

EDITORIAL

An open access forum for the discussion and advancement of research about public space

Luisa Bravo & Mirko Guaralda

Queensland University of Technology
Creative Industries Faculty, School of Design
luisa.bravo@qut.edu.au | m.guaralda@qut.edu.au

Human beings are social beings and public spaces have always been the stage of interaction, socialization and representation of a society as well as of a culture (Carmona, Heath, Oc, & Tiesdell, 2010). The role of public space has changed throughout history; the profound changes our cities have undergone during the industrial and technological revolution have modified the way people access and engage in the public domains (Gehl, 2010). The introduction of motorized vehicles and mass consumption commercial centres challenged the traditional view of publics and new types of public spaces in time have emerged. More recently, at the outset of the digital revolution, some analysts predicted that information technology would have sanctioned the death of public place, but the introduction of mobile technologies is instead fostering a renaissance of social public spaces (Foth, 2011). The way citizens relate to the public dominion has also deeply changed in recent decades with more and more bottom-up, pop-up and temporary interventions taking place in the public realms (Caldwell & Guaralda, 2016).

Public space is still the centre of the contemporary social life; its forms and types have evolved in time and today we are facing with a variety, complexity and richness in public spaces rarely experienced in the past. The traditional role of the square as gathering and social place has evolved in a multitude of location, uses and interactions. Streets, parks, commercial centres, cultural precincts, techno-parks, libraries, but also infrastructures, stations or parking lot today accommodate publics in different ways. What in the 1990s was labelled as a 'non-place' (Auge, 1995) today has resulted in a 'new-place'.

The discourse about public spaces is generally dominated by exempla coming mainly from Europe and North America, where in the 1960s and 1970s main theories about use and navigation of the built environment have been developed (Arefi, 2004). If on one side cases from these cultural areas are more accessible, on the other side interesting and relevant experiences are today developed all over the world, starting with the innovative and highly socially relevant intervention in South American cities. New types of public spaces are also emerging in the Asia-Pacific region, due to the digital revolution, or in Africa, in consideration of the massive urbanisation this continent is undergoing.

Whilst there are several dedicated publications to cities, urban morphologies, urban dynamics and urban design, a forum where to discuss and share research, experiences and projects about public space so far was not provided in a structured and clear way.

The Journal of Public Space aims to be the first international, open access journal, integrally dedicated to the discussion of public space in all its different forms and incantations. The objective is to provide a platform where academics and practitioners can share ideas and debate publicly breaking traditional disciplinary boundaries. We are willing to engage also artists, to provide a different point of view.

The Journal of Public Space, as a true public space, is meant to be an inclusive forum where people from different backgrounds can present their work and access other people's experiences. This is possible through the use of an open access platform (Open Journal System), where authors publish their work and readers can download articles without the payment of any fees. The open access platform could be also used to comment articles and to send requests to authors and editors. Nowadays academic knowledge is often not easily accessible; most of the leading journals require a subscription fee to access contents. Universities, institutions or individual researchers have often to deal with the substantial cost of knowledge in the form of fees to publishers, not only to be able to read contents, but in some cases even to have one's research reviewed and published. Publish or perish, they say, but how? A recent online petition "The Cost of Knowledge", signed by more than 15.000 researchers, is discussing the way knowledge is produced and disseminated in academia. Some illegal actions - like Sci-Hub, the first pirate website in the world to provide mass and public access to tens of millions of research papers - are standing against commercial enterprises. We promote a different approach to academic knowledge. We want a journal different from most of the leading journals that are currently available. Knowledge is a common good, in the same way public space in cities is a common good.

As a project, The Journal of Public Space was born as a collaboration between the nonprofit cultural association 'City Space Architecture', based in Bologna, Italy¹, and the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia². Discussions about the need of a new journal started after the first 'Past Present and Future of Public Space' International conference on Art, Architecture and Urban Design organised by 'City Space Architecture' that took place in Bologna on June 25-27, 2014³. After two years of brainstorming, discussion and planning, The Journal of Public Space commences now its journey, paying tribute to the international conference that has fostered its conception. The partnership with UN Habitat, the United Nations Agency for Cities and Human Settlements is a promising wish that the journal will be able to attract attention and interest not only of the academic environment but also of global institutions involved in the process of create, transform and manage public space all around the world. The Journal is committed to foster international collaboration and knowledge transfer from academia into industry and society and to facilitate better practice in the design and management of public spaces through access to knowledge and international exemplars.

