Bellagio Accord for Public Spaces in African Cities

September 2016

Story of Joy Living in the City of Hope

Joy is born in an informal settlement in the city of Hope. Her mother is a local trader who sells fruits such as mangos and papaya on the street. The street is organized so that there are wide sidewalks and a safe place for Joy's mother to work. While Joy is little, her mother takes her to work with her. Joy's mother works with many other women in the community and they support each other in caring for the little ones. Joy's mother likes her work, she enjoys meeting with people and she earns enough to support her family and contribute to her community. Buildings made from discarded materials enclose the streets. The furniture she uses includes small stools and a table she made for herself from discarded items. Everything around her is valuable in one way or another.

A few years go by…

Joy and her mother visit the many places in their informal settlement where she can play with her friends. They are easy to walk to and they are close by her home. There is one special park in particular where she can play many different games and learn many things. One of her favourite things to do is to sit under a beautiful tree and read stories with her mother and her friends.

A few years go by…

As Joy becomes a teenager she walks to the park from school where she meets and hangs out with her friends. Every once in awhile she will play a board game with one of the elders. They tell fun stories.

A few years go by…

As Joy walks to work she arrives safely and easily. She does not get hit by a car.

A few years go by…

There is a natural disaster in Joy's community, but she is safe. The same park where she grew up, the same park where her children now play, the same park where she connected with her neighbours and played games with the elders is now a safe place of refuge. She feels comforted because she is surrounded by her friends. Her mother supplies healthy food while they wait to return to their homes.

A few years go by…

Joy moves to a new neighbourhood in her city. Her new community has a local public market and she meets her neighbours regularly at the market where they discuss neighbourhood events. Joy's child uses a wheelchair and they can easily walk to the local public market with her mother.

Many years go by….

Joy is a grandmother. She is strong and healthy. She takes her grandchildren biking to the park she played in as a child. She shares with her grandchildren her traditions and stories under her favourite old tree.

That is the story of Joy in the city of Hope.

This *Bellagio Accord on Public Spaces in African Cities* is the output and consensus of the discussions at a June 6 to 10, 2016 meeting convened by the HealthBridge Foundation of Canada and University of Cape Town with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation. The 18 participants who represent civil society, researchers, and government from the countries of South Africa, Ghana, Niger Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania believe that the story of "Joy" who lives in the city of "Hope" should be the story of all people in Africa. The following *Research and Implementation Agenda* is our contribution to this vision.

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Join this effort

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Research and Implementation Agenda for Public Spaces in African Cities

Introduction

Public spaces are those spaces that are open, accessible and enjoyable by all for free and without a profit motive. Public spaces include streets, local public markets, parks, public squares and beaches. UN-Habitat considers public spaces "a vital ingredient of successful cities" and are the places in the city that build a sense of community, culture, social capital, and community revitalisation.[1] However, in many cities, especially in African countries, public spaces are not seen as a basic service and as a result are often chaotic, poorly planned and maintained, if they exist at all. This is especially the case for informal settlements and slums, where 61.7% of the urban population resides in Sub-Saharan Africa.[2]

In Africa - like in many other places in the world - public spaces are used for public life, commerce and interaction. However, lack of funds, planning, and maintenance, as well as priority for motorized vehicles, has turned many public spaces into unsafe, unforgiving and unconnected places. In addition, many public spaces are difficult to access, especially for those living in vulnerable situations. Public spaces are a key element of individual and community well-being and are critical for the historic, environmental, social and economic functioning of cities and ultimately for people's quality of life.

