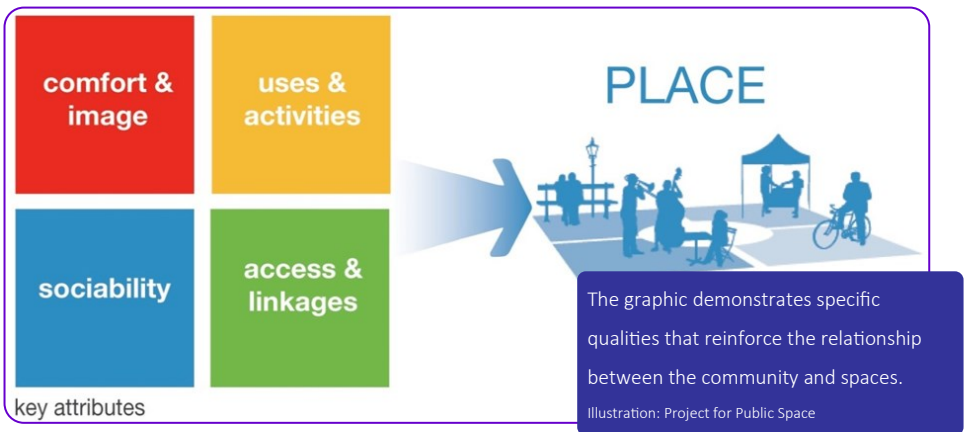
“The keynote address the agenda a step forward by linking the goal of equality to the supply, quality and fair distribution of public spaces in cities, and by outlining the fundamental role that public space can play in inclusion and a more forward-looking approach to urban development on the part of local governments.”

*Sibusiso Sithole, City Manager
eThekweni Durban*

05 ACTION LEARNING: MY PUBLIC SPACE

On the second day of the public spaces learning exchange, Ethan Kent and Vanessa September from Project for Public Spaces (PPS) facilitated a workshop for Durbanites and guests to reflect on the transformation and revaluation of Durban's public spaces. Building on the discussions of the first day, they introduced a framework, a set of principles and engagement tools to improve public spaces for the communities they serve.

The session began with an overview of the concept of “placemaking” and international examples of its implementation. “Placemaking” is about creating **places where people want to be**. Its focus is on improving public spaces through community-based processes aimed at maximizing their shared value. Parks, squares, and streets should feel **comfortable and offer a wealth of amenities**; waterfronts should be the face of a city; and markets and cultural facilities should anchor local economies. Equally important is how these **destinations connect and interplay**, supporting and complementing each other rather than struggling in isolation.



At the workshop, a series of participatory exercises was held to demonstrate practices for future planning processes. “The Power of Ten”, for example, is a framework that aims to focus placemaking initiatives at neighbourhood, city or regional level. Our experience of the physical environment is defined and enhanced by great places and the things we do in them, yet we seldom focus on creating great places and **defining them around uses**. A great place typically has at least 10 things to do in it; a great neighbourhood or district also has at least 10 great places; and a great city or region has a least 10 of these great districts, plus other major destinations. A community can quickly determine its strengths and prioritize a path forward by thinking about places that are special and that represent the greatest opportunities. This simple, common sense idea can be transformative for evaluating and strategically improving an entire city or region.

Jonathan Edkins and Bram van Heerden— Chief Architect and Engineer – explained the focus and outreach of the eThekwin central business district (CBD) regeneration project.

The following indicators show some of the challenges currently faced in the CBD that the project hopes to improve:

- Unstable social fabric: the majority of citizens living in CBD are between 20 and 30 years old, and 35% are not economically active.
- Downturn in investment: over 20% of the rentable area is vacant.

The inner city is an engine of the regional economy, which formally employs over 845, 000 people and requires significant investment. Yet, over the past 10 years, public sector investment has been much greater than private investment in this area.

The following key points inform the inner city revitalisation programme:

- The municipality needs to facilitate private sector investment.
- The hub of services needs to be promoted and supported, and the development of tertiary sectors facilitated.
- Plans should seek to develop or reinforce activity in districts which have a particular focus (e.g. a tourism district, an entertainment culture precinct, a creative industries precinct, a maritime district, etc.).
- Key parcels of land within the inner city should be unlocked for developments that create employment.

