

BENNIAL OF PUBLIC SPACE 2017

KEY POINTS FROM THE PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF 11 CASE STUDIES,

WORKSHOP ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION 1, 25 MAY 2017

Ad hoc interventions are always possible and important, to seize opportunities etc. However, they should be seen as pilot interventions to inform city-wide plans and strategies, across sectors, or inform other sectoral strategies.

Public space cuts across many sectoral concerns and issues and is a very useful platform to address many development concerns, cutting across different sectors. It requires a different way of working among sectors within a municipality (horizontal) or between levels (vertical).

We recognize the importance to focus on specific groups, as indicated in SDG 11.7. But In order to be inclusive and effective, the best way is to consider them in an integrated way.

The public-space objective indicated in SDG11.7 , “universal access for all”, requires a special focus and a specific priority on all marginalized groups and urban areas.

A diagnosis of public space across the city is crucial to define adequate plans and strategies. Equitable distribution should be considered, as well as the recognition of underutilized assets and potentials, including difficult terrain.

Each project and plan needs to be a process: different strategies of process should be explored, in which the participation of different actors, users and stakeholders is promoted to increase project ownership, create trust and identify the qualities of the specific sites for the community, and be built around a “common mission”.

SDG 11.7 speaks about ‘providing’ public space – however, experience shows that public space that is ‘built together’ is more valuable and better owned. Public space delivered from the top is often impersonal and neglected.

To innovate in public space interventions, we need to either forget references and norms, or introduce new ones built with the users, going beyond stereotypes and inspired by creativity.

An important ingredient for the success of public spaces is the dimensions of aesthetic pleasure and sheer enjoyment – in short, of beauty and fun.

Successful public spaces do not rely only on good design, but also on the presence of services, uses and activities. Urban life and activities at street level are particularly important.

Learning across national and regional contexts (e.g. from and within the South) is very important for innovation and for the discovery of relevant tools.

Critical evaluation is important to validate approaches and build evidence around them.

Developing (comparable) documentation can help greatly in exchanging experiences and learning: case studies shared at this Biennale from and between countries demonstrate the need for a strong world wide mechanism for sharing PS experiences, tools and practices.

Economic feasibility is important and needs to be addressed. Innovative mechanisms can also be explored, like building a convincing set of actions/components of a comprehensive project to propose for crowd funding (e.g., the “Urban Jungle Catalogue” in Guatemala City).

Making the case for public space is important, particularly in terms of economic benefits and added value of interventions (see, for example, the arguments presented in the “Global Public Space Toolkit”).

The privatization of important public spaces, such as public libraries, can lead to the loss of free access and of the no profit character of these and other spaces. Private sector involvement in public space is a risk when it is not carefully managed and monitored.

Universities can be powerful agents of change and should be encouraged to engage in community development projects, as part of the community. Universities are also important resources for the development of public-space related courses in order to develop new generations of professionals versed in participatory approaches to public space planning, design, development and management.

Rome, Biennial of Public Space, 25 May 2017