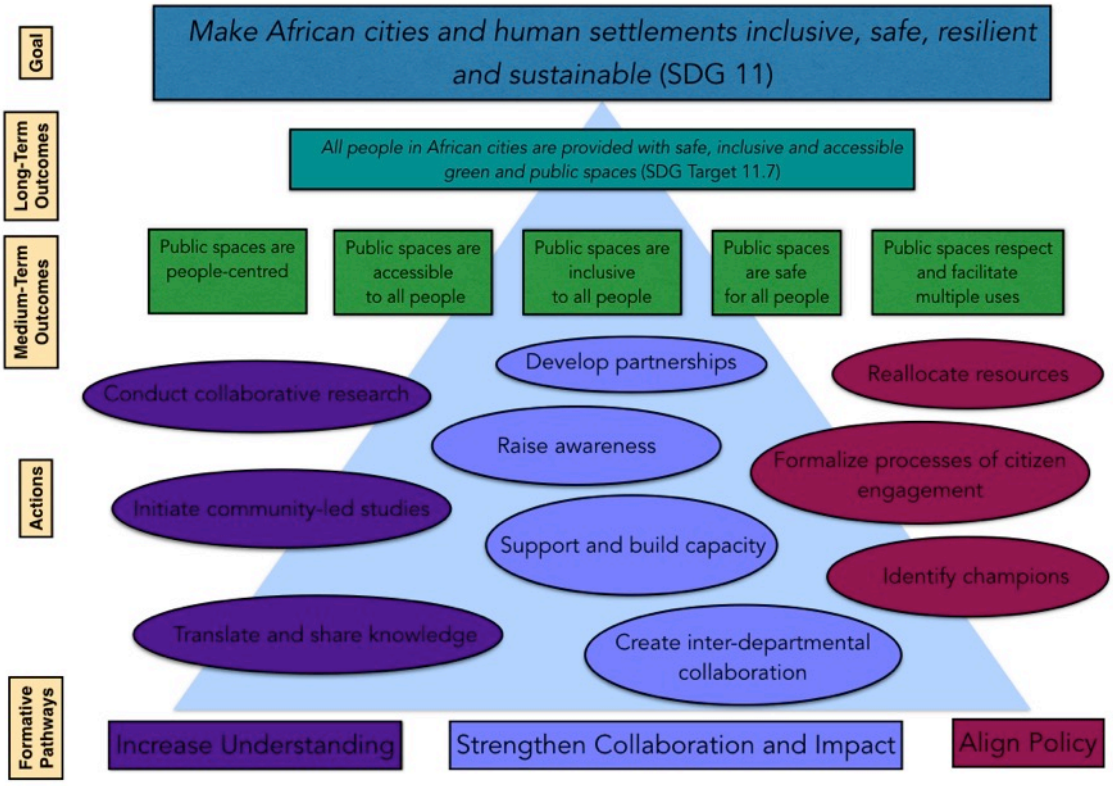
This document outlines a suggested agenda for key public spaces research and implementation priorities for researchers, civil society, government, and funders

[1] UN-Habitat. Global Public Spaces Toolkit: From Global Principles to Local Policies and Practice. (2015). http://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Global%20Public%20Space%20Toolkit.pdf

[2] UN-Habitat (2015). Habitat III Issue Paper No. 22 – Informal Settlements. http://unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Habitat-III-Issue-Paper-22_Informal-Settlements-2.0.pdf

in Africa. It can be used as a starting point to develop research strategies and funding programs for the creation and support of public spaces in African cities. This agenda was developed using a Theory of Change that articulates an overall goal for public spaces in African cities and then describes the conditions and actions that must be in place for the goal to be realized.[3] The document explains the Theory of Change, starting with the impacts (goal) that we hope to achieve, followed by a discussion of the pre-conditions (outcomes) that must exist in order for the impacts to occur and a description of the formative pathways and actions required to bring about the desired changes.

Theory of Change – Public Spaces in African Cities



Goal

In September 2015, world leaders committed to achieving 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets as part of the Agenda 2030 for

[3] Center for Theory of Change (n.d.). What is Theory of Change? http://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/

Sustainable Development. These goals and targets are intended to provide direction to government leaders, civil society, and communities around the ways to end extreme poverty, fight gender inequality, achieve health, and protect our environment. SDG 11 focuses specifically on cities:

> SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Given that by 2050 more than two-thirds of the world will be urban dwellers[4] success in achieving the cities goal sets the stage for achieving the targets in many other SDG goals. For the purposes of our work, we have refined the goal to focus specifically on African cities.

Long-Term Outcome

Public spaces have been acknowledged as a critical element for achieving African cities and human settlements that are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. SDG 11 includes a specific target for public spaces:

> Target 11.7: By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

But in addition, public spaces, if properly implemented, will make an important contribution to achieving several other SDGs, including:

- *Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. (SDG 3)*
- *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. (SDG 5)*
- *Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. (SDG 8)*
- *Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. (SDG13)*[5]

Public spaces are the places where both active transportation and recreational physical activity occur, thereby reducing risk of non-communicable diseases

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[4] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, Highlights* (ST/ESA/SER.A/352), (2014) New York.

