0pen Public Space and the Private Sector

A toolkit for overcoming barriers and best practices

FINAL REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF BOXES

Preamble and acknowledgements

PREAMBLE

This report accompanies and complements a pilot study titled "The Private Sector's Role in the Production of Open Public Spaces in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City." This pilot study interrogates the role and impact of an important policy reorientation in Vietnam regarding the production of open public spaces in cities such as parks, public gardens and playgrounds. Beginning in the late 1990s, this policy shift transferred a significant part of the responsibility to invest in the design, construction and management of these spaces from the public to the private sector.

One of the objectives of the pilot study was to critically assess the policy tools and mechanisms currently used in Vietnam to involve the private sector in the production of open public spaces in cities. Building on the study, this report helps to put this critical assessment in international perspective. It does so by reviewing the experiences of a variety of cities around the world with privately-produced open public spaces. It synthesizes recommendations formulated by international organizations to overcome barriers related to the financing, planning, management, governance and quality of open public spaces by the private sector. It further identifies and discusses best practices identified by these same organizations to produce high-quality, accessible and genuinely public green and open spaces in cities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

All around the world, the way cities are built, managed and planned is changing—and rapidly. Several major transformations are underway globally:

- **New kinds of urbanization**. We are increasingly living in a suburban planet, where urban expansion is occurring in vast territories surrounding major cities, often called peri-urban areas. In many of the world's most populated regions, it is becoming increasingly difficult to speak of cities as conventionally understood. Rather, megacity regions are taking form wherein many cities and suburban areas are linked by an infrastructural web. In addition, developers, investors and governments increasingly favour highly planned new towns and satellite cities, which have their own regulations and functions, often as gated communities. Finally, urbanization and peri-urban development in particular has led to loss of farmland, significant changes in food systems and encroachment and degradation of ecosystems.[1]

- **Changed environment for investment**. These changes must be seen in the context of a dramatically transformed economy. High rates of economic growth, a globalized financial market with little national barriers, and over-accumulation of capital has opened up unprecedented investment opportunities. By and large, investors seek stable investments with short-term but reliable payoffs. Because of this, real estate has become one of the most desirable avenues for investment and speculation, consisting of about 60% of all capital investments globally. Concurrently, as municipalities and countries seek capital for housing a growing urban population, public-private and private-private partnerships have become common avenues for financing, construction and management of urban developments. Finally, the liberalization of state communist markets, and a shift away from social democratic models around the world, has led to more opportunities for private involvement in management and development of urban space.[2]

- **Desire for green space and public areas.** Just as ecosystems see degradation due to fast-paced urbanization, there is increased enthusiasm from the public for the provision of green spaces in urban areas. In addition, municipalities are realizing the importance of offering open public spaces to citizens, which encourage the development of a strong community fabric, health and well-being, and more livable cities.[3]

In the context of these many changes, offering ***open public spaces*** in cities and new developments has become an important way to increase attractiveness of urban areas, citizen satisfaction and participation while encouraging a healthy, functioning urban life.

Plazas, markets and gardens in particular have existed in many cities around the world for millennia.[4] While more formal public spaces often reflected dominant powers, such as for military parades or political speeches, other more mundane spaces such as public markets

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[1] Keil (2017); Barthel et al. (2019); Gu (2019)
[2] Stein (2019); Fernandez & Aalbers (2020)
[3] Stanley et al. (2012)
[4] Historical evidence of urban public spaces (gardens, plazas, recreational areas, green spaces, etc.) has been documented across Indian, Nigerian, Chinese, Aztec, Ottoman, Moroccan, Russian and South Asian premodern cities.

were also often used in diverse ways by citizens, such as for leisure and trade. Dedicated open public spaces like parks and recreational areas are relatively recent developments. They arose in the 19th and 20th centuries, largely as a response to industrialization and imperatives of planning for a healthy, cultured working population. The early 20th century saw large-scale, top-down modernist planning, such as that of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, as well as social housing in Western European countries, such as the *banlieues* in France, where large social housing developments included housing, plazas, parks, essential services and recreation areas.

According to the Charter of Public Space, agreed upon by all parties present at the 2013 Biennial of Public Space convened by UN-Habitat, public spaces are important because they:

-   Support the movement of and interaction between people;
-   Host accessible commercial and public activities;
-   Offer space for recreation, leisure, exercise and regeneration;
-   Promote education and culture;
-   Promote conviviality, encounter and freedom of expression;
-   Are important for individual and collective memory and community identity;
-   Are vital in the integration of ecosystems and architecture, and determine the image of the city;
-   Are one of the main tools available to governments to build social and economic wealth and upgrade urban space.[5]

In modern societies, and increasingly around the world, the provision of open public spaces is often steered by the drive for profit and returns on investment rather than public interest. Today, large-scale open public space development is often not a primarily public endeavour but involves significant private participation from the planning stage to the financing, construction and management. As a result, new models for public space management have emerged, such as privately-owned public spaces (POPS)[6] and open public-spaces in low-income areas financed and managed by non-profit organizations and philanthropic initiatives.[7]

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[5]   Biennial of Public Space (2013). Charter of Public Space, Adopted in Rome, Final session of the II Biennial of Public Space, May 18, 2013, URL: http://www. biennalespaziopubblico.it/blog/ wp-content/uploads/2013/11/ CHARTER-OF-PUBLIC-SPACE_June- 2013_pdf-.pdf
[6]   Privately owned spaces which zoning laws require to be publicly accessible.
[7]   Stanley et al. (2012)

Box 1: What is an open public space?

We define an open public space as:

A formally managed outdoor space in an urban area, accessible to the public. These are mostly unbuilt, landscaped spaces (whether hard- or soft-scape) designed to have aesthetic, socialization and/or recreational functions. These spaces can be owned, managed or designed by the public or private sector, or by civil society.

This report is concerned with the growing involvement of **the private sector in the production of open public spaces**. Our focus is on **open public spaces the planning, financing, development, management and/or maintenance of which have involved actors from the private sector**.