However, some of the Inner City Management programmes are already facing barriers because of misunderstandings and concerns regarding how people will be treated in the inner city.

“The Place Game” took small groups to different sites to evaluate and develop short- and long-term action plans for key public spaces in Durban. The concept of “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper” was also introduced as a tool for shifting the culture to place-led implementation. The day closed with a discussion of the possible obstacles when applying placemaking in Durban and African cities, with participants split into small groups to develop action plans for overcoming each obstacle.

Reimagining eThekwin-Durban

The following are examples of methodologies and questions explored in the learning exchange that aim to initiate change by focusing urban planning on public spaces. They follow the notion that spaces have the potential to shape the city and improve the way we work with one another.



1. The place game: which are the best places in Durban?

- Participants in the workshop were asked to evaluate different places within Durban city centre and rate them in order to identify places that present opportunities for future development in the short- and long-term. The documentation of “good” and “bad” places also allows for the identification of perceptions and positive and negative values that create an important framework for the design and evaluation of public space projects.

- Participants in the workshop agreed that the places demonstrating opportunity and the “best” places were the same. Although perception of what makes a place great is dependent on many factors – class, race, gender, age – and participants did not

fully reflect this diversity, there was a general consensus on Durban’s “best” places.

- The Moses Mabhida Soccer Stadium and uShaka Marine Entertainment Theme Park were the places highlighted by the non-Durbanites. However these places are not easily accessible to all citizens.
- All of the “best” places highlighted by Durban citizens were related to the confluence of people. For example, the beachfront, a large open space where the population can gather at any time (and access for free).
- The “worst” spaces were associated with specific social problems like illegal drug consumption and prostitution, such as some areas around the harbour and close to the bus terminal.
- The central business district was voted as both the best and worst area, and as an area of opportunity. Discussions about transforming streets into pedestrian corridors to improve this area are ongoing. However, public investments have been prioritized in other areas which has slowed down regeneration plans.
- LED street lighting and public investments in the Florida Road area have generated investment opportunities, although this is classed as a best place for leisure for higher income groups.

2. What are the main initiatives of reference in eThekweni-Durban?

The group exercise aiming to answer this question reflected on the key attributes, their positive impact and challenges that are relevant to the Durban area.

Initiatives	Challenge s
Long-term changes have occurred in magic spots like the beach front, including the implementation of entertainment activities, events, a play area, a gym area, and better signage.	Requires leadership and broad support until the interventions are understood.
Safety and inclusion are top priorities. The cultural activities available, like music, sports and leisure, support integration.	However, the racial divide and apartheid legacy must be overcome in neighbourhoods.
In some areas, in particular in the city centre, local partnerships and local talent could develop side by side and make the space “innovative”, a “place to be”.	Gentrification may become an issue.
Getting businesses to ‘Adopt a Spot’ has increased the popularity of public places, as well as the perception of safety.	The crime rate continues to be too high. More public investment in cleanliness and lighting would aid a better perception of the safety of public spaces.
Small or informal businesses that are concentrating in specific spots like Warwick are accepted and perceived as relatively safe.	Opportunities might have been missed due to the permission given for the privatization of spaces (e.g. shopping centres).



3. What are some of the greatest obstacles to successful public spaces in Durban?

- Areas of too high or too low density. The central business district (CBD) is a very compact space in the city, whereas most neighbourhoods follow the urban pattern of low density and urban sprawl.
- The public transport system does not cover all areas of the city. Therefore, public space cannot be enjoyed by all citizens.



- Lack of effective collaboration and communication among public, private and community actors.

- Crime and safety are mainly addressed in the short term through control-based strategies. This is difficult to sustain in the long term.

- The CBD has no activity at night; there is a problem of use at specific times of the day.



- Community mobilization and civil society engagement require government resources as well as leadership from politicians.

- The issue of “walkability” for the majority of the population. Many streets still do not have pavements or pedestrians areas

- Since public space is not recognized as a public service and therefore does not have a permanent budget, there is a lack of maintenance of public spaces and a lack of adequate resources to develop areas through small-scale projects.



4. The concept of development evolution

PPS categories the differing mind-sets on the perception and development of public spaces.



