

Public Space: a Strategy for Achieving the Equitable City

Keynote address, Learning Exchange on Public Space

Durban, South Africa, 4-6 June 2014

By Pietro Garau

International curator, Rome Biennial of Public Space

The author would like to thank UN-HABITAT for the opportunities offered to jointly develop public-space related policies and tools and for participating in the equity-focused 2014 World Urban Forum in Medellin, Colombia; and the United Cities and Local Governments Organization for the opportunity to reflect on these topics further and take part in the Durban Learning Exchange on Public Spaces. Finally, warm thanks go to the city of Durban for organizing this stimulating event.

Summary

The concept of inequality, introduced by the social sciences, has achieved increased attention since leading economists (e.g. Lansley, 2012; Stiglitz, 2013) demonstrated the positive relationship between equity and economic growth. In addition, environmental awareness increases once employment levels rise, basic needs are satisfied and educational levels improve. We also know that in an increasingly urban world, what will happen in cities will determine our planet's liveability. Therefore, equity in our cities can be considered a fundamental driver of sustainable development.

This note argues that equity, beside 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 centered urban strategy. One of the many reasons for this, is that 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 cities and within most cities – one more reason for seeking equality through a fairer urban distribution of good public spaces and international cooperation at, and for, the local level.

This can inspire positive opportunities for a new style of urban governance based on public space as an organizing principle for urban form and wellbeing. This new urban governance can be nurtured and supported by a host of useful tools. Among them are city wide surveys of public space supply, quality and distribution to determine priority areas and sectors of intervention; 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 tradeoffs; 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 and capture of unearned land-value increment due to public investment; incentives for private-sector involvement in public space development and management.

I. PUBLIC SPACE AND THE EQUITABLE CITY

The Concept of Equity

“Equity” has become a very popular notion. Much has also been said and written about its correct interpretation and its relationship to similar concepts, such as “social justice” and “equality. It is only a sign of the times we live in that “equity” can be “the value of an ownership interest in property, including shareholders' equity in a business”, as well as something expressing the concept of “fairness”. The latter was, of course, the meaning that inspired the recently concluded World Urban Forum in Medellin, Colombia, to adopt equity as its main theme. At the Forum public space was also accorded a notable level of attention. It will be useful, therefore, to explore the issue of the relationship between equity and public space.

The germane concept of “Equality” is a stronger, more definitive, unequivocal term: we are “equal”, and not “equitable” in front of the law (but laws should be “equitable”, and not “equal”). “Gender equality” basically means that we should all have the same rights and opportunities, irrespective of gender. “Equal” is “equal” – there can be no confusion about it.

“Equitable” is a more difficult, nuance-ridden concept. We can say an agreement should be “equitable”, in the sense that it should be fair to both parties. But who is to decide the degree of this fairness, and what is fair to each of the parties?

Yet, if we speak of cities, the term “equal city” becomes void of sense¹, while “Equitable City” resonates as a desirable goal. Literally, it makes “a lot of sense”. “Equal” is the result of something – an action, a ruling, a social pact. “Equitable” is more of an attribute, something describing a course of action, an ethical precept being followed and put into practice.

Yet, public space is where the two concepts of “equity” and “equality” come together. In public spaces – a street, a sidewalk, a square, a kiosk, a playground, a park, we are all *equal*, in the sense that in such places we can all exercise our shared right to the city without having to display our social status nor our ability to spend money. But public spaces are also the embodiment of *equity*, as the physical expression of the principle that it is fair for all citizens to enjoy access to basic, fundamental amenities, such as recreation, aesthetic enjoyment, walking, cycling, play, sports, culture, information. All these spaces, with the exception of streets and sidewalks that also have to exist for mobility and physical access purposes, have to be created for the sheer enjoyment of citizens. Public space is the result of purposeful action.