[5] For a full description of the ways in which public spaces contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), please refer to the HealthBridge paper titled: Public Spaces: A Key tool for Achieving the SDGs. Available from: www.healthbridge.ca/images/uploads/library/Final_Electronic.pdf

(NCDs), which will be the number one cause of death and disability in Africa by 2030[6]. Public spaces provide the locations necessary for informal workers like street and market vendors to ply their trade, and for people to meet. Public spaces can also provide the necessary green and open spaces in cities to maintain a wide diversity of species and landscapes within an urban context.

Agenda 2030 is an ambitious framework and in order to achieve success, governments and communities will need to choose interventions that have the greatest impacts across a number of goals and targets. With such clear benefits afforded by the provision of public spaces, governments and communities should consider public spaces a top strategic priority. The provision of safe, accessible and inclusive green and public spaces for all people is a key pre-condition for achievement of SDG 11. However, it will require significant investments in urban planning for public open spaces, as well as the creation of mobility and urban planning policies that focus on encouraging walking and cycling, and on urban policies that support local markets.

Medium-Term Outcomes

The simple provision of public spaces in itself cannot achieve the overarching goal of SDG 11. Rather, public spaces must also meet certain pre-conditions if they are to contribute to making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

People-Centred

Experience suggests that many cities consider aesthetic aspects as well as a narrow definition of function when designing spaces. Public parks are made to look beautiful with little consideration about the needs of the local communities. Streets are designed to move automobiles with little consideration to the varied activities that occur on streets in African cities. Local

[6] World Health Organization (2011). Global status report on non-communicable diseases 2010. Available from: http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ncd_report2010/en/

public markets are being replaced with commercial centres with little consideration of the needs of the vendors and consumers. Ensuring that public spaces are people-centred ensures that particular attention is paid to the natural, cultural, and social identities that define a space and capitalizes on a community's assets, inspirations, and potential.[7] People-centred design ensures that informality is respected and that the people who live, work, and play in a particular space have a say in how their space is designed and built. The result is the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to SDG11.

Accessible to All People

Accessible public spaces ensure that everyone in the community, regardless of age, gender, income or disability, can reach and use the space. Streets need to provide comfortable and safe facilities for mobility, which encourages walking and cycling, as well as supports micro-businesses and vending. Public parks need to be conveniently located close to where people live and work, be free of charge, and designed so that a myriad of activities can be accommodated. Local public markets should be located within walking and cycling distance of all residents and designed to accommodate both formal and informal selling. Everyone should feel welcome in public spaces including women, men, children, youth, the elderly and people with disabilities. Public spaces can only contribute to the goal if everyone in the community can easily access them.

Inclusive to All People

Inclusive public spaces encourage and enable different people in the community to interact. Inclusive spaces not only ensure that all people are accommodated but also ensure that people are able to make and build connections with others

[7] Project for Public Spaces (n.d.). What is Placemaking? http://www.pps.org/reference/what_is_placemaking/

in their community. Inclusive public spaces promote social and cultural diversity. Inclusive public spaces promote community cohesion and are particularly important for contributing to the goal.

Safe for All People

Safe public spaces have features that reduce people's risk of being harmed by violence or injury. Safe public spaces also enhance people's feelings of safety. Safety is critically important in the provision of public spaces because if people are in either real or perceived danger, they will not use public spaces if given another option. Different groups, such as men, women, children, the elderly, vendors, and the disabled, have different safety needs and all should be addressed in the function and design of public spaces. Safety is an important pre-condition to be met in order to achieve the goal.

Respect and Facilitate Multiple Uses

It is important that public spaces are created in such a way that they respect and encourage multiple uses and functions. Spaces that facilitate multiple uses enable different people to use the spaces in different ways. Local vendors may wish to use the space to sell their goods. Children may wish to use the space for unstructured play, adults may wish to use the space to play sports, and older adults may wish to use the space for relaxing and chatting with neighbours. Spaces that respect informality are particularly important for contributing to the goal.