Private involvement in open public spaces may concern (see Figure 1):

- **Quasi-public, pseudo-public or semi-public spaces**. This category includes publicly accessible outdoor commercial areas (e.g., a square surrounded by cafés, outdoor market) along with parks, gardens and childrens' playgrounds in masterplanned communities that are accessible to non-residents. While indoor malls, markets, theme parks, wilderness areas, vacant lots, private pools and pay-for-entry services are also typically included in this category, they are not taken into consideration in this report.
- **Public facilities and/or urban services.** This can include playgrounds, outdoor exercise areas, and sidewalks with benches and greenery. We do not include public facilities that are not open to the general public or charge an entrance fee (e.g., stadiums, airports, waterworks, schools).
- **Parks, leisure areas, walkways, bodies of water, fountains**.
- **Privately-owned, publicly accessible areas**. Such as parks, squares, gardens or playgrounds owned and maintained by a private entity.
- **Strategic partnerships of any kind**. This could involve joint or partial ownership, management, financing or development of, for example, private security overseeing an open public space.

As is clear, private involvement in open public spaces is an important issue today. Researchers, non-governmental organizations and many international organizations agree that public development and management of open public spaces is preferable over private management of space. This is because ***private involvement can often lead to cost overruns, lack of long-term commitment, little oversight or limited public accessibility*** (see Table 1 below).

However, ***despite the many barriers for the success of private involvement in public spaces, the fact is that it is increasingly common***. While many public spaces around the world continue to be publicly owned and management, a significant portion of these spaces use models of investment and management that involve the private sector.[8] Municipal and national governments often have the will to provide more open public space to urban residents but face different barriers to doing so, such as zoning, development regulations, lack of

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[8] Kaw et al. (2020)

finances, environmental management, pressure from the private sector, and long-term maintenance (see Table 1).[9] Yet, even as private sector participation is increasingly prevalent globally, ***there is little clear information on how to ensure high-quality open public spaces that involve the private sector.***

PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF OPEN PUBLIC SPACES	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Ability to finance projects through raising money from real estate, investors and philanthropy.	No one-size-fits-all model in terms of planning and maintaining private involvement. Establishing partnerships and approach can take time.
Ability to mobilize external funding (e.g., international investors).	In developments entirely managed by the private sector, participatory planning is often more difficult.
Can limit improper use of public space, e.g., through use of private security, limiting illegal commercial activities or parking on public space, etc.	Less long-term viability, subject to eventual privatization and loss of accessibility to the public.
Not subject to lack of planning or indecisiveness from public actors.	Private actors are in large part motivated by profit and are often compelled to meet demands other than those of the community (e.g., shareholders).
By developing areas zoned as open public space, developers can limit competition for land and real estate.	Often lead to proliferation of commercial uses, commodification of public space.
Can organize programming and benefit from clearly defined roles (e.g., oversight, financing, security, upkeep).	Subject to pressure from speculation on real estate.
Projects can benefit from a strong base of investment from diverse stakeholders (e.g., small business owners).	Local authorities may face difficulties in enforcing regulations in open public spaces involving private actors.
Allows for creativity from private sector for development of innovative uses of public space.	Reliance on private security may lead to lack of oversight and exclusion of marginalized groups (e.g., minorities and urban poor).
Involving civil society can increase engagement in managing public spaces, encouraging vibrancy, shared ownership, a sense of place, and satisfactory city life.	Difficulty of oversight, long-term maintenance and tendency to become more inaccessible as financing decreases.
	May design public spaces with exclusiveness in mind, e.g., to keep out homeless, informal vendors or urban poor.
	Little incentive to provide public amenities to under-resourced neighbourhoods.
	Government mechanisms to ensure accessible and sufficient public space, including regulation, financing and oversight, are often unclear.

Table 1: Strengths and weaknesses of the private sector involvement in the development and management of open public spaces.[10]

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[9]   De Magalhaes & Trigo (2017)
[10] UN-Habitat (2015); San Francisco Planning Department (n.d.)
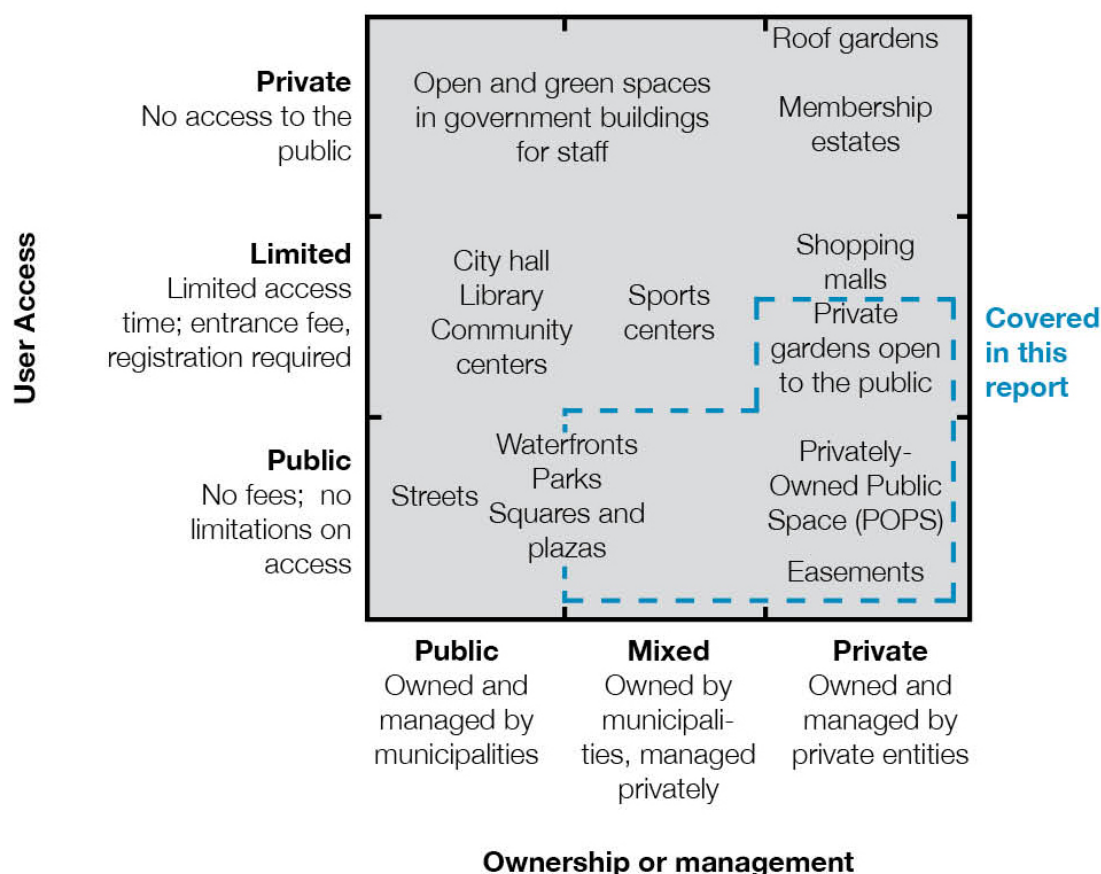
Figure 1: Examples of public spaces by ownership, management and user group, and types of open public spaces discussed in this report.[11]