¹ Although some argue that “equal cities”, in the sense of “cities resembling each other more and more” both visually and structurally, are an important and ignored contemporary phenomenon (see Garau, 2013)

The Equitable City

So, what is an “equitable city”? It is a city that is fair to all, a city that treats all in an equitable manner – particularly those who are in greatest need of fairness *and* equality – the poor, the discriminated, the disadvantaged. This does not mean that everybody will live in the same kind of housing or even enjoy the same standards of services. It does mean, however, that regardless of economic and political status, origin or nationality, at the bare minimum the equitable city will offer, free of charge and on a not-for-profit basis, a substantive and accessible stock of agreeable space, accessible amenities and useful services whose costs are shared by all according to each one’s means. This is a fundamental definition of public space.

Public Space and the environmental aspects of the equitable city

Open green spaces are important components of a city’s public-space endowment. When designed and used as parks, gardens and playgrounds, they offer much needed services to city users and visitors alike. But of course, open and green spaces also perform vital ecological functions. Take trees, for example: A single tree can absorb CO₂ at a rate of 48 pounds per year; trees act as natural pollution filters by absorbing pollutants through the stomates in leaf surfaces; they lower temperature by transpiring water and shading surfaces; they reduce heat sinks; they reduce erosion; they provide food and wildlife habitats; they recharge ground water and sustain stream flow. At the same time, trees provide aesthetic pleasure and shade; a row of trees can transform an indifferent street into a pleasant urban space.

Open spaces are particularly valuable when they are part of an urban environmental system/network combining eco-compatible activities (walking, running, cycling) with natural landscape and habitats. Opportunities for re-connecting episodic open and often neglected spaces are particularly frequent in peripheral urban areas, where the lack of good public spaces is most severe. What is good for environmentally meaningful public spaces is good for equity, and viceversa.

Public Space and the ethical aspects of the Equitable City

One of the most interesting aspects of the debate that preceded the Charter of Public Space adopted at the last Public Space Biennial was on who should have access to the free services cities have to offer: “taxpayers”, and residents, or also those who happen to live and work in a city without the full, formal attributes of citizenship. The consensus was that the term “citizen” when applied to urban context should indeed conform to the second, wider meaning.

What helps greatly this wider acceptance of the concept of citizenry (after all, virtually every inhabitant of the earth is a “citizen” of some country) is the *non excludable* nature of public space. It is impossible to discriminate on access to streets, sidewalks, public gardens, playgrounds, parks. Those public

spaces whose use is often not permitted at night (eg. public parks), are off limits to *everybody*. Consequently, public space is a powerful instrument of inclusion. This is of great importance to cities. It means that all those who happen to be in a city and behave responsibly are treated as *equals*, at least in the considerable portions of a city that are public. The Equitable City is one where all have access to the public facilities of cities: public libraries, gardens, parks, playgrounds, and public sports grounds.

Of course, there is more to the equitable city than public space. For example, an equitable city is a city that offers decent and affordable housing opportunities, or that manages to provide efficient public transport at a reasonable cost. But public space, as we shall see further on, is a fundamental pre-requisite for the satisfaction of these fundamental urban needs.

Public Space and the Economic Aspects of the Equitable City

The concept of inequality, introduced by the social sciences, has achieved increased attention since leading economists (e.g. Lansley, 2012; Stiglitz, 2013) demonstrated the positive relationship between equity and economic growth. Economists famously lack an appreciation for space. In spite of that, Joseph Stiglitz, in accepting the challenge of talking about cities at the recently held World Urban Forum in Medellin, wasted no time in mentioning public space and public transport as two areas that can promote equality and consequently urban development.