Formative Pathways and Actions

In order to achieve the goal and outcomes, specific actions need to be implemented by researchers, civil society, and governments in African cities. These actions fall under three formative pathways that represent the greatest opportunity for impact and change. The three pathways and associated actions are:

- Increase Understanding
    - Conduct collaborative research
    - Initiate community-led studies
    - Translate/share knowledge
- Align Policy

    - Reallocate resources
    - Formalize the processes for citizen engagement
    - Identify decision-maker champions
- Strengthen Collaboration and Impact
    - Create inter-departmental collaboration
    - Develop partnerships
    - Raise awareness
    - Support and build capacity

Although the actions are listed within one specific pathway, the reality is that many of these actions are inter-related and cross over from one pathway to the other.

Increase Understanding

There is much to be learned about public spaces in African cities. Most academic public spaces research to date has been conducted in a high-income country context, which may not be readily transferable to an African context. In order to be effective and achieve the outcomes it is important to better understand public spaces in the African context.

Creating better understanding of the issues related to public spaces can involve conducting collaborative research, initiating community-led studies, and ensuring the information collected is both shared with key stakeholders and translated to ensure the information is understood. Through such actions, an African evidence-base on public spaces can be developed.

Conduct Collaborative Research

The co-design and co-production of new knowledge, created by researchers working in collaboration with civil society, government, and community, is critical to developing scientific insights, data and tools that can contribute to addressing public spaces in Africa. Research that bridges fields and disciplines such as transport, urban planning, urban design, and public health has the potential to produce knowledge that is valuable to decision-makers and to generate the solutions that society needs.

Collaboration can be as modest as borrowing methods from other disciplines (such as adapting health's stages of change theory for smoking and applying to cycling studies) or as advanced as trans-disciplinary where researchers with

different fields of study work jointly and move beyond discipline-specific approaches to address public spaces. Research can also be multi-level where academic, government, and grassroots researchers work together. When considering the public spaces research that would benefit from a collaborative approach, themes of inquiry include understanding definitions, functional use and structure, equity, economics, and behaviour.

Definitions

It is important to ensure there is a common conceptual understanding of public spaces in African cities. It is particularly important to base definitions on context and reality as this will be critical for building the evidence base. Collaborative research can help answer questions such as:

- What is an African city?
- What do governments and citizens consider as "public spaces"?
- Do African cities acknowledge that public spaces are a basic service?
- What is a "street" in an African context?
- What is a local public market and how is it linked to the informal markets? Is there a difference?
- What are the economic, spatial and regulatory definitions of informal trading?

Functional Use and Structure

In order for public spaces to be people-centred and inclusive, it is important to understand the functional use and structure of the places. It is necessary to understand the various activities that occur on streets, in open public spaces, and in markets, the structures and forms these places need to take in order to better facilitate such uses, and built environment elements that support the functions. Collaborative research can help answer questions such as:

- How do public spaces include streets, local public markets, parks, public squares and beaches, function as an entire system? What are the mechanisms by which each type of public space supports the other?
- How can public spaces be designed as a system that is informed by a strategy?
- How can cities create transversal public space policy?
- What activities are currently occurring on streets and in local public markets and local public spaces?
- What activities are considered "acceptable" and how much room should be provided for these activities?
- How are conflicts in public spaces managed and accommodated?
- What provisions should be provided to support such activities?
- What is the quality of infrastructure necessary for people to partake in the activity?
- What are the design priorities for different users?
- What is "beautiful" to the local population and how can that be fostered?
- How is the division of space currently decided? Who are the power brokers that decide who gets to use spaces when?
- What are the differences in functionality of spaces considered "formal" vs. "informal"?
- How can we make the most efficient use of our available public spaces?
- What is the function of the informal public spaces in cities, and what structures would continue to support and facilitate informality?
- Do the fundamentals of built environments that support public spaces (mixed land use, street connectivity, etc.) hold true in African cities? To what extent are African cities the same or different?

Equity

There are significant demands on public space and in many African cities these spaces are not used in an equitable manner. Frequently, vulnerable groups are pushed out of public spaces due to their needs not being fully accounted or provided for. Collaborative research can contribute to the goals by examining the equity issues related to public spaces, including:

- What are the specific attributes of public spaces that ensure equitable use for everyone?
- How do we create public spaces that are accessible to vulnerable populations?
- How equitable are public space interventions for urban poor?
- Where do vulnerable populations go and what facilities do they use?
- What are the affordability and other barriers that affect the poor?
- Who is actually benefiting from the street?
- How can the needs of women and children be better integrated into public space design and upgrading?
- What are specific safety threats for vulnerable populations?