The concept of “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper”, explored during the learning exchange, is a tried and tested hyper-local development framework. It provides a low risk and low cost option, capitalizes on the creative energy of the local community and efficiently generates new uses and revenue for places in transition. Where traditional expert-led and project-driven development tends to emulate big capital projects and top-down solutions, “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper” starts with short-term and low-cost improvements, to test and build momentum for longer-term capacity to sustain development.

5. Ideas nurturing Durban’s strategies for the transformation of public spaces:

- Design squares and parks as multi-use destinations. The multi-use of a place makes it more effective (i.e. combined educational and health care facilities).
- Build local economies. Durban has made efforts to integrate informal street vendors into the formal economy.
- Improve design to support public spaces as short- and long-term strategies. For example, the construction of temporal structures or pocket parks.

- Overcome the apartheid legacy through civic education and participation.
- Utilize public space in support of public health efforts. Health campaigns and community work are also important components of a safer city.
- Reinvent community planning with the people, not just for the people.
- Create a public space agenda with defined responsibilities and funding.

6. What can be done in the short term?

- More seating
- Maintenance of public spaces
- Civic and educational activities; using campaigns that look at international best practices for ideas on how to transform these spaces.
- Look into noise levels and leisure activities that are negatively affecting neighbouring areas.
- Address conflicts on the use of different public spaces.

The placemaking approach in Durban can be summarized by the slogan “the community is the expert.” Strong local partnerships are essential to the process of creating dynamic, healthy public spaces that serve the people. Each place, each culture, is unique. Questions of societal norms, climate and tradition must all be considered. Every culture needs to find the tools and approaches that work for them.



06 LESSONS LEARNT

Some important takeaways from the learning exchange

Participants agreed that the exchange created new opportunities to learn and to challenge existing mind-sets and assumptions about public space. International and national thought leaders and panellists inspired participants with new ideas, while round-table discussions and informal meetings at lunch or on the bus gave practitioners the space to share their opinions and engage in debates. Action learning on the second day, through facilitated on-site sessions where participants used all their senses to assess the quality of public spaces, also worked well to stimulate them to rethink their notions of functional public spaces.

They key takeaways that stood out for participants and that could serve to inform policy debates and inspire action are:

1. There is an urgent need for greater clarity about the concept of public space

Perhaps one of the reasons the public space agenda has not been actively championed in African cities is that there has not been any concerted effort to address exactly what constitutes public space: how is it defined, who uses it and why? The Durban learning exchange created a platform to finally begin this debate. The first lesson was that, moving forward, it is important to have a clear notion of what public space is, and its contribution to creating a more equitable city. This notion must be shared, not only by municipal officials, but by all city stakeholders.

2. Public space as a resource has been undervalued. It is up to us to reclaim this resource and act now!

In reflecting on the value of public space from social, cultural, spatial, environmental and economic perspectives, participants acknowledged that, generally, local government practitioners have been doing a disservice to citizens by not actively promoting the public space agenda. Practitioners accepted that we cannot continue as we have been doing.

In addition, in recognizing the transformative role of public space – given the histories of colonialism, under-development and exclusionary and segregated public spaces in many of our cities – speaker after speaker called for a change in how we see public spaces. All accepted the need for innovation and resilience as we re-imagine public spaces and reassert their value and potential to shape our cities, our culture and even improve the way we relate to one another.

Taking the public space agenda forward in our respective municipalities means designing clear visions, deciding on public space champions and developing action plans as a matter of urgency.

3. Putting people first

The penny dropped for many participants who were moved by stirring and passionate pleas from non-governmental organizations and international thought leaders to recognise that, as city planners, we sometimes forget that people must remain at the centre of all our initiatives. The message rang home that it takes a place to create a community and a community to create a place. Participants accepted that public spaces can be used as spaces to build a culture of citizenship and local values. 'Putting people first' means that cities need to be aware of existing traditional practices in public spaces. Hence, new attitudes to trading and cooking on city pavements should be developed and assimilated into city planning.

4. Recognizing the art of placemaking

Inspired by the presentation of the Project for Public Spaces initiative and the day-long action-learning field visit, all participants acknowledged the need for more active placemaking. If we build our city spaces to be more comfortable, then many other challenges in city building will fall into place. It was also accepted that what attracts people most are other people. Therefore, diversity, creativity, culture and heritage are values that African cities need to acknowledge, because these will help to create innovative strategies.