One of the main economic aspects of the Equitable City is that it is a place where opportunities for earning a decent living are available to all. Space is an important component of this objective. For example, distance without transport is one of the greatest stumbling blocks to income generation for poorer urban residents. In many cities of the South, we often find great numbers of people who are forced to walk for hours to and from their place of work either because there is no public transport, or because the public transport that is available is too expensive. Large cities and metropolises like Medellin and Bogotá have developed efficient surface mass transit systems that allow great numbers of commuters to move rapidly from home to work and viceversa. There, transport is not cheap, as fares are calculated in order to achieve the maximum cost recovery. Other cities have adopted robust cross-subsidy systems in order to abate transport costs for commuters. All of these measures are fundamental also from a strictly commercial point of view: time and monetary resources not wasted in traffic can be used in a number of vitally important purposes, including skill formation and family care. Urban transport, by definition, occurs over public space, and its planning is paramount to sustainable urban development. A study from a Nairobi-based urbanist and scholar demonstrated that the costs of a comprehensive new urban plan for the city, regularly turned down because it was considered too

expensive, would have been covered by the opportunity costs of just three days of chronic traffic congestion.

Urban space is, of course, urban land. In all cities, the commercial and/or speculative use of land is a major economic activity. How can this activity be governed in such a way that it can become as equitable as possible? We shall try and deal with this challenge in the final part of this presentation.

Public Space and the Social Aspects of the Equitable City

An equitable city is a city where the most pressing needs of citizens – those “present needs” mentioned in the Brundtland report’s definition of sustainable development - are taken care for. They are, generally, individual or household needs: housing, education, and health. These needs are usually satisfied in different ways. In those cases when people are taken care for, by way of special programs or subsidies, the problem of social stigma is almost always inevitable.

By contrast, public space is where all citizens, regardless of their income and personal circumstances, can feel both equal and cared for. Public space embodies the special dimension of *commonly satisfied needs*; needs that are classified as social ones like the others, but have in addition a *socializing quality*. Public spaces are where people can meet, socialize, discover common likes and passions, affirm their shared rights to the city, organize, and where they can demonstrate to defend or champion commonly held rights or demands.

An equally important dimension of public spaces, in their capacity as commonly enjoyed resources, is that they also constitute an ideal ground for developing and extending the practice of participatory planning, particularly at the neighbourhood level. Nothing can beat a new public space – a playground, a park, and a new public facility – as an opportunity for calling citizens together around a common purpose. Therefore, public spaces offer both the place and the content for social involvement, and as a result for more equitable conditions in cities.

Public Space and the Spatial Aspects of the Equitable City

Equity in a city cannot be measured in aggregate terms. This is what advocates of the priority of rural poverty do when they point out that schools and health care are much more available in cities than in rural areas. They are: but only to those who can afford them.

This should not be the case of public spaces, which are accessible for free by definition. Unfortunately, the quality and supply of public spaces varies dramatically between cities and within most cities – one more reason for seeking equality through a fairer urban distribution of good public spaces and international cooperation at, and for, the local level.

This fairer distribution will hardly happen by itself. In fact, the greatest parks

and gardens in the great capitals of old, as well as those of post-world war two independence, are located in the older, more established, and wealthier sections of the city. The same applies to elegant avenues, streets, boulevards, and squares. This is true in Paris, Rome, London, New York, but also in cities like Nairobi, where public parks are concentrated in the city centre or close to the most elegant neighbourhoods. This is so because their central city, i.e. the original nucleus around which the rest of the city developed in subsequent times, was planned according to nineteenth-century parameters of urban décor, which demanded, among other things, large avenues and boulevards and majestic parks.

Sadly, these parameters were hardly applied as cities expanded from the centre to the periphery. There, profit motives prevailed over wise planning criteria. As much available space as possible was reserved for private estate development, with the bare minimum left over for vehicular circulation and access, parking, and even less for gardens, playgrounds and parks. And of course, outcomes were even more disastrous in informal settlements. Today, the only exceptions to this situation, seen from the air at least, are gated communities, with their often generous endowment of private open space.