This report identifies challenges and best practices for private involvement in open public spaces. The report relies on academic literature and reports by non-governmental organizations as well as municipalities, predominantly published in English. A total of 42 journal articles and reports were analyzed (see References). The analysis pays specific attention to non-Western contexts—in this regard, academic literature has less to offer compared to grey literature put together by international organizations. We also focus on more contemporary literature (2000–present), which takes into account current developments in urbanization, especially in the Global South.

The intended audience of the report is officials, local governments and civil society. The report discusses ways to overcome barriers or shortcomings stemming from the involvement of the private sector in open public space investment, design, management and maintenance. It also gives examples of innovative models that address these barriers from around the world, with the aim of inspiring decision-makers. Finally, the report outlines best practices for governments with regard to private involvement in the financing, development and management of open public spaces. The recommendations presented in this report are drawn from a wide array of sources and examples, from high-income to low-income countries. The report emphasizes that all municipalities have the capacity to improve their capacity to build and maintain high-quality public spaces through involving private actors and avoid shortcomings and pitfalls discussed in the report.

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[11]   Adapted from Kaw et al. (2020)

OVERCOMING BARRIERS: FINANCING, PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE, AND QUALITY

Each country has a unique legal, cultural and political systems—guided by different goals and economic interests. This makes it very difficult to identify the main problems faced by open public spaces, and how to address them. However, the literature clearly shows that there are cross-cutting lessons for how to develop and manage open public spaces with private sector involvement. In general, the private sector can be involved in four dimensions of open public spaces: financing, planning and strategy, management and governance, and quality. These aspects encapsulate the different choices to be made about how to design a space, maintain it, fund it, and assess its use. In the following, we describe what each dimension entails, some of the common issues associated with it, and best practices specific to this aspect of the private sectors' involvement. We intersperse this section with examples of innovative schemes which have been documented across the world. This then leads us to, in the final section, describe cross-cutting best practices.

Box 2: Questions to consider when planning an open public space

Financing

The funding of the public space, how that funding is maintained over time, and the way by which appropriate expenditures and acquisitions are assessed.

- Where does the money come from for design, construction, maintenance, clean-up, oversight and security? Can those finances remain stable in the long term?

Planning

The way that the public space fits within long-term urban planning processes, integrates with the urban landscape, and the design of the space itself.

- Who are the actors, and how are they involved?
- Who has the power to carry out decisions made in the planning process?
- How does the public space fit with long-term urban planning orientations and goals (e.g., sustainability, livability)?
- Who participates in the planning process? How can planning ensure equal participation in design and long-term use? Who carries out long-term operations and maintenance of the space? Who has the authority to monitor and intervene in the public space?
- How does the design of the public space integrate with the urban environment? What kinds of users does it favour (e.g., pedestrians or cars, wealthy or poor)?
- What are the expected social, environmental, economic and health benefits of the open public space?

Management and governance

The ownership, regulations, zoning, maintenance, oversight and different kinds of institutional arrangements.

- Who owns the land? Who maintains it? What kinds of regulations are in place to ensure quality open public spaces? What body oversees construction, delivery (handover) and long-term functioning?

Quality

The sustainability, accessibility, safety and use of a space, and how they are assessed.

- How accessible is the space to the public? How does it improve well-being and urban liveability? Who uses it and who is excluded from the space?
- How should the space be made safe and secure for its users? Who oversees security?
- How can usage and quality be assessed over time?

FINANCING

Finding funding for both the development and long-term stability of open public spaces is paramount to their success. As the forms of involvement of the private sector in public spaces diversifies, sources of funding are also diversifying—leading to a lot of experimentation, innovation and, all too often, financial instability.

COMMON ISSUES

Risks. As with management, funding often faces the challenge of unpredictable events, such as financial insolvency of private or public actors, fluctuating funding for public spaces from the local government, competition between different actors and interests (e.g., will an undeveloped lot become a park or a hotel?) or changing political priorities. As a result, operations often fall by the wayside, leading to degradation of the public space.

Long-term costs. Operations and oversight are often not adequately planned for, leading to public spaces falling into disrepair, becoming unsafe or no longer integrated in their urban environment. In addition, while design and development are often given priority, ultimately, public spaces often lack sufficient funding to cover day-to-day operations. This is especially so with private involvement in open public spaces, because there tends to be little incentive for developers to maintain spaces in the long term after initial investments and expected profits are already made.

Cost overruns. Due to poor planning or lack of oversight and transparency, projects often see cost overruns, their completion date is pushed back and, in some cases, they are left unfinished.

Mismatched priorities. In creating public spaces, developers may focus on expensive, spectacular interventions (e.g., innovative design, expensive high-tech features) while putting less focus on financing for the long term, for example, by making sure that infrastructure is robust and easily replaceable. As a result, budgets are often depleted for the more necessary aspects of maintaining a public space.

