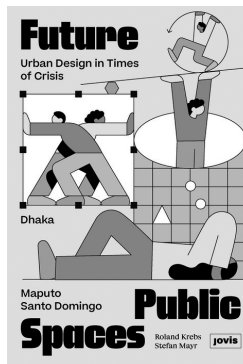


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FUTURE PUBLIC SPACES URBAN DESIGN IN TIMES OF CRISIS



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Starting from the hypothesis that the right to public space is a fundamental human right, the publication emphasizes participatory planning as a key tool for purposeful urban space transformation. The impetus for the project was the recent COVID pandemic, which, in addition to the health crisis modeled by the virus, quickly became an urban crisis characterized by irregular work, weak access to healthcare, and lack of access to dignified housing and open urban spaces, especially from the perspective of the Global South.

Through the initiative of the Participatory Urban Design project financed by the World Bank and the Ministry of Finance of Austria, the architectural office Superwien has been commissioned to develop and implement new approaches in the design of urban public spaces in three underdeveloped cities: Dhaka (Bangladesh), Maputo (Mozambique) and Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic). Although divided by thousands of kilometres, these cities share similar features – they are all fast-growing, former colonial cities, challenged by many crises, such as contested public spaces, gender-based violence, unsustainable transportation, unequal access to affordable housing, and institutional weakness.

The main goal of the initiative was to strengthen the capacity of the local authorities in the mentioned cities, to be involved in the participatory process of urban design, with an emphasis on the promotion of open and usable public spaces designed by the local community and located in marginal urban zones. The analysis and encounters with significantly different urban, social, and political systems have revealed related obstacles and shortcomings in previous projects, causing even deeper social and economic divisions, as well as the disintegration of society and the urban space.

The logically structured research process began by collecting data and addressing the challenges of individual locations through dialogue with representatives of each city, to obtain a condensed insight into the local per-

spectives and specific conditions of each city. After the insight, several experts set a methodological framework in the direction of integrated urban development, which is manifested in 7 main themes and challenges, which lay the basis for a resilient public space: *Planning from Below*, *Gender-sensitive Planning*, *Transitioning into inclusive mobility*, *Activating the Local Economy*, *Climate Change Adaptation*, *Closing the Housing Gap*, and *Responsive City Administration*.

The contextualization of the Global South issue was carried out through a series of panels with local architects from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, in which topics in interdisciplinary practices related to community mapping, urban gaming, post-conflict planning, and academic involvement were studied thoroughly. As a result of joint effort, the publication offers three case study projects with specific requirements and aspirations that have been realized.

Dhaka, Bangladesh – Shahjahanpur Jheel Lake is a former green oasis located in a densely populated neighbourhood of Dhaka, northwest of the Central Railway Station, which has partially dried up over time and degraded into a dump site. Together with the local community, Superwien has created an urban vision for Jheel to revitalize the surrounding area. The area of 3.5 hectares is enriched with new greenery and united by a continuous promenade around the lake, along with the necessary infrastructure, children's playgrounds, seating groups, and additional pedestrian bridges over the lake.

Maputo, Mozambique – In the urban conglomeration of Maputo, new centralities were identified in twenty informal neighbourhoods around the formal city (*the cidade de cimento*), whose population numbers more than 250,000 members. The neighbourhoods are densely populated and suffer from a lack of green spaces and space for recreation and outdoor living, and most of them have limited access to water, waste collection, electricity, and sewage. Together with the local commu-

nity, the Superwien initiative recognizes and designs the main central open spaces, which become the headquarters of each of the 20 newly created neighborhoods. Accordingly, these previously disordered and chaotic systems gain a sense of micro-community and belonging. The initiative also included the creation of a 20 km long Active Mobility Network to connect pedestrian and bicycle paths.

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic – In a city characterized by a large amount of traffic and the dominance of cars, the project focused on the Quinto Centenario Expressway, which represented an undesirable infrastructural gap in the urban fabric. Its construction destroyed parts of the settlement and caused the relocation of more than 2,000 inhabitants. Fortunately, a metro line was subsequently developed under the highway. The project focuses on the infrastructural development of public spaces connected to the existing metro line, and turns the highway into an urban avenue, by reducing the number of car lanes and introducing greenery and cyclists.

Based on experience and knowledge obtained through the participatory projects in the three observed cities, the authors conceived the comprehensive Co-creative Design Toolbox as a universal methodological tool and guidelines for designing and acting on related topics. Introduced Toolbox presents various ways in which to involve the public at various stages within the planning process and is divided into four sections named after the main objectives: *local assessment and scoping*, *vision and goals*, *action planning*, and *feedback and evaluation*.

The complex process of learning, research, and participation that culminates with the inclusion of the ideas and guidelines for the local community is presented through logical and exact guidelines in the last chapter of the book. As a result, this publication represents a valuable contribution to the mentioned topic and serves as a relevant template for future related initiatives.