Again, equity and public space come hand in hand. Moreover, while affordable housing and access to employment for all require a combination of good policy and favourable economic cycles, public space is a natural and viable promoter of equity. Through a combination of sound surveying, good planning and creative resource mobilization much can be done in relatively short periods of time – both for carving out public spaces in developed areas and for using public space, as we shall see below, as the organizing principle of new urban development.

The Cultural Aspects of the Equitable City (the city as a public space)

The cultural dimension is frequently, and rightly, included as a fourth parameter/indicator of sustainability. Here we shall refer to the concept of “Public Space as Culture” as distinct from “The Culture of Public Space”. In the latter case, one usually expresses a “system of values” around which a “community” of experts - professionals, experts, practitioners, zealots – rally to establish principles and develop practices. On the other hand, the concept of “Public Space as Culture” is “meta-urban” and “meta-place”: it takes public space as a founding principle, and the very essence if you like, of urban civilization. It is also universal: it does not belong to the East or the West, to the North or to the South. As we all know, great cities surfaced and thrived when what we call the West today was covered with forests and inhabited by rural tribes.

The English language, one that people like myself from the world's majority of non-native anglo-speakers use as an indispensable communication tool, adopts the term "city". Connected to the same root is a host of positive terms: civility, civil, civilized, civilization, civic. We have learned to refer to cities as the places where a "civil way of life" is nurtured. The concept of civility, absurd in a social vacuum, starts making sense when we share the same space (a city, a neighbourhood, a fronting sidewalk) with other people. Cities, therefore, offer us all an opportunity to exercise our civility, to test our willingness and ability to co-exist with people we do not know.

Cities, of course, are also places of conflict and danger. In all cities we find threatening places. But cities are also a miraculous construct of civilization. Cities are where considerable, often enormous, numbers of people from all walks of life and all lifeworlds (the irreversible transfer from the country to the city) live and work together.

And here we come to a phenomenon we might want to call "the urban paradox".

Cities are, by definition, settlements characterized by high density over considerable extensions in space. The living paradox they embody is that the denser and vast the settlement, the greater freedom we enjoy. In a small village, everybody watches what we do. In a city we can seize rich opportunities for socializing, but we can also choose the privilege of walking, moving, doing our business alongside perfect strangers that we are not particularly inclined to make the acquaintance of. This freedom, of course, is everybody else's freedom as well. Anybody at all can walk on a city sidewalk. Anybody at all can sit on the same bench at the museum or in a park, or next to us in a public library. Those who resent this tacit contract are the ones who build gated communities. By closing that gate, people reject the very concept of freedom. This is the paradox of cities.

Much is being said about the value of difference, and rightly so. However, we probably will have scored well on this front the moment we develop the "indifference to difference": that is, a natural disposition to considering people in strange dress and who look different from us as perfectly normal. This disposition, natural in children, has to be re-acquired by adults. Again, this can happen best in a city's public spaces. It is a form of equality as well: we become equal the moment we stop attributing a ponderable value to our differences.

In this sense, the city itself is a Public Space. Freedom is a universal value: it is "meta-public space". But the freedom cities give us is realized through public space.

II. A PUBLIC-SPACE LED NEW STYLE OF URBAN GOVERNANCE

So far, we have argued the central role of public space in promoting equitable cities, and in turn ensuring a sustainable development based on equitable social, economic and environmental premises. We shall now consider a number of tools that can be used to pursue the objective of an adequate supply, quality and distribution of public space in our cities.

These tools are presented in this order: city wide surveys of public space supply, quality and distribution to determine priority areas and sectors; 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 aerious uses; mechanisms for land an building-rights tradeoffs; 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 and capture of land-value increment due to public investment; incentives for private-sector involvement in public space development and management.

It seems obvious that regardless of the strategies to be pursued in involving actors and taking into account the very welcome cases of grassroots initiatives, planning and coordination will always have to rest with the local government. Equally important will be enablement at the national level. Some of the tools described below will require legislation supporting such tools as a robust local planning authority, a dependable local revenue base, participation enabling procedures, adequate land and development taxation measures, and capacity building.