Focus on the real estate sector. In financing open public spaces, officials and developers may focus on their potential for boosting short-term real estate sales rather than considering them within an integrated, well-budgeted, long-term plan for sustainable urban development. As a result, open public spaces may become neglected, may not fit within the wider urban landscape, or their entire lifecycle may not be accounted for.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Plan for lifecycle of open public spaces. Adequate planning and creating an appropriate regulatory environment is essential for ensuring the long-term financial stability of open public spaces. Planning for the lifecycle includes taking into account each step of development and execution from the very first stages: construction, operations, oversight, assessment, auditing and eventual deconstruction or renovation. This also involves **earmarking adequate funding for necessary services (e.g., clean-up, security, oversight and signage) from the beginning of the project design.**

Work with, and make demands from, the real estate sector. It is a reality that much of urban development is driven by interests in real estate development and the profits from it. However, this does not mean that developers should be given free reign: with high profit

margins, they should also be required to share their profits, which are, after, all, possible due to public sector infrastructure and maintenance (e.g., roads, sewage, electricity). One strategy is what is called **value sharing**, where municipalities capture unearned land value through, for example, taxing profits made from land sales. This income can then be earmarked to fund long-term maintenance of open public spaces.[12]

Consider diverse tools for funding. Along with value-sharing, there exist a variety of tools to fund open public spaces. Some of these include:[13]

- *Evaluating available land and updating property tax assessments.* Assessing what is already available can go far in highlighting opportunities. A thorough census of publicly-owned land can lead to trading, leasing or selling land for the purpose of development elsewhere. A property tax assessment, where all properties and their real estate value are re-evaluated, can highlight inefficiencies and political inaction and generate missing revenue.[14]
- *Land readjustment.* Commonly used in East Asian countries, India and Germany. A certain area of land is pooled together and replanned, and some parcels are sold, redeveloped or turned into public parks. Though the original owners are left with less land, their land is now of higher value because it is better serviced and/or connected to amenities and infrastructure.
- *Tax-incremented financing.* This tool takes advantage of growing real estate value by borrowing bonds according to the estimated future revenue from property taxes to fund urban redevelopment projects.
- *Transit-oriented development.* This involves planning around transit infrastructure such as commuter trains—which raise the land value of certain areas and thereby increase potential tax revenues.
- *Exactions.* Developers are required to offer in-kind services for public use, such as streets or public spaces, which are then handed over to public management.
- *Impact fees.* Developers are required to pay one-time fees for the construction or development of public services, as a way to offset government costs of those services.
- *Incentive zoning.* Allowing developers to exceed certain regulations (e.g., floor-area ratio, number of floors) in exchange for developing public amenities like parks.
- *Special case-specific zoning laws.* Developers are given mandates or favourable rezoning, for example, to develop commercial activities surrounding public spaces.
- *Private donations.* Public spaces are maintained through the establishment of partnerships with non-profit groups, or through philanthropic donations.
- *Fees for services.* Users are charged fees for certain services offered in the open public space (e.g., parking, event fees), the proceeds of which fund its maintenance. However, it is recommended these fees do not exclude some potential users from the space itself (e.g., a park should avoid charging an entrance fee that the poorest section of the urban population cannot afford).
- *Crowdsourcing.* Crowdsourcing, or raising money from the public often through online campaigns, can offer an opportunity for innovation and experimentation. However, this is recommended for temporary public projects only, ideally in partnership with citizen groups.
- *Earmarked revenues.* Revenue from public spaces can be used for other purposes. For example, income from recreation areas, corporate sponsorship or park dedication fees can be used for renovation or maintenance costs elsewhere.

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[12] UN-Habitat (2020)
[13] Drawn from Shaw et al., 2020: p. 60–81 unless stated otherwise.
[14] UN-Habitat (2014)

- *Accommodate informal sector.* Managers could also consider accommodating informal sector trading activities in open public spaces through a non-exploitative licensing system. Such activities help drive traffic and use of public spaces and encourages a sense of safety among users.[15]
- *Transfer building rights.* Municipalities can transfer rights to build to themselves or private partners through legislation, and so obtain land at little cost.[16]
- *Capture unearned land value.* Also called *value sharing* (discussed above), municipalities can take a cut of any sales of land, which is then earmarked for public projects.

Consider in-kind funding arrangements. While public spaces require a stable source of funding, it is also possible to reduce costs in different ways. This could include, for example, partnering with citizen groups to maintain the space, volunteer clean-up efforts, encouraging a sense of ownership by the community (which tends to lead community member to contribute to the maintenance the space), or requiring that developers offer in-kind services in exchange for certain land-use rights, such as covering clean-up costs or providing parking for users of the space.[17]

Case-by-case flexibility. Financing open public spaces can be facilitated through flexibility in regulations, design and management, albeit under a stable regulatory environment and transparent oversight.

Collaborate. Building strong links with other actors and multiple city divisions can go a long way in financing projects. It will allow for pooling funding sources and finding new money sources. Governments and developers can also consider minimizing costs by, for example, co-locating services (e.g., flood control and public parks, or consolidating community centres and recreation areas) or incorporating low-maintenance green design (e.g., sustainable landscaping, natural ventilation and shaded areas).

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[15] UN-Habitat (2020) p. 43
[16] UN-Habitat (2014) p. 42
[17] Barker et al. (2019)

PLANNING

The development, management and maintenance of open public spaces, even if they are built or managed by private entities, requires planning and a strategic approach. This involves agenda-setting by the government, establishing criteria and long-term goals, and bringing together the multiple stakeholders involved in open public spaces (developers, urban planners, officials, citizens, communities) through open-ended but guided processes. It also involves doing the preliminary work to ensure that the public space will be maintained and managed adequately, financed, and meet existing regulations and zoning requirements. In other words, planning means making sure that open public spaces fit with wider social goals, values and requirements. Thus, good planning affects all other aspects of public space development and management, and is the key in limiting barriers to developing successful public spaces.

COMMON ISSUES

When planning for open public spaces with private involvement, stakeholders regularly face the following barriers:

Strategy. Often, planning an open public space is ad-hoc and situational, not connected to a wider strategy. If a long-term strategy does exist, there may be inadequate institutions set up to ensure that open public spaces are aligned with it. And, existing guidelines and strategies are often not helpful in making key decisions about how to create and run open public spaces. For these reasons, researchers and international organizations recommend that governments lead the planning process and integrate open public spaces in their long-term strategy.

