

Buenos Aires 1-3 September 2014
Streets as Public Spaces and Drivers of Urban Prosperity

“We managed to do it because we did not know that doing it was impossible”
(A veteran activist in a Buenos Aires slum at the fifth World Urban Forum, Rio de Janeiro)

“Conseguimos hacerlo porque no sabíamos que hacerlo era imposible”
(Una activista veterana de una miseria vieja en Buenos Aires,
Quinto Foro Urbano Mundial, Río de Janeiro)

INU Workshop

“Public Space in the Global Agenda for Sustainable Urban Development: From Principles to Practice. Preparing for the 2015 Biennial on Public Space”

REPORT

Pietro Garau and Alice Siragusa

Buenos Aires, 3 September 2014



Public Spaces are about Sharing.
Argentina’s “Hierba Mate” can be a symbolic representation of this concept.

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Duration:	4 and half hours
Location:	Rio Parana room
Expected participants:	30-50
Documentation:	UN-HABITAT's Draft Public Space Toolkit (on line) Charter of Public Space (printed versions in Spanish and English)
Working Language:	English and Spanish
Coordinators:	Pietro Garau and Alice Siragusa, INU/Biennial of Public Space

Background

The Global Public Space Toolkit by UN-Habitat and INU was presented at the 7th World Urban Forum in Medellin in April 2014.

After this presentation, Future of Places organizers suggested that a workshop on the Toolkit be organized at the Future of Places Conference in Buenos Aires.

Objective

The main goal was to share with workshop participants the rationale, main contents and potential uses of the "Global Public Space Toolkit", promoted by UN-Habitat and developed in partnership with the Italian National Planning Institute (INU). The Toolkit is in the final stage of preparation, and plans are being made for its translation into Spanish. One of the Toolkit's main thrusts is the connection, illustrated by real-life examples, between the general principles contained in the Charter of Public Space adopted by the Biennial of Public Space and the constraints and opportunities for the creation, management and enjoyment of public space in cities. The workshop offered presenters and participants an opportunity to share their experiences from Latin America and other regions of the world in improving the supply, quality and distribution of public space, and to offer suggestions on the most effective strategies for the dissemination, use and on-line enrichment of the Toolkit. Information was be offered on modalities for participating in the concluding event of the 2015 Biennial of Public Space, which will take place in Rome from 21-24 May. .

SPEAKERS

12:30pm – 12:45pm

Workshop presentation

Alice Siragusa, National Institute of Urbanism (INU, Italy)

12:45pm – 1pm

The Global Toolkit as a means to use and broaden public-space networks

Thomas Melin, Head of the Office of External Relations, UN-Habitat

1pm – 1:20 pm

The Global Public Space Toolkit: genesis, architecture, potential

Pietro Garau, International Curator, Biennial of Public Space and INU Team Leader Global Public Space Toolkit

1:20pm – 1:40pm

Streets as public spaces: good (and less good) practices in Latin America

Andrés Borthagaray, Director of Strategic Planning in the City of Buenos Aires and Director of the Latin American program of the City on the Move Institute, IVM

1:40pm – 2pm

They said it would not work: two case studies

Juan Pedro Urruzola, Director of Planning, Montevideo (Uruguay)

3pm - 3:20 pm

Supporting public space development through the intermediate city planning

Bruno Reinhimer, Director of Territorial Planning, Santa Fè Province (Argentina)

3:20pm – 4pm

Discussion: posting comments

General comments on presentations

Suggestions for workshop's group work

Suggested theme(s) for the 2015 Biennial of Public Space

4pm – 4:45 Working Groups discussion on different topics

Group 1 The Global toolkit: suggestion for additional good practices

Group 2 How the Charter of Public Space can be linked to national and local policy agendas?

4:45pm - 5 pm WGs work presented and conclusions

PRESENTATIONS

Thomas Melin praised the value of the partnership between UN-Habitat and INU and the Biennial of Public Space. The Charter of Public Space resulted out of this partnership was a valuable document, already widely known and used. UN-Habitat was looking forward to the next Biennial of Public Space in 2015 as another milestone in the roadmap towards Habitat III.

Pietro Garau illustrated the genesis of the Global Toolkit on Public Space as a pillar of INU/UN-HABITAT cooperation, the interactive process followed in its drafting, its rationale and main present structure. He stressed that comments to the draft toolkit made available at the Conference and posted on the UN-Habitat urban gateway web page were welcome as UN-HABITAT was proceeding to the finalization of the toolkit's printed version. The toolkit would remain a live product as its online version was expected to be continuously revised and enriched. With regard to the concluding event of the III Biennial of Public Space, to be held in Rome on 21-24 May 2015, participants were invited to be part of the preparatory process, suggesting theme(s), signalling their own activities for publication in the Biennial's web site, participating in the concluding event and, if they so wished, proposing workshops or seminars to be held during the May 2015 event.

Andres Borthagaray outlined the importance of streets as public spaces. Streets cover 80% of public space in cities. It was crucial to deal with them as public spaces and not just as transport corridors and parking places. Gender should be taken into consideration in organizing urban mobility. Streets also were to be considered not just as physical spaces but also as places of cultural and social identity. These concepts were developed in the book "Ganar la calle" soon to be translated into iEnglish and on the www.ganarlacalle.org website.

Bruno Reinhimer described the original approach of enabling public space development by building up planning capacity and fostering participatory approaches in intermediate cities thorough programmes spearheaded by the Argentinian province of Santa Fè. The programme was carried out in partnership with international organizations, including the United Cities and Local Governments organization (UCLG).