5. Making our bureaucracy work for us: changing policies, structures and systems

Whilst the need to innovate was accepted, one of the striking observations was the frustration of city officials who attempted to try new things, but were obstructed by systems, structures and policies.

Whilst legislation and regulations remain a challenge, practitioners were encouraged to take risks with these spaces. Practitioners were reminded that they must be willing to accept that some projects will work and others won't, and that high risk projects should be taken on at a low cost.

6. Maximizing and leveraging existing resources for public space development and management

Another common theme emerging from the learning exchange was that funding will always be a challenge. What is important is to explore innovative ways that can lever other resources from the private sector and other funding agencies. Public-private partnerships and other creative financing mechanisms need to be explored in order to fund public space projects.

7. Connecting policy and planning frameworks with action

Useful presentations from national government representatives on Urban Integrated Development Frameworks and how they promote safety, as well as from international and national agencies on the importance of urban design frameworks, made clear the urgent need to put public space at the centre of policy and planning frameworks. The challenge will be to ensure that these frameworks for an enabling environment are translated into action.

8. No one size fits all solution: the need for tailor-made responses, given that many African cities face the challenge of the urban-rural divide

Solutions have to be tailor-made to suit the local context. This point was reiterated throughout the learning exchange. Constructive feedback was given on the UN toolkit on public space, including the need to actively factor in rural communities and urban-rural circular migration. It was agreed that whilst good practices could be shared, local creativity and home-grown solutions were the most important tools.

9. The importance of engagement and networking

The learning exchange reinforced the need to share, network and be open to new ideas and voices. Unlike previous exchanges, this session invited local NGOs to share their insights and perspectives. Participants felt that this created new value and that it should be continued at future events.



The learning exchanges are evolving. Formerly, they concentrated on showing and sharing the areas that the host city was best in. Now, they tend to focus more on the topic the city wants to learn about, so that peers, city leaders and the community can come together to reflect, debate and give each other strategic feedback.

Sara Hoeflich, UCLG

Photo (left to right): Pietro Garau, Laura Petrella, James Nxumalo, Sibusiso Sithole, Sara Höflich, Thulani Bhengu

07 THE WAY AHEAD

The UCLG public space roadmap and its contributions to the Porto Alegre Municipality



In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in public spaces. A transformation process is underway, fuelling international discussions on urban matters. We are seeing a revival within the planning field, and if there was ever a moment to influence this area, it is now!

The Porto Alegre administration has a strong interest in engaging in these discussions and in working alongside partners. As Co-Chair of the UCLG Strategic Planning Committee, Porto Alegre would like to further develop public space strategies, mainly in terms of rethinking the way cities are being urbanized, but also by reinforcing their current work linking citizenship to public spaces.

The joint efforts being made with eThekweni Municipality, our Co-Chair of the USP Committee, have great potential. Both cities have made remarkable improvements, but in relation to different issues and within different realities: Porto Alegre is the protagonist of participatory budgeting, while Durban implemented MILE, the Municipal Institute of Learning. There are many experiences to share and many great ideas to collaborate on that will drive the develop-

ment of a global agenda on public space within UCLG.

The starting point in Porto Alegre is the belief that to talk about public spaces is to talk about people. Good public spaces can act as powerful social and political arenas, and local governments are the ones who must create them. However, in institutional terms, how do we make this happen? How can we shift people's mind-sets about the way they are behaving in public spaces? As an attempt to showcase some practical examples, we will explore three specific initiatives from our range of current planning procedures:

Including the voice and the needs of people is also a strong force for citizens' education, in terms of their involvement in urban affairs, and the collective awareness of urban development.

*Maria Regina Rau de Souza,
Prefecture of Porto Alegre*

1. Participatory budgeting: public spaces as spaces of democratic participatory practices and social inclusion.

This is an opportunity to provide a better quality of life to those who usually do not have access to all urban benefits. Equity has become an important issue; an equitable society is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development.

2. Municipality in the community: where the work on public areas helps to build a culture of citizenship, local values and co-responsibilities.

A form of citizen engagement in development is the use of public spaces as an arena in which to make demands. It is a way to build the capacity of the community to create and to improve social bonds. We must tap into the energy that is already there!