Design. Planning also concerns the design of public spaces and how they are integrated into urban environments (existing or to be developed). Often, public spaces constructed by private entities do not fit well with the urban landscape and are often "enclaves," and the infrastructure can be inadequate for long-term use of the space. This is because private actors may be more concerned with keeping costs low than with accessibility of the spaces, or the development of the project may not be integrated with larger urban planning processes. Open public spaces should provide urban transitions, links between blocks in the city and a continuity in the urban fabric.

Aligning actors and stakeholders. Another common issue is the lack of coordination across institutions in terms of design, maintenance, construction and ownership. This could involve, for example, a lack of coordination between police departments charged with security or traffic control, the municipal agencies responsible for parks and sanitation, and private landscaping firms—leading to a public space that is in disuse or perceived as unsafe or unclean by its users.

Participation. During the planning process, governments and private entities have the chance to involve citizens and local communities in the design process, to get their feedback on initial proposals, and to allow them to express their needs and concerns. However, public participation in the planning process is often lacking. As a result, once the space is built, citizens do not feel represented or consulted. In many cases, this limits their sense of ownership of the space. Weak public participation at the planning stages has other negative effects, such as a low degree involvement of the community in informal management of the space, which can contribute greatly to maintenance, safety and cleanliness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Asset management. One key recommendation from the World Bank to address various problems that arise from working with private actors is to align planning and strategy through asset management. They outline five steps. First, assess the regulatory changes that need to be made to make the project or city-wide strategy a reality. Second, assess interest from the private sector and determine resources available. Third, ensure that the project or strategy has high-level support from politicians and urban planners. Fourth, take leadership with developing a conceptual design through a public-private partnership. Fifth, and finally, ensure that there is accountability by developing long-term oversight mechanisms.

Concerted planning process. Existing literature also highlights the necessity of a concerted planning process, ideally resulting in a 5-year plan, involving local leaders and local communities affected by the development. The involvement of local communities and leaders, and the enabling of local champions in particular, is essential. It can decrease costs down the line (e.g., upkeep, safety) and internalize ownership by the community (see ***Management and governance***, below)**.** To avoid institutional gaps and build accountability, projects could also be incorporated into other already-existing planning initiatives, such as flood mitigation or transport. A successful planning process that takes into account the concerns and needs of different stakeholders can also guarantee appropriate and accessible design, such as by designing for children or for local minority groups with multi-language signage.

Sign a joint contract. Even if there may not be a legal mandate to put agreements and responsibilities in writing, it is suggested that in all cases parties (in varying arrangements between public and private entities) sign a joint contract. When dealing with a private entity, the actors responsible for the public space must, according to international guidelines, "develop a procurement procedure, a request for proposals (including terms of reference [TOR]) for bidders, and a draft contract. And, eventually, the responsible party must conduct the procurement, which ideally would include the possibility for bidders to reflect on the draft TOR and contract."[18]

Experiment. It is also recommended, especially in countries where private ownership of and involvement in public spaces is still nascent, that governments incentivize innovation and experimentation with the kinds of open spaces available to the public. This could involve funding pilot projects, offering temporary take-over of public spaces as proofs of concept, or setting up discretionary funding or competitions for small-scale proposals. Pilot projects can help model new ideas and generate feedback. Designs can be low-cost, such as paint and planters, to demarcate space. Temporary projects like temporary tents or heated gathering spaces can also be seasonal, planned around warmer, cooler or drier months, depending on the climate. Institutionalization of successful trials can come afterward. However, it remains necessary to have oversight mechanisms throughout and plan them with set timeframes.

Consider power. Throughout the planning process, it is important to consider who has the power to implement decisions, to oversee the space or implementation of the strategy, and to monitor construction and long-term operations. It is recommended that the government be involved in planning and have oversight mechanisms ready before the project is initiated. Further, there need to be mechanisms in place to ensure that the management of the space is accountable to its users, for example, through feedback mechanisms and easily accessible information.

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[18] Kaw et al. (2020) p. 87

MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Increasingly around the world, management and ownership of public space involves a variety of actors. A World Bank survey of public spaces in Nairobi, Kenya; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Wuhan, China; and Bamenda, Cameroon found that governments continue to be predominant owners of public space, even as a majority of those public spaces rely on mixed models of management, such as joint ownership, private security and so on.[19] This highlights the fact that even if governments own the land, they need to develop the capacity to work with private actors and ensure that there is adequate oversight of open public spaces and their management, and a dependable regulatory environment.

Therefore, beyond planning, a key consideration is how to manage and govern an open public space, both in the immediate present and the long-term future. While planning is the process by which governance of public spaces can be aligned to ensure their development and long-term sustainability, management and governance pertains more to the day-to-day requirements of how to run an open public space successfully. There are several forms of private sector involvement in the management of open public spaces, including management by a non-profit organization, the outsourcing of management operations to a private company paid by the local budget, and full management and funding by a private entity.[20]

COMMON ISSUES

Responsibilities. Here, responsibilities refer to different forms of ownership, which could either include use-rights over land which ownership remains public (as in communist countries) or freehold, private ownership of land (as in capitalist systems). When it comes to fully private ownership, regulations can differ in terms of who is responsible for maintaining the land, whether the government nevertheless has the right to buy or expropriate the land, or whether regulations for use and access to publicly-owned spaces apply to open public spaces with private sector involvement, including privately-owned public spaces. Further, ownership can be mixed and responsibilities may be unclear or not formalized in a country's legal structure. This applies, for example, to the case of an accident, given the infrastructure of the public space. Beyond fully public and private ownership, there are many kinds of ownership and management structures: steering committees, development corporations, business improvement districts and memoranda of agreements which stipulate very different relationships and responsibilities.[21] It can therefore be difficult for stakeholders to choose what kind of ownership agreements will be best suited for the management of open public spaces.

