

EDITORIAL

Shaping the Public Space Discourse with the Global South

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When I presented The Journal of Public Space at Habitat III, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, in Quito (2016), during an event at the Urban Library, I made it very clear that the partnership that City Space Architecture had established with UN-Habitat inspired our mission to give voice to unheard countries in order to include them in the discourse on public space. I was interested in overcoming the Western-oriented approach that currently shapes the knowledge of public space and to expand to a more complex understanding. This commitment was included in the editorial of the first issue (Bravo and Guaralda, 2016). Being a Diamond Open Access Journal reflects this mission by giving authors from fragile countries and territories, who are too often excluded, the opportunity to publish without article processing charges.

At the end of 2021, I started discussing with UN-Habitat the possibility of producing a thematic issue on the African continent. The idea was to give an overview of the state of the art of public space in several African countries, both in terms of research, by outlining issues and meanings, and in terms of practice, by looking at how it is implemented, with the intention of also showing the richness and diversity of cities, landscapes and urban settlements.

At the beginning of 2022 we launched a call for papers inviting scholars, designers, planners, city practitioners, historians and writers to offer critical and innovative contributions to understanding meanings and practices in plural and diverse African spaces, contexts, climates, regional and local scales, and histories. The issue was intended to contribute to the establishment of the Centre on African Public Spaces (CAPS), a project initiated by the City of Johannesburg (South Africa) in collaboration with other African cities, universities and community advocacy groups. As a Pan-African urban lab for public space, CAPS was designed to be a home and resource to a community of urban practitioners and thinkers, students, scholars and civil society activists dedicated to connect, exchange experiences, advance knowledge, share resources, grow expertise and mobilize on a wide range of relevant local, regional and global issues.

In response to the call for papers we received 70 submissions. We shortlisted 27 papers for this issue and we invited African scholars to serve as peer reviewers and to support the production of quality contents. The peer review process involved more than 60 African scholars and two African guest editors, for more than one year.

An overview of the issue was presented at the 11th World Urban Forum in Katowice (2022) during an event organized by the Centre on African Public Spaces (Fig. 1), in partnership with UN-Habitat Global Public Space Programme and GIZ Inclusive Violence and Crime Prevention Programme. The event discussed “Building community networks for participatory governance of public space”, with the participation of global stakeholders, including City Space Architecture as well as Block by Block, Public Space Network, Pepinieres Urbaines, Dreamtown, HealthBridge, Kounkey Design Initiative, PlacemakingX and Open Streets Cape Town.



Fig. 1. Global stakeholders attending the event organized by the Centre on African Public Space at the 11th World Urban Forum in Katowice (2022).

This thematic issue of *The Journal of Public Space* on “Public Space and Placemaking in African Cities” includes 15 academic articles and 9 case studies, from South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Northern Rhodesia, Namibia, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Morocco, presented in over 400 pages after a double-blind peer review process, that also engaged public space experts from UN-Habitat.

We're currently developing a second thematic issue focusing on the African continent. Our aim is to increase its impact and highlight the importance of shaping public discourse with the Global South.

References

Bravo, L. and Guaralda, M. (2016) “An open access forum for the discussion and advancement of research about public space”, *The Journal of Public Space*, 1(1), pp. 1–4. doi: 10.5204/jps.v1i1.3

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