3. Transfer of development rights: as a form of auto-financing the city.

The issue of public spaces is linked to city administration and management. It is not common for the cost of maintaining public spaces to be taken into account upfront. We need resources to mobilize public spaces, and also to mobilize people around them. Historically, property taxes are the most important revenue for governments. We are working on alternative funding sources, such as the transfer of development rights through auctioning. This is seen as a promising funding tool.

Local governments have the capacity to contribute to the development of international agendas on public spaces.

We must take up opportunities to influence policies and planning initiatives in this regard. Public space is the founding principle of civilization. Looking back as far as the ancient Greeks, it is in public spaces, the city's Agora, that we find the roots of democratic life. "We, local leaders in UCLG, commit to continuing this organic and historical bond between public spaces, democracy and freedom."

Next steps towards the Committee's agenda on public spaces

The municipality of Porto Alegre will provide a platform, in particular for Latin American cities, to exchange, reflect and position themselves on the issue of public space. The next meeting is scheduled for October 2014. Through this event, UCLG also envisages future partnerships with the Latin American Mercociudades network, UN-Habitat and organizations or foundations active in public space promotion, such as the centre for contemporary culture in Barcelona.

Further, the Charter of Public Space will be promoted throughout the UCLG network in order to motivate, strengthen commitment and monitor the initiatives of member cities.

The Committee will participate in more expert discussions organized by UN-Habitat in September 2014 in Buenos Aires and in March 2015 in Puerto Rico. UCLG and the Committee will continue to support the advocacy of UN-Habitat in making public space a focus of attention and governance for the coming decade. We hope to provide inputs on the issue of public spaces in metropolitan areas, peripheries and intermediary cities in the process towards Habitat III.

Concrete steps for implementation and follow-up.

Immediately after the event, eThekweni-Durban's Inner City Renewal Team **activated Step One** of the project's vision for a pedestrian priority zone along Dr Pixely ka Seme. An exhibition detailing the project and outlining the plans for a 400-metre stretch of Durban's inner city to be repurposed and turned into a green space, showcases that it is possible for people who live and work in the city to relax, exercise and play.

Showing its commitment to public spaces, the city leadership team, comprising the Municipal Manager, Mr Sibusiso Sithole and his Deputy City Managers held their weekly team meeting in the linear park, in the city centre's main street.



CREDITS

Event organization and methodology design: Durban, UCLG, MILE, Imagine Durban, CoGTA, PPS

Coordination: Sara Hoeflich de Duque, UCLG

Editing and layout: Fezile Njokweno, Tara Katti, Lina Gast

Photographs: Fezile Njokweno, Ethan Kent, Doung Anwar Johangeer.

Links and further information: www.uclg.org, MILE website

Contributors:

Charles Patsika, UCLG-Africa

Sogen Moodley, Senior Manager, MILE eThekweni

Doung Anwar Jahangeer, NPO dala

Thulani Bhengu, CoGTA

Laura Petrella, UN-Habitat

Ethan Kent, Project for Public Spaces

Puvendra Akkiah, UCLG USP Committee, Durban

Fezile Njokweni, MILE eThekweni

Pietro Garau, INU Italy

Maria Regina Rau de Souza, UCLG USP Committee, Porto Alegre

Diego Cala, Bogotá

Cecilia Anderson, UN-Habitat

Bongumusa Zondo, Imagine Durban

Re-imagining Public Spaces

June 2014

Speakers:

Mayor James Nxumalo
Mr Sibusiso Sithole
Mrs Sara Hoeflich
Mr Sogen Moodley
Prof Pietro Garua
Mrs Laura petrella
Mr Christo Swart
Mr Guy Redman
Mr Charles Patsika
Mr Dhoung Jahangeer
Mr D Naidoo
Ms Lindsay Bush
Mr Richard Dobson
Mrs Monique Marks
Mr Puvendra Akkiah
Mr Ethan Kent
Mrs Vanessa September
Mr Thulani Bhengu
Mr Siyabonga Manyanga
Dr Modjadji Malahlela
Mr Terence Smith
Mr Micheal Krause
Ms Jacquie Subban
Mr Martin Xaba
Mr Bulumko Nelana
Ms Maria Regina Souza
Mr Juma Assiagio



UCLG AFRICA
United Cities and Local Governments of Africa
Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis d'Afrique
CGLU AFRIQUE



UN HABITAT
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

With the support of