Regulations. This includes the kinds of rules and policies in place that guide the development, management, operations and oversight of public spaces—which can apply to both publicly-owned open public spaces and those in which the private sector is involved in one way or another. When regulating these aspects of open public spaces, actors often face difficulties such as the unintended or unforeseeable impacts of shifts, such as new technologies (like widespread use of smartphones) or cultural movements (like skateboarding). Regulations must catch up with these developments while keeping public spaces accessible. This is especially difficult in the case of public spaces owned or under the control of private entities, since government regulations often do not apply to private actors. The different application of regulations to publicly-run public spaces versus those owned or controlled by the private sector can lead to variegated levels of access by the public in different kinds of spaces (also

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[19] Kaw et al. (2020) p. 13
[20] Ibid. p. 79
[21] Ibid. p. 24

see **Usage and quality** below). For example, in spaces managed by the public sector, provision of bicycle parking or potable water may be a requirement—a regulation that does not extend to privately-managed public spaces.

Operations. This includes the kinds of long-term maintenance that ensures the quality and safety of an open public space, such as essential services like security, landscaping, clean-up, infrastructural maintenance and accounting of expenses. Importantly, the financing of operations can sometimes be separate from the financing of initial planning and development, and, therefore, needs to be secured and maintained in the long term (see **Financing** above). As with regulations, operations may meet severe difficulties when faced with unpredictable events, such as flooding, financial crises, bankruptcy of key actors, or corporate mergers. In these cases, oversight, discussed next, is a necessity for the long-term stability of an open public space.

Oversight. This involves ensuring that open public spaces meet existing regulations, continue to function adequately, can respond to difficulties (e.g., complaints from users) and are held accountable to mismanagement or corruption (e.g., unlawful sale of the land, or misuse of public space for the purpose of private profit). This could be done through a government department, private non-profit organization, citizen groups, reporting mechanisms or the media. Oversight is necessary because it ensures that the implementation and management of open public spaces is accountable to its users and stable in the long term. Oversight is a difficult process because it must balance competing interests, such as satisfaction of users, government regulations and the desires of the developers to maintain a secure environment for investment. For example, private security forces might exclude poor people from using an open public space, which improves the perception of investors and potential homeowners in the area, but negatively impacts the openness of the space, and exacerbates injustice. Equally, different stakeholders may be excluded from the oversight of a space, such as local leaders or citizens. Oversight is also often not implemented appropriately, either through failure of the planning process, lack of regulations or long-term disinvestment in the open public space by private or public actors. The diversity of kinds of oversight models available can make it difficult for stakeholders to choose between them. Finally, the kinds of oversight regulating the daily use and management of an open public space may not be clearly communicated to the users of the space. For example, users may have no recourse in case of perceived breach of their rights by security staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consider different kinds of management. The appointment of steering committees; working with large-scale development corporations;[22] setting up business improvement districts;[23] strategic partnerships between local actors, developers and government; formalizing partnership with civil society groups; or signing memoranda of agreements[24] could each ensure management and division of responsibilities.[25] These can all be experimented with, as long as mechanisms for oversight are put in place.

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[22] Developers in charge of building districts and mega-projects, often operating internationally.
[23] Business improvement districts are special zones with unique regulations set up for large-scale development projects involving multiple private and public actors, aimed at streamlining and targeting development and creating a favourable investment environment.
[24] A memorandum of agreement is a formal document signed by multiple parties that explicitly states the roles and expectations for a project, initiative or partnership.
[25] Kaw et al. (2020) p. 25; Barker et al. (2019); Mayor of London (2009)

Coordination and assignment of tasks. To avoid gaps in service, it is important to clearly assign tasks to all actors. This includes:

- The entity in charge of the cleanliness of the open public space (collect trash and ensure its removal)
- Entity in charge of security and enforcement of regulations
- Entity in charge of maintenance of amenities (trees, grass, toilets, playground safety)
- Legal responsibility if an accident occurs involving equipment and infrastructure in the public space
- Actors in charge of oversight and eventual dismantling of the site and transfer of responsibilities

Ensure access for all. As noted by UN-Habitat, "There is the increasing tendency for two very different types of public spaces to emerge: privately-managed ones with rules excluding the homeless, active recreation and anyone perceived to be threatening and truly public ones."[26] Thus, to ensure equal access for different kinds of users, regulations must apply across different kinds of open public spaces, both publicly-run and privately-managed. Oversight bodies must also be in place that have jurisdiction over different kinds of open public spaces and are invested with power and authority to mandate changes when accessibility criteria are not met.[27]

Include citizens. Put in place measures and regulations that allow citizens to be included in the oversight of open public spaces, fostering both a sense of place and helping to reduce costs such as security and clean-up. This could involve regular programming or making the space available for use or booking by citizen-led initiatives.

Be flexible. In order to limit bad surprises and regulatory gaps, planning and management should be flexible and involve collaboration across different institutions, as well as feedback mechanisms if things go wrong.

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[26] UN-Habitat (2020) p. 69
[27] Ibid.

Quality

Beyond the question of how to operate, manage, plan for and finance an open public space, planners also need to take into account the quality of the public space they are developing. Quality involves variables like sustainability, accessibility, equity, safety and usage.[28] Another important part of the quality dimension of public space concerns its assessment and whether it fits the variables listed above and pre-established criteria. We will not discuss the varying assessment criteria here (see **Box 3** below for a summary of assessment criteria).

Common issues

Safety. The perception of safety is just as important as the actual safety of a public space. Safety is particularly important to ensure that women and children use a given public space. Safety can be measured according to: "the absence of crime; the absence of antisocial behavior; the absence of accidents near or within public spaces; and the presence of working streetlights."[29] Streetlights after dark, in particular, shape people's willingness to use public spaces actively.

Equity and inclusivity. Equity refers to public spaces' ability to support diverse users and to the fact that they do not perpetuate social inequalities. Inclusivity refers to who can use the space and how accessible it is to different kinds of users. Multi-functional public spaces that support a wide diversity of activities tend to be more inclusive then public spaces dedicated to a single function (e.g., group sports, contemplation, etc.). Public space offering different kinds of amenities, such as seating, garbage bins, water, bicycle parking and adequate signage, also tend to be more inclusive. Environmental conditions (air quality, cleanliness, etc.) are also determining factors for encouraging people to stay in an area. Traffic noise, bad odours and poor upkeep tend to keep users away from public spaces, to reduce frequentation and duration of visits. User-friendliness is also important for accessibility; but, often public spaces lack features such as walkability, wheelchair access, signage for the blind, seating for the elderly or play areas for children. Finally, an important indicator of inclusivity is whether there are any restrictions on use of a public space, such as limits on the duration of stay or access fees.