Economic

Public spaces provide an important contribution to the economy. However, their contribution to the economy in African cities is unknown. Collaborative research can contribute to the goals by examining questions such as:

- How do land values change with public space provision (or lack of public space provision) and how do these land value changes impact the surrounding communities?
- How do public spaces contribute to the economic base of cities?
- What are the financing mechanisms for informal public spaces and how does this differ from formal public spaces?
- How do public spaces support resilience of urban economies in a disaster?
- What is the role of the informal spaces and informal economy in supporting resilience of urban economies in a disaster?

Behaviour

In addition to better understanding public spaces, it is also important to better understand citizen knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour related to public spaces. Better understanding of behaviour has the potential to further support the creation of public spaces that meet people's needs. Collaborative research can contribute to the goals by examining questions such as:

- What is the effect of non-supporting environment (quality and quantity) on use of public spaces? Are there other variables impacting people's use of public spaces?
- Who is currently using public spaces? Which ones? Why?
- How do users perceive and define public spaces?
- Do people know of the benefits of walking/exercise/eating healthy foods and how public spaces contribute to their wellbeing?
- Is there a difference between actual and perceived levels of quality related to public spaces?
- How can we improve perceived levels of quality?

Initiate Community-Led Studies

The foundation for effective and credible research is the level of community involvement in setting priority, designing the research and execution. While collaborative research generates better understanding of the public space, there is a need to keep communities at the centre of all public space research initiatives.

In addition to conducting collaborative research to generate a better understanding of public spaces in African cities, investigators should consider undertaking community-led studies that can be either part of a more formal

research process or as a smaller-scale study. In many cases, local knowledge is an untapped resource and, when used appropriately, can help create a better understanding of the present reality in a city or neighbourhood.

Community-led research involves using community members to set the study agenda and to collect the local research data thereby grounding the study in the local reality. Community members, when they act as "citizen scientists" can bring the local expertise and knowledge as they know the community best. Tools and processes such as community led mapping, enumeration and profiling of informal settlements, and participatory-action research can be used to facilitate community-led studies and crowdsourcing.

Community-led studies have the potential to increase community ownership and acceptance of the research project, particularly when people see what they have said leading to results, such as certain activities or initiatives being implemented. Community-led studies are well positioned to respond to local problems and can facilitate solutions to be implemented in a local context at different levels. An additional benefit is that studies grounded in the local context are more likely to influence policy as decision-makers typically prefer to understand local needs and wants when deciding on a course of action.

Translate and share knowledge

In order for research, whether it is collaborative academic research or community-led studies, to contribute to the attainment of the goal it must be shared and understood by those benefitting, influencing and making decisions. Often research is produced for academic qualification and ultimately sits on shelves in libraries and does not make it into the hands of those who could most use the information. When influencers are made aware of research, it is often technical and written in the language of academics. Ensuring research is shared and written in a style that can be easily understood by practitioners, government, and the community, is important.

Another significant challenge in creating a better understanding among those influencing and making decisions is that much of the research document is only available in English. In many African cities, the local population, including decision-makers, do not speak English. There is a need to ensure that research is translated into local languages. In some cases this might mean creating information materials or resources such as videos in the local dialect to explain

the concepts. Finally, different audiences are interested in different information and have different communications needs. It is important to develop different communication tools for different audiences that are accessible and are suited to their literacy level and understanding of the issues.

Several strategies exist for supporting greater translation and sharing of information. Researchers, civil society, and government should consider translating knowledge into various languages. Literacy levels and readability scales should be considered and wherever possible the messages should be simple and short. Consider peer to peer and community-community exchange programs, as this is a good tool to validate documentation.

Align Policy

If the outcomes and ultimately the impacts of the Theory of Change are to be achieved, urban policies, including planning, engineering, construction, maintenance and fiscal policies, must be put in place that create, preserve, and protect public spaces. These policies need to be developed based on research and be grounded in the local reality. Unfortunately, in many African cities, policy is not locally adapted. Instead, policies developed elsewhere or set by funding agencies are adopted without consideration of local needs.