City wide public space surveys

It has been noted before that the supply and quality of public spaces tends to diminish with the distance from the central city. Since, as argued before, one of the principal purposes of public space endowment is to reduce inequality, the first important step is to identify the parts of the city where public space supply is lacking, or of a poor quality, or both. It is very likely that this will occur in peripheral lower income neighbourhoods and even more so in informal settlements and slums.

Surveys will classify public spaces by type. In terms of playgrounds, gardens, and parks (the "obvious" public spaces), it might be advisable to assess supply in terms of "raw supply" (availability, e.g. surface per inhabitant, and access (walking distance by type of open space).

Assessments can become more difficult when it comes to roads and streets. While roads, streets and sidewalks are the most ubiquitous and flexible public spaces, it is somewhat harder to assess their supply in quantitative terms. But there will be exceptions; for example, it is well known that most informal settlements totally lack paved roads wide enough for accessing most dwellings with a motor vehicle such as an ambulance. In all road infrastructure, quality of (paving and state of maintenance) will be important.

Linear public spaces reserved for non-motorized mobility are important elements of a good public space system. First and foremost, the all-important sidewalk – Is it wide enough? Is it in a good state of repair? And then other essential elements of the sustainable city, such as bicycle paths? Are they designed and managed as a network, thus allowing longer runs?

City-wide urban plans with a clear focus on public space: a revolution in the making

The “new style of urban governance” postulated above rests on a revolution (literally: turning upside down) of the concept of planning. The traditional concept of planning for expanding cities rests, by and large, on the identification of the portions of urban territory where private development can occur, the setting of rules about construction, and the matching identification of infrastructure and public facilities that can serve development. Often, development happens in this very order, with infrastructure falling behind construction.

Planning with a focus on public space means reversing this order and starting, rather than from the “private city”, from the “public city”. It is the concept of public space-led planning. The idea is to start with the infrastructure and the open spaces that the city will require in the future, taking into account the “public space deficit” identified through city wide public space surveys. This architecture will constitute the organized container for private development, including the all-important solution of assisted self-help housing.

Advance public purchase of land for future urban development reserving fair shares of public space for various uses

The advantage of this approach is that a municipality might be in a position to co-ordinate its land and infrastructure development policy. A forward-reaching administration can identify ahead of time the corridors along which development is to take place, acquire vast portions of land along these corridors, and then resell part of this land, endowed with infrastructure, at a profit. It would be a very equitable way of internalizing the value added by the efforts of all, often pocketed by private operators through lack of an

enlightened and responsible development strategy. Cities like Helsinki, in Finland, are renowned for having pursued consistently a public land acquisition and management policy, and never regretted it.

Mechanisms for land and building-rights tradeoffs to secure public space

Whenever public land is not available for developing suitable and accessible public space, the question will arise of how to secure the land that the plan allocates to public space purposes. In some cases, legislation or available municipal resources might allow for expropriation or outright purchase. In many other cases, however, these means may not be available. This is when alternative options such as transfer of development rights can prove useful. Interestingly, this is also where the concept of equity comes to the fore. The owner of a piece of land zoned for public space might claim being deprived of the “right to build” on his or her land. So the municipality can choose to compensate the owner for this loss. Where can the money come from? According to established “transfer of development rights” procedures (TDR), the municipality can choose to boost development rights in a different area zoned for densification and exact fees from the owners in exchange for the increased value of their land. These fees are used to compensate the owner of the preserved parcel of land, or to acquire the land outright.

This procedure, when applied with the public interest in mind, has three advantages. First, it promotes densification and thus prevents urban sprawl. It is equitable, because it safeguards landowners’ perceived rights and secures precious public space for others. And it can be carried out successfully at no expense to the municipality.