Criminalization and exclusion. Many open public spaces suffer from active exclusion of informal workers and homeless people. Diverse use of a space by these groups can encourage a more vibrant space, contribute to a positive culture and lead to a more inclusive, liveable city for all. Allowing street vendors to use a space also offers affordable user choices while giving informal waste collectors access to the space can reduce upkeep costs. Informal workers, in general, tend to collectively manage upkeep and use of the public spaces they use, further improving their safety and cleanliness. Informal workers represent a sizeable proportion of urban populations in the Global South: 52.6% of urban employment in low- and middle-income countries, 43.7% total. Excluding this large segment of cities' populations from public spaces increases social segregation and inequality. However, the issue is contentious because allowing informal workers to use a public space may lead other, often wealthier users to feel threatened or unsafe, and the informal sector can be perceived as competing with formal businesses in the area. In public spaces involving the private sector, security will often target poor people as they are perceived, on a very subjective basis, as not being able to spend money and as discouraging others from coming. Finally, informal use of a space is often seen to go against government imperatives of securing a good investment environment,

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[28] Drawn from: Kaw et al. (2020) pp. 131–139; Garrett (2015); UN-Habitat (2020)
[29] Kaw et al. (2020) p. 132

modernization and civilized public spaces. These factors often lead security forces to exclude visibly poor or racialized users from accessing public spaces, in some case through violent and repressive tactics and heavy fines. The alternative to criminalization is to offer more regulated inclusion for informal workers, and include their leaders in policy-making processes.[30]

Distribution. While individual public spaces may be satisfactory, often, public spaces are isolated from each other and lack connection or points of access, either through sidewalks or sufficient parking. An isolated public space will lead to less use overall and public spaces thrive when they are connected to each other in a wider network and planning process.

Sustainability. Public spaces should correspond to the goals of sustainability, which includes social equity, ecological aspects and long-term financial stability. Many public spaces become degraded over time and suffer from unhygienic and often environmentally destructive issues such as poor drainage, inadequate waste disposal or use of pesticides in landscaping.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Multifunctional spaces. Spaces that have multiple uses thrive because they encourage a greater diversity of people to use them, ultimately leading to a sense of safety and openness. Spaces that are designed and equipped to allow a diversity of activities are more responsive to a variety of users.

Connect public spaces. Even as different public spaces may be managed by different bodies (public, private, mixed, etc.), it is still important to connect them to each other through, for example, sidewalks, walkways, lanes, low-traffic side streets, parking options within walkable distance and so on. As a network of public spaces is established, each space can cover diverse needs which may or may not overlap.

No entrance barriers. Most experts recommend that public space have no entrance barriers of any kind. This includes both physical barriers such as fences, gates or checkpoints and entrance fees or time limits. All of these barriers negatively affect public spaces' usage and the diversity of people who use them.

Take advantage of existing, but underused, public spaces. Existing spaces can be redesigned to offer more amenities and to improve their connections with other spaces. Certain spaces such as schoolyards or road intersections can be repurposed to better link up public spaces through corridors.

Involve local communities in management. When designing and planning a public space, local communities should be approached as partners. Civil society organizations and local officials can be supported through resources and flexibility to determine the use and programming of a public space. Partnerships can also lead to creative pilot projects and should involve diverse people to fully maximize a space's sustainability, community stewardship and accessibility. This could include, for example, involving local environmental groups or representatives of the informal sector in designing a space.

Include informal workers. Rather than criminalizing the informal sector, planners and managers should take clear steps to regulate and provide for informal workers to ensure a symbiotic relationship. For example, public spaces could offer designated areas for street

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[30] Chen et al. (2018)

vendors and waste pickers, see for temporary closures for nightly or weekly markets, include informal worker leaders in management and rule-setting, and offer tapped water and adequate sanitation.

Accessible amenities for safety and cleanliness. It is recommended that all public spaces include sanitation and safety measures such as access to tap water, fire extinguishers, sanitation, draining, waste collection and adequate lighting.

Box 3: Checklist of criteria for high-quality open public spaces

Financing

- Planning of open public spaces must include a budget strategy that pays attention to **long-term maintenance** and **management costs**. The initial investment should cover installation of durable materials (sports, kids' playground, etc.) that are also replaceable. The budget should include the day-to-day maintenance (to keep a good quality space) and also budgeting replacement of materials.

Planning

- Public spaces are **continuous**, **well-connected** and **integrated** with the urban environment, in order to be accessible to the whole community and improve urban life.
- The creation of public space should be part of a **holistic** and **unitary plan**, which involves all necessary stakeholders (e.g., for clean-up, management, security, financing and the community of users).
- The design and management of public spaces should **take into account the needs of both formal and informal businesses**, especially as informal workers, when fully accounted for rather than criminalized, may help in maintaining the safety and cleanliness of public space and draw more users.
- Public spaces can play a role in **environmental** and **climactic amelioration**, for example, through providing drainage, shade, protecting wetlands or flood barriers.

Management and governance

- Decisions surrounding the creation, management and use of public space are **transparent**, **participatory** and **clear**.
- The design and management of public space involves and accommodates **new techniques** and **technologies** for communication and democratic management.

Quality

- Public spaces are **inclusive, accessible** and **multifunctional**, for example by providing seating for elderly, wheelchair access, playing areas for children and bicycle parking.
- Public spaces must offer a **sense of safety**: no crime, accidents, air pollution, or harassment, safe playing areas for children, working streetlights, low noise levels and protection from traffic.

BEST PRACTICES

It is clear that private involvement in the creation and management of open public spaces is extremely diverse. However, the existing literature points to several important crosscutting principles that apply in most cases. These are different from the criteria mentioned above (Box 3) as they focus mostly on the *how to* of creating adequate public spaces. They are useful mainly for decision-makers who want to create a good environment to ensure private partners are accountable and meet their responsibilities. For this reason, these principles apply largely to the planning, management and governance dimensions of open public spaces.