The development of inclusive public space policies in the urban sector will enable a conducive environment for developing and building sustainable public spaces. Documents such as guiding principles and frameworks that outline the ways in which cities can plan, implement and maintain public spaces will be critical for success. In order to better align policy, several actions can be taken including: developing champions, formalizing citizen engagement, and reallocating resources.

Identify Champions

A key strategy for achieving the outcomes of public spaces that are people-centred, inclusive, accessible, safe, and that respect informality is to identify and develop public spaces champions. A champion is someone who speaks publicly in support of an issue or a cause. A champion is a charismatic advocate of an issue or policy and they create and communicate meaning around the issue. They help promote the ideas and bring people onside with the local changes that need to be made.

Public spaces need champions within government to create policy level change and within communities to create community level change. Within government, champions help secure resources and involve and motivate others to lend their support. Champions can help build consensus among stakeholders with diverse interests, or can garner organization support for significant changes to practice or policy. Champions are particularly valuable for complex issues that require sustained support and continued involvement over time.

Formalize Processes of Citizen Engagement

In order for public policy to be effective, governments need to work together with communities, paying special attention to the urban poor, women and children and people with disabilities, in identifying the problems and collaborating in developing and implementing solutions. Community engagement is a key asset in delivering transformation in cities and in public spaces. In order for the spaces to truly meet the needs of the people, they must be involved in the planning, implementing, and maintaining of public spaces.

When the community participates in the decisions that affect them, local ownership and a sense of responsibility among residents is created thereby improving both the intervention itself and its long-term sustainability. Community participation in the monitoring of public spaces can be a powerful way to raise awareness about their importance and create the necessary follow-up on policy measures aimed at improving public spaces. Communities unite around specific issues, and engaging the community in public space development has proven to be an effective motivator for residents. Residents can invest knowledge, labour, time, and money into their public spaces, which further increases support for the changes needed.

In order for citizen engagement to be effective, and not just a token exercise, it is important to institutionalise the processes of engaging communities and

actors on issues of public space. Unfortunately, at present, "community engagement" often takes the form of community sensitization whereby government notifies the community of projects preceding the implementation phase. In this scenario, communities often do not have the opportunity to understand the planning process, nor the opportunity to provide input in the planning process.

In certain countries like Uganda, Zambia, Angola and Ghana, city development forums have been institutionalised to formalise citizen engagement and participation. These forums bring together stakeholders from communities, civil society, academia, women and youth groups, vulnerable groups and city officials to discuss issues and these are good platforms to engage on public spaces in cities.

There are specific community constituencies that are central to a community engagement process on public spaces – as users, potential benefactors, and custodians/managers of these spaces:

- **Youth** at all levels. The school is an example of an ideal setting where young people can be conveniently engaged (through the facilitation of teachers and administrators).
- **Associations** with mandates that are relevant to the goal such as neighbourhood associations, market associations, civic associations (including service, e.g. Rotary), professional associations (e.g. Institution of Engineers, Institute of Architects, Institute of Planners, etc.), Forum of African Women Educators, and sport, social, and recreational clubs.
- **Issue-specific groups** such as the Federations for the Disabled, National Associations of Persons with Disabilities, and Forum of African Women Educators.
- **Religious groups and leaders** as they have large memberships
- **Community guardians** including those who might be perceived as potentially resistant, but who play a role in the management and use of these spaces and whose acceptance of the need for public space is nevertheless essential.

Finally, there is a need to provide non-financial incentives for everyone's participation. It is important to demonstrate to governments how the process of community engagement can help achieve community buy-in for a project and how it can help to inform the actions a government should take. It is equally as important to demonstrate to community stakeholders that their participation can

give them spaces that are in line with their needs and priorities. The challenge is to convince local community members that in order to get the spaces they want, they will need to give their time without monetary compensation.

Reallocate Resources

Governments demonstrate their priorities through their fiscal policies. Those programs and projects that receive public funds are considered important. Public space policies without the necessary resources for implementation are destined to fail. In addition, government staff with the experience, skills and time to support public space planning and implementation, including community participation, is a necessary condition of success.