Of course, this is not as easy as it seems. In times of slowdown, private-sector demand for development might be low. Fees may not match compensation nor purchase. Procedure may be blocked or delayed by litigation. However, TDR is being applied successfully in several countries, including one, the US, where, incidentally, property rights are very closely safeguarded. Cases in point are Montgomery County, Maryland (1980) and the New Jersey Pinelands (1981). A number of more recent programs showing early potential are the Long Island Central Pine Barrens, New York (1995), Bucks County, Pennsylvania (1994), King County, Washington (2012). This is not a developed country invention, either: Hong Kong has pioneered and practiced a form of the TDR since the 1960s.²

² P Li, *Transfer of Development Rights Approach: Striking the Balance between Economic Development and Historic Preservation in Hong Kong*, *Surveying and Built Environment Vol 19(1)*, 38-53 December 2008 ISSN 1816-9554, Faculty of Architecture of Sydney.

Maintenance-oriented design

The Charter of Public Space, para. 25, incorporated a number of converging experiences and summarized them in the recommendation that “Design must pay full attention to maintenance and management costs by using simple solutions and materials that are durable, simple, easily replaceable and climatically adequate”.

Too often, architects and urban designers forget that a public space project mindless of environmental conditions and maintenance costs can turn out to be very expensive. On the other hand, there is plenty of solutions based on solid and durable materials that can be also enjoyable and aesthetically attractive. Such materials may appear to be expensive in the construction phase, but they often turn out to be money savers in the long run. One example is the celebrated sidewalks of the Copacabana public beach in Rio de Janeiro, designed by the famous Brazilian architect Carlo Burle Marx.

Encouragement of temporary public-space uses of idle land

Eleven years ago, Jaime Lerner, the inventor of the city of inventions, Curitiba, produced at the instigation of Oscar Niemeyer a little book titled *Acupuntura Urbana*. In one small chapter titled “Continuity is Life”, Lerner insists that where there is only economic activity and no people, housing must come in. And if there is no activity, it is important to introduce services. An urban vacuum has to be filled, preferably with an activity that can bring about animation. If future uses are uncertain, portable structures can be installed, immediately. If the place is dead at night, let it be a night time activity. It is a form of instant acupuncture that can revitalize a whole urban environment.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is getting more involved in urban development and in agriculture-based activities that can help the urban and the rural poor. One of them is urban agriculture. There is no reason why undeveloped land, particularly publicly owned land bordering roads, cannot be used for growing crops. The same applies to public urban markets, other important public spaces, where produce and other goods can be sold by informal vendors. Often, such markets can be the result of clever urban recycling, as in the case of Durban’s Warwick Junction project.

Participation of citizens in all aspects of public space development such as planning, design, resourcing, maintenance and enjoyment (the “*citifier*” concept)

Saying that citizens should enjoy their public spaces can sound like a banality. Why shouldn’t they? After all, public spaces are created and maintained for them. Yet, enjoyment can be prevented by a number of negative factors. The first one is distance: residents who live far away will find

it hard to enjoy a playground, a public library, a small park on a regular basis. Others are lack of time, which is an indicator of urban inequality (the poor enjoy much less leisure time than the wealthy – they cannot afford to “take off for the day”). Other reasons can be lack of security, or bad design, or poor maintenance.

One good premise for future enjoyment and use is participation in all aspects of the public-space cycle process: creation, design, maintenance, management, use, and evaluation. In fact, the quest for good public spaces can trigger practices far more advanced than the conventional participatory processes of top-down initiative and project formulation, followed by some form of consultation and later by execution. There is hardly a more initiative-inducing project than a playground for the children, a neighbourhood park to walk and run in, the adoption of measures for making streets safer and more attractive. Initiatives of this kind are growing everywhere, and are often supported by local organizations with very good skills in the interface between residents and local government and by public-space specialists with expertise in the realm of urban “placemaking”. And many of them are crowned with success. So, public space can become the ideal platform for building a sense of accomplishment that can lead to the building of confidence needed to establish a permanent sense of community and to move on to even more ambitious collective goals. UN-Habitat has championed the “I am a City Changer” slogan. Along with that aspiration, it would be wonderful if we could also transform ourselves from “city users” into “cityfiers”: people who nurture the urban wonderment with the care and respect their common living environment requires.