Juan Pedro Urruzola described two surprisingly successful public space projects in Montevideo, borne out of the city's participatory budgeting policies and its emphasis on improving public space and facilities in deprived urban areas. Fears of abandonment, vandalism and neglect were swept over by huge levels of use by local and city residents and a new sense of ownership of public space as a public good.

WORKSHOP WORKING GROUP REPORTS

1 - Toolkit

Despite the fact that the organizers had wisely included the last draft of the toolkit in the pen drive provided at registration, hardly anybody had had a chance to read it. Therefore, participants in the working group were asked to come up with a topic or issue they considered important and that the toolkit should not ignore.

One observation, offered by one of the workshop's presenters, was that the toolkit should devote even more attention to streets, which constitute about 80 per cent of urban public space. It was important to avoid streets being suffocated by car traffic, car parking and speculative actions.

Other observations were the following:

- Public space creation, management and enjoyment was impeded by out-dated building and planning codes.
- Public space should be considered a right.
- Toolkit should become a "button to push" for fresh, reliable information.
- Efforts should be made to use public spaces and their facilities as opportunities to overcome diffidence, fear and mistrust (the "sitting in a bench next to a stranger" example)
- The toolkit should not be a technical manual, nor simply a collection of good practices: the importance of context should not be ignored.
- Serious investigation was essential. Too many public space projects are conducted without serious and in-depth analysis and though a superficial design approach.
- Toolkit should include tools for participatory processes.
- Participatory processes could be validated through community-grounded mechanisms, such as "social observatories".
- Cities kept making mistakes. We should learn from them in order not to repeat them.
- Emphasize little, modest things, vs. large, ambitious showcase projects.
- Design should be concerned with the project's entire life cycle.
- There should be more working group exchanges following the workshop's format. ("Hacer Esto").
- The toolkit should teach us that it is important to "see the world" to know our own place better.

2 – Charter of Public Space

A second group of workshop participants-worked on the *Charter of Public Space*, which had been provided both in English and in Spanish.

The main observations were:

- The **gender issue** should be introduced and strengthened.
- The **European Landscape Convention** should be treated in more detail both in the Toolkit and in the Charter. The new concept of landscape should be considered, including the notion of place. Landscape is a heritage that should be preserved.

- Attention should be paid to the difference between private/public ownership of public spaces and private/public uses of them.
- Public space is a **three- dimensional space**. Facades and street- level activities are part of this three-dimensional nature.
- Some participants proposed that for particular public spaces, such as museums, a **minimum fees or a donation** could be apply, in order to make them economically sustainable. Public spaces such as museums should not be for profit, but not for free.
- **Community gardens** should be considered public spaces, as they are a new and participative kind of public space.
- Regarding the **methodology followed in the Charter's drafting process**, it would help to specify it should be clear who are the authors of the charter, what expertise has been involved, and for whom is was written.
- **Participation** and appropriation processes in managing and designing public spaces should be encouraged by local authorities.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Alejandra serrudo
2. Alejandro Viana
3. Alfosnso Arcos
4. Alice Siragusa
5. Allo Manuel
6. Ana Maria Compagnoni
7. Anais Asselin
8. Andrés Borthagaray
9. Ariel Garicoits
10. Ashley Edlund
11. Berverence Tamen
12. Brenda Hunt
13. Bruno Reinhimer
14. Cecilia Martinez
15. Cinthia Iglesias
16. Cira Szklowin
17. Claudia Zuleqka Vidal Ramirez
18. Daniel Bortolin
19. Daniel Scarfo
20. Diego Gentiel
21. Elizabeth Rosenstein
22. Enrique Acosta
23. Fabiana Escobar
24. Gabriel Padilla
25. Imagen Richmond-Bishop
26. Javier Delgado
27. Juan Pedro Urruzola
28. Lea Champagne
29. Lorena Perez
30. Luisa Bravo
31. Luiz Carlos Viera Filio
32. Maej Nyksic
33. Marcela Lamas
34. Mariana Giusti
35. Marice Chael
36. Martha Alonso
37. Martin Ruano
38. Mora Liaño
39. Natalia Armas
40. Nikolai Elneser Montiel
41. Norman Garrick
42. Pablo Flores Brañez
43. Patricia P. Cabillos Lopez
44. Paulo Ragal

45. Pietro Garau
46. Radouda Assaf
47. Rafael Tuts
48. Santiago Gandarea
49. Santiago Marcilese
50. Semeeha Sheth
51. Susana Egiua
52. Thomas Melin
53. Vanina Perretta Del Missier
54. Veronica Fabio
55. Yarieth Hernandez Mier
56. Yi Huang

FOLLOW-UP MESSAGE TO WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

A happy follow up to our workshop on the Toolkit

Thank you all again for your active participation.

We would just like to summarize the networking information on the Toolkit and the Charter that we provided this morning, which are the following:

- 1- For the comments to the charter email to: alice.siragusa@inu.it and pietro.garau@inu.it. Subject: Comments on Charter of Public Space
- 2- For the comments to the toolkit: urban.planning@unhabitat.org, copying : alice.siragusa@inu.it and pietro.garau@inu.it. Subject: Comments on Global Toolkit

For information and participation in the Biennale, see the following link:

<http://www.biennalespaziopubblico.it/blog/2015-2/proposta-partecipazione/how-to-take-part-in-the-biennale/>

Pietro Garau and Alice Siragusa
INU workshop coordinators