

INNOVAZIONE/INNOVATION

The quality and enjoyment of public space: the Charter of Public Space

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The idea of a Charter of Public Space was launched by Pietro Garau, international curator of the Biennial of Public Space. The need for a shared definition of public space was what prompted by the international curator of the Biennial of Public Space to launch in 2013 the idea of a "Charter of Public Space". A strong push to help turn this concept into reality was the idea, developed in partnership with Marichela Sepe, to present it at a side event during the 2012 World Urban Forum in Naples. During that event, useful inputs were collected. A public-space partnership was also born between INU and UN-Habitat, the main organizer of the Forum. This led to UN-Habitat's participation in the second Biennial, the signing of an agreement of cooperation with INU, the joint organization of an international Expert Group Meeting on Public Space and Sustainable Urban Development (Rome, January 2014), and INU's selection as partner in the preparation of a "Global Public Space Toolkit". The Toolkit, a tool based on the Charter's three main themes (design, development and management of public spaces) was presented at the 2014 World Urban Forum in Medellin, Colombia. Immediately after the 2012 WUF in Naples, Lucia Lancerin joined the drafting group and provided a fundamental contribution by inserting the Charter's project in the nation-wide "Journey to Good Practice Municipalities" conceived to involve local governments in the Biennial's preparatory process.

The Charter consists in a preamble, which clarifies the importance of public space and the goals of the Charter itself; a definition of public space, followed by a description of various typologies of public spaces; a series of recommendations for the creation,

management and enjoyment of public space, and a description of constraints to be overcome in order to connect these three aspects to aspects, equally important to develop public spaces of quality.

The Charter's key elements are: a clear and understandable definition of public space: public space as a public good; reasonable and shared principles regarding the creation, design, realization, maintenance, enjoyment and transformation of public space; all in a concise document and, like public space, accessible to all.

The "Charter of Public Space" aspires, indeed, to be a document of all those who believe in the city and in its extraordinary ability for hospitality, solidarity, conviviality and sharing; in its inimitable virtue in encouraging social interaction, encounter, togetherness, freedom and democracy; and in its calling for giving life to these values through public space. At the same time, cities show the worsening of economic, social, ethnic, cultural and generational inequalities. Public space must be the place where citizenship rights are guaranteed and differences are respected and appreciated.

Finally, it is important to highlight two principles of the Charter that summarize its goals and which include resilience and adaptability. The enjoyment of public space is intimately linked to its civil, respectful and responsible use. The quality of public-space enjoyment is therefore tied not only to the availability, quality, mutability, adaptability and maintenance level of public spaces, but also to the behaviour of individual citizens. The good use of public spaces is closely linked to their mutability and adaptability in relation to the changing needs of citizens.