Funding for public spaces needs to be allocated at both the national and local levels. The ideal model is to have city and national governments allocate core funding to public spaces, thereby creating sustainability. Given the important role public spaces play in improving health, governments can explore health impact revenue tools such as tobacco, alcohol, vehicle, and sugar taxes as a mechanism for funding public spaces. Because public spaces generate and support tourism, tourism levies can be initiated to help provide a reliable revenue source. National governments can empower local governments through national grants. Finally, local vendors can pay fees and/or rents as a potential revenue source but such an action should be formalized through registration, licenses and permits. These fees can contribute to the upkeep of the spaces.

Strengthen Collaboration and Impact

In many cities, public spaces fall under the jurisdiction of many different government agencies and departments. For example, in many cities streets often fall under the domain of the transportation sector, parks under the recreation sector, and local public markets under the trade sector. It is, therefore, important that different government agencies and departments work together to address public spaces. Just as it is important to ensure participation across sectors within government, it is equally important for different types of groups representing different sectors to work together. Civil society organizations provide an important link to the community and can take action to implement public space interventions. Civil society groups can link with like-minded groups to advocate for policy change and allocation of resources. They

can also work directly with government and communities to facilitate civic engagement. In order to better collaborate and strengthen their impact, local groups can take several actions including: creating inter-departmental cooperation, developing partnerships, raising awareness, and supporting capacity.

Create Inter-Departmental Cooperation

Many cities have policies that address public spaces. However, these policies are often old and they are often siloed. Ministries or departments such as Health, Environment, Planning, Transport, Agriculture, Culture, and Trade may make decisions related to public spaces. Multi-sectoral collaboration among decision-making entities and the public is key, as any one ministry or government alone cannot address issues such as health or climate change. Coordination across these sectors is needed in order to ensure policy coherence at a national and city level. Recognition of the importance of synergies across different departments is increasing but progress in many areas remains poor. Cities need to adopt a transversal approach to public space development as opposed to the current siloed approach.

With the introduction of the SDGs, there is a need among governments to review policies with a mindset of developing a mutually owned strategy. Moving forward it will be critical to choose interventions that can have an impact on many SDG targets and goals in order to maximize efforts. Public space is one key intervention that can address multiple goals and involving many different stakeholders will be key in delivering a strong public spaces network.

In order to achieve multi-sectoral action there needs to be a willingness and openness from all participants to consider new ways of working together. There are mechanisms and methods that promote and train on multi-sectoral action and these should be promoted as key tools for public spaces planning.[8]

Develop Partnerships and an African Platform for Public Spaces

There is a long history of civil society, government, and researchers working together on key issues such as poverty, climate change, hunger, and health. Such partnerships can be at the local or national level and can bring together a

[8] The National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools (Canada) has a number of resources that can support partnership development and inter-sectoral collaboration. Visit www.nccmt.ca/

diverse group of actors who are interested in public spaces. As with community engagement strategies, developing partnerships for public spaces among a range of organizations can bring varied perspectives and strengthen the possible outcomes. Often civil society organizations address one issue or one key constituency group. Working together has the potential to strengthen implementation strategies and can provide support involving a wider variety of actors.

There are many different types of collaborative arrangements that can range from loose network affiliations to fully collaborative structures. Partnerships help build upon the strengths and assets of the individual members, thereby strengthening the work. In addition, such models typically strengthen the capacity of the organizations involved by sharing resources and ideas.

Raise Awareness

In order for the community to want to become involved in the design and implementation of public spaces, people need to understand the issue of public spaces and why they are important to their day-to-day lives. For many cities, in order for policy to be enacted and resources allocated to public spaces, people need to demand them. For other cities, good public policy can be difficult to implement without residents' support. By helping the public understand and appreciate the goal we are more likely see community participation and to generate the support needed for policy implementation.

In addition, it is important to raise the awareness among local authorities of the need and importance of public spaces. Although public spaces have taken on much greater importance in the last few years, there are still many local authorities that do not consider streets, public open spaces, and local public markets as a priority issue that requires their attention. Civil society groups in particular have an important role to play in raising awareness among local authorities, which can ultimately create greater levels of government support.