Mobilization of resources through fair and efficient taxation of private property and capture of land-value increment due to public investment

This fundamental function of local government is justified by the fact that private property in cities enjoys a number of municipal services not paid for as utilities. It is calculated in an equitable manner, commensurate for the value of the property. In many cities, however, the assessed value of property may not be commensurate to its value as it increases over time, or the collection of property tax may be faulty or inefficient. This is one of the main causes of the chronic resource deficit of so many municipalities.

As cities grow and expand and new public infrastructure is built, or in the case of major rehabilitation / regeneration projects in parts of the existing urban fabric, public investment invariably produces a significant increase in the value of private property adjacent or near the intervention. Since this increase in value is not due to any investment on the part of the owner, this justifies the full, or partial, recapture of the corresponding land-value increment.

This procedure was recognized internationally as far back as 1976, by the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. Notable among national-level applications (UN-HABITAT 2009) is Colombia's tax law of 1997 (Law for Territorial Development) that set out several ways in which local authorities could participate in capturing unearned value increments on real property: property owners could negotiate a cash payment to the municipality, could pay in kind through transfer of a portion of the land, or could participate in the formation of an urban development partnership. This mechanism is an important source of income for the Colombian capital city's Urban Development Institute, responsible for infrastructure and public-space development in Bogota' including its well known Transmilenio transport system.

Incentives for private-sector involvement in public space development and management.

Of course, the construction of a new road or a park, not to mention management contracts, naturally involve private sector companies. Aside from this, there is great potential for involving businesses of a different nature in non-profit public space development and management. It is important that such an opportunity be considered in a positive way, and not simply as a necessity to exploit the business sector when in need of resources. But it is equally important for the public sector counterpart to be fully equipped to establish, and manage, these partnerships in such a way that they become an asset in the public interest. The *gratis* nature of public space also involves the need to find justifiable incentives for private sector involvement other in addition to the natural vocation of the private sector, which consists in making money. Many companies may be interested, for example, in becoming patrons of a playground, a park, a street. Others may be interested in outright donations of land. A case in point is the Jeevanjee Gardens in Nairobi, a gift to the city on the part of an enlightened patron that have become one of the most treasured public spaces in the city. Another common practice is support for city museums and libraries. Public concessions in public parks and other public spaces can also become an interesting source for public space budgets as well as a welcome facility for visitors and public space users.

Conclusions

The focus of this contribution has been to highlight the key role of public space in pursuing a goal that is increasingly recognized as a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development: equitable cities. A selection of tools has been presented to help reach this goal. It is hoped that this contribution may be a welcome addition to the debate on the issue of "re-imagining Public Spaces" that will animate this exciting initiative promoted and hosted by the Thekwini Municipality.

References

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (2009), *Planning sustainable cities: global report on human settlements 2009*, Earthscan

Biennial of Public Space, *Charter of Public Space*, http://www.biennalespaziopubblico.it/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/CHARTER-OF-PUBLIC-SPACE_June-2013_pdf.pdf

P.Garau (2012),“La Ville Unique”, in L.N Tellier, C. Vainer (ed.), *Métropoles des Amériques en Mutation* (ISBN 978-2-7605-3476-6), Presses de l'Université du Québec, Montreal, Canada, pp. 265-277.

Stewart Lansley (2012), *The Cost of Inequality*, Gibson Square, London, UK

Joseph E. Stiglitz (2012), *The Price of Inequality*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York City, USA

Richard Dobson and Caroline Skinner (2012), *Working in Warwick*, School of Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Martim O. Smolka, (2013), *Implementación de la Recuperación de Plusvalías en América Latina*, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Cambridge, Mass., USA