In this first issue, the variety and richness of public space is discussed presenting some of the papers initially presented in 2014, revised, on a double blind peer review process, and expanded to suit the broad audience the journal aims to reach.

We present in this first issue a selection of five overviews that leading academics in the field of architecture have kindly provided in order to start rendering the complexities of

the discourse on public space. Margaret Crawford, Pietro Garau, Hendrik Tieben, Darko Radovic and Davisi Boontharm provide their view from different geographical and cultural perspectives. The journal is then organised in three sections covering Space, Society and Systems: six different papers discuss topics in design, such as urban form and temporary spaces; social dynamics, for example urban hacking or the emergence of new places; and complex topics related to publicness and openness. The viewpoint section closes the first issue providing an artist's point of view on his city, Bogota, a report on an on-going research project in Hong Kong and a report of a photography research project on instant urbanity initiated in Bologna.

Overall, this first issue gives voice to experiences across five different continents and provide points of view from different disciplines and cultural positions. As a first issue, the tone and structure of the Journal is still developing, but its vision as a public inclusive forum is clear.

After the 2014 conference in Bologna, City Space Architecture and the Queensland University of Technology are currently establishing the 'Past Present and Future of Public Space' research group, intended to engage academic scholars from multidisciplinary fields in the advancement of knowledge and understanding of the complexity and relevance of public space in our cities. The Journal of Public Space was presented on September 23, 2016, in Venice, Italy, during an international seminar, in the frame of Biennale Sessions, a special educational project of La Biennale di Venezia. This symposium was the first meeting of the 'Past Present and Future of Public Space' research group.

The Journal of Public Space will be officially launched at the Habitat III conference, the United Nations Conference and Sustainable Urban Development, that will take place in Quito, Ecuador, on October 17-20, 2016⁴. City Space Architecture, the Queensland University of Technology and UN Habitat will held a talk at the Urban Library on October 19, 5.00-5.45pm at the main venue of the conference, Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana 'Benjamín Carrión'. This talk is included in the main programme of the conference.

Habitat III is a major global summit that takes place every twenty years⁵, to decide the future of cities. More than 45.000 participants already registered. We hope to provide a valuable contribution.

Bologna/Brisbane, October 13, 2016

Acknowledgments

The Editors would like to thank the Queensland University of Technology, QUT Library and QUT - Creative Industries Faculty for the support to this editorial project. We would like also to acknowledge the support of QUT eJournal Community of Practice for their input in finalising this first issue. Finally we wish to thank every one who has collaborated to this first number; the Scientific and Editorial Boards our Correspondants and particularly all the academics who have volunteered their time to peer-review the articles.

Notes

(1) <http://www.cityspacearchitecture.org>

(2) <http://www.qut.edu.au>

(3) The 'Past Present and Future of Public Space' International Conference on Art, Architecture and Urban Design (2014) was organised by City Space Architecture under the patronage of the Municipality of Bologna, the Department of Architecture of the University of Bologna, the Italian Institute of Urban Planners (INU), the Institute of Cultural Heritage of the Emilia-Romagna Region, the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna, the Professional Association of Architects and Engineers in Bologna, the Italian Council of Architectural Libraries and the International Society of Biourbanism, with the collaboration of several relevant Italian Institutions. Conference details are available here: <http://www.cityspacearchitecture.org/?p=past-present-future-of-public-space>

(4) Official website of the conference: <https://habitat3.org/>. More details on the conference are available here: <http://citiscope.org/habitatIII/explainer/what-habitat-iii>

(5) The first one was in Vancouver in 1976, the second one was in Istanbul in 1996.

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To cite this Editorial:

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

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