There are many communication strategies for raising awareness. A key strategy is to make use of media and smartphones. In many African cities radio is a very influential medium and generates robust debate. Journalists have kept public space issues alive, documented status of public spaces, and held government officials to account. There is a strong tradition in Africa of disseminating messages using community storytelling and drama and public spaces are the places where these dramas occur. Using community drama has the potential to

increase usage of public spaces while also raising awareness of their importance through the sharing of personal testimonials and lived experiences. There is also the opportunity to explore new media opportunities such as 2D renderings on billboards, and in bus shelters.

Support and Build Capacity

In order for public spaces to be created in a manner that ultimately leads to impact, the organizations involved in research, advocating, planning, and developing the spaces need to have certain capacities in order to deliver results. Planning and developing people-centred, inclusive, accessible, and safe public spaces that respect informality requires a fair amount of technical knowledge and skill. Understanding and building processes for true community engagement requires leadership, communications skills, and the ability to adapt and to build relationships.

Trainings, guidelines, operational manuals and frameworks can help enhance the knowledge and skills needed for creating public spaces. In addition, creating opportunities for cross learning through exchange programs has the potential to strengthen skills and knowledge. Offering experiential workshops whereby organizations experience successful, local public spaces offers the potential to demonstrate firsthand that success is possible in local, immediate context.

One area of particular importance for capacity building is to ensure all organizations involved are able to effectively evaluate the results and impacts of their interventions. Structural changes to the environment, whether organized and implemented by researchers, civil society or government, should examine not just the intended consequences but the unintended consequences as well. This helps generate best practice, which can ultimately be shared across the broader partnerships. Finally, the organizations involved in public space development need support in building and maintaining their core infrastructure and other capacities in order to be effective. This requires funding and leadership development.

Conclusion

In June 2016 the Bellagio workshop on Public Spaces in African Cities helped to facilitate a common understanding and momentum for moving the public spaces research and implementation agenda forward. With such clear benefits afforded by the provision of public spaces, governments, communities and researchers should consider public spaces a top strategic priority. This will require significant investments in urban planning for public open spaces, in mobility and urban planning policies that focus on encouraging walking and cycling, and on urban policies that support local markets and informal vendors.

Through the use of knowledge and evidence that is generated by a collaborative African research strategy on public spaces, members of civil society, academics, public servants and other advocates can increase advocacy efforts, particularly through strong civic engagement initiatives to press for action on the creation and continued support of public spaces. Advocacy efforts can be a strong driver of political attention and action, and can bring about increased government investment in urban planning for public spaces. This will result in an increased number of policies that support public spaces in African cities.

Therefore, by increasing understanding, strengthening collaboration and impact, and aligning policy, collectively we have the potential to create public spaces that are people-centred, accessible to all people, inclusive to all people, are safe for all people, and that respect and facilitate diverse uses. In addition, ensuring that public spaces are considered a basic service and planned as a system is critical for ensuring that public spaces meet the needs of city residents both now and in the future.

Next Steps

This document provides governments, researchers, and community groups a research and advocacy agenda to begin working on public spaces. In order to continue the momentum from the Bellagio workshop, those in attendance agree to the following next steps in 2016/2017:

- Begin developing the platform as a collaboration between HealthBridge, the African Physical Activity Network (AFPAN), and United Cities and Local Government (UCLG). Each of these organizations currently have structures and supports in place to assist their constituency group in

helping to plan, support and implement the development of public spaces. The intent of the platform is not to recreate the networks that already exist but will instead be responsible for bringing these three groups together to discuss issues and promote public space discourse and debate. Developing the platform will begin by forming an agenda committee whose role will be to ensure that the three groups connect and network. This committee will act as facilitator to ensure that there is consistent energy and synergy between the various roles and players. The three organizations would continue to be responsible for the administration and running of their individual networks.

- Further develop guidelines on how to initiate action on the Bellagio Accord for Public Spaces in African Cities. This will involve investigating the suitability of using existing documents developed elsewhere, and preparing, when necessary, new material.
- All participants to share the Bellagio Accord with the diverse groups and organizations with which they are connected. Each participant will look for ways to encourage participation in one of the three networks.
- Promote the Bellagio Accord at Habitat III at the Healthbridge and UCLG exhibition spaces. Recruit new participants and connect them to the three organizations as appropriate.

These important first steps, along with the Theory of Change to guide future planning and action, public spaces have the potential to become a top priority for African cities.

Signatories to the Bellagio Accord for Public Spaces in African Cities