BIG PICTURE PLANNING

Private developers and local authorities often have a large degree of control in creating and designing public spaces. However, best practices show that healthy, accessible and high-quality public spaces are integrated in a "big picture" of long-term urban planning. There are several reasons for this.

First, to be accessible, parks and other public spaces must be **linked** to each other, **well-connected** and **integrated** in the wider urban environment and public transportation. For example, if there are no sidewalks connecting multiple parks, they may not be used and parking will be more difficult for those who do want to use them. To take another example, many cities in the Global South are developing metro system or bus systems. Locating OPS and transit stations next to each other favours their accessibility.

Second, planning adequate public spaces requires the **involvement of many stakeholders**: the private sector; but also multiple urban departments such as urban planning, transportation and environmental management; and, finally but perhaps most importantly, locals. To align all these stakeholders, it is best to **engage in visionary planning exercises that involve each stakeholder from the beginning**. When new open public spaces are then designed, different leaders can already integrate these spaces in the bigger picture.

INVOLVE THE PUBLIC

When planning open public spaces, it is important to involve the public from the beginning and throughout the project's lifespan. This could mean anything from **using clear communication and signage** for users, to **empowering local leaders and community groups to use the space** (e.g., for sports or community events or regular programming), or i**nvolving the community in the design and visioning** of the space itself. This has several benefits: local participation can help **reduce costs** (such as clean-up), **increase a feeling of safety** and **encourage a sense of ownership over the project**, which eventually helps **ensure a long-term lifespan**. It also **increases pressure on the managers of the space to maintain it adequately**.

IDENTIFY ROLES EARLY ON

While planning private involvement in public spaces, it is important to **identify clear roles and responsibilities and support them** through adequate financing, regulations and institutional resources. For example, roles such as maintenance, oversight, steering committees and even eventual renovations and redesign need to be identified and agreed on from the beginning, and an existing framework should be in place to facilitate this process. This is best done in the

planning and strategic visioning stage, when **institutional gaps can be identified and filled**. This best practice also involves identifying all expenses, both immediate and ongoing, and ensuring adequate funding is earmarked throughout the lifecycle of the project.

CREATIVE AND FLEXIBLE APPROACH

Even as long-term planning and strategy is necessary, it is also important to take a **flexible and creative approach**, which encourages **innovation** and **new ideas**. This could be through creating mini-grants, design competitions, discretionary funding or experimenting through trial projects. However, it is still necessary to **identify mechanisms of oversight and accountability**, as well as clearly identify roles to **ensure evaluation and eventual institutionalization**.

USE THE TOOLS THAT ALREADY EXIST

In terms of regulating private actors to maintain and supervise public spaces adequately, financing projects and institutionalizing oversight and transparency, there are already many tools available to municipal governments. These can be adopted, adapted and leveraged depending on the context. Importantly, governments must realize that **as real estate has relatively high profit rates compared to other sectors**, this can be used as an opportunity to exact fees and services as part of developments, which includes mandating the creation of adequate open public space. However, while private companies are well-equipped to raise money for investments, municipalities should be aware that they are less well-equipped for **long-term planning and upkeep due to their short-term profit-seeking orientation**. For this reason, **private development can be paired with governmental regulations, planning and accountability measures**. Tools for ensuring institutional oversight could involve, for example, signing a memorandum of agreement between all parties; assigning steering committees; formalizing partnerships with civil society groups or local leaders; and adopting regulations that guarantee long-term accountability of private developers towards public spaces. Tools for financing include setting up special zoning alongside, as mentioned above, land readjustment, land transfers, tax-incremented financing, impact fees and exactions.

NO BARRIERS TO ENTRY

One final best practice is to avoid any kind of barrier to entry. This includes **charging service and entrance fees, as well as physical barriers such as walls, fences or even busy streets**. Open public spaces thrive and become assets to the surrounding neighbourhood when they are **accessible** and **functional** for all; barriers to entry instead make public spaces exclusive and undesirable, leading to a lack of a sense of **ownership** and **belonging** by its users.

EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIVE SCHEMES

ORCHARD ROAD, SINGAPORE

In Singapore, new commercial development projects must be done in collaboration with the private sector; however, they are also highly regulated. This is in great part due to the fact that the government is the sole owner of all land and developers can only lease lend when meeting strict conditions.

The redevelopment of one of Singapore's main shopping districts and tourism destinations, Orchard Road, has involved both public and private participation. Redesign was carried out by developers who were given guidelines to invest in public spaces and in return were given density bonuses. This was paired with heavy public investment and funding of infrastructure, as well as long-term planning, coordinated across government agencies. Private sector development is directed by a wider government plan for more pedestrianization and greening, which involved converting streets into public spaces and closing them to traffic and will now involve redirecting traffic permanently. Planners have also linked Orchard Road with other parks and destinations by mandating public walkways through private buildings, as well as by developing attractive new open spaces throughout the district and a network of connecting parks. Developers are also encouraged to plant vertical, rooftop and roadside greenery, adding to the cohesive but highly varied environment. Officials have encouraged development through offering specific incentives for the private sector, such as allowing them to obtain buildable floor area when they provide public art works and installations.[31]

Figure 2: Orchard Road in Singapore.
Photo: Nicholas Lannuzel

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[31]   Kaw et al. (2020)

Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass (DUMBO), Brooklyn, USA

The development of DUMBO was initiated through a property tax started by local property owners, which then created funding for a Business Improvement District (BID). The BID then used these new resources to create an audit of public space infrastructure, which revealed opportunities to transform underused plots into public spaces. Through innovative use of previously unused spaces, such as opening an archway under the Manhattan Bridge to the public, and creating a network of parks and squares, the district became a nightlife and business destination. This also involved creating cycling paths, as well as connected pedestrian paths and parks that linked other communities to the district. The BID eventually became managed as a full public-private partnership, which also manages event programming, maintenance and upkeep of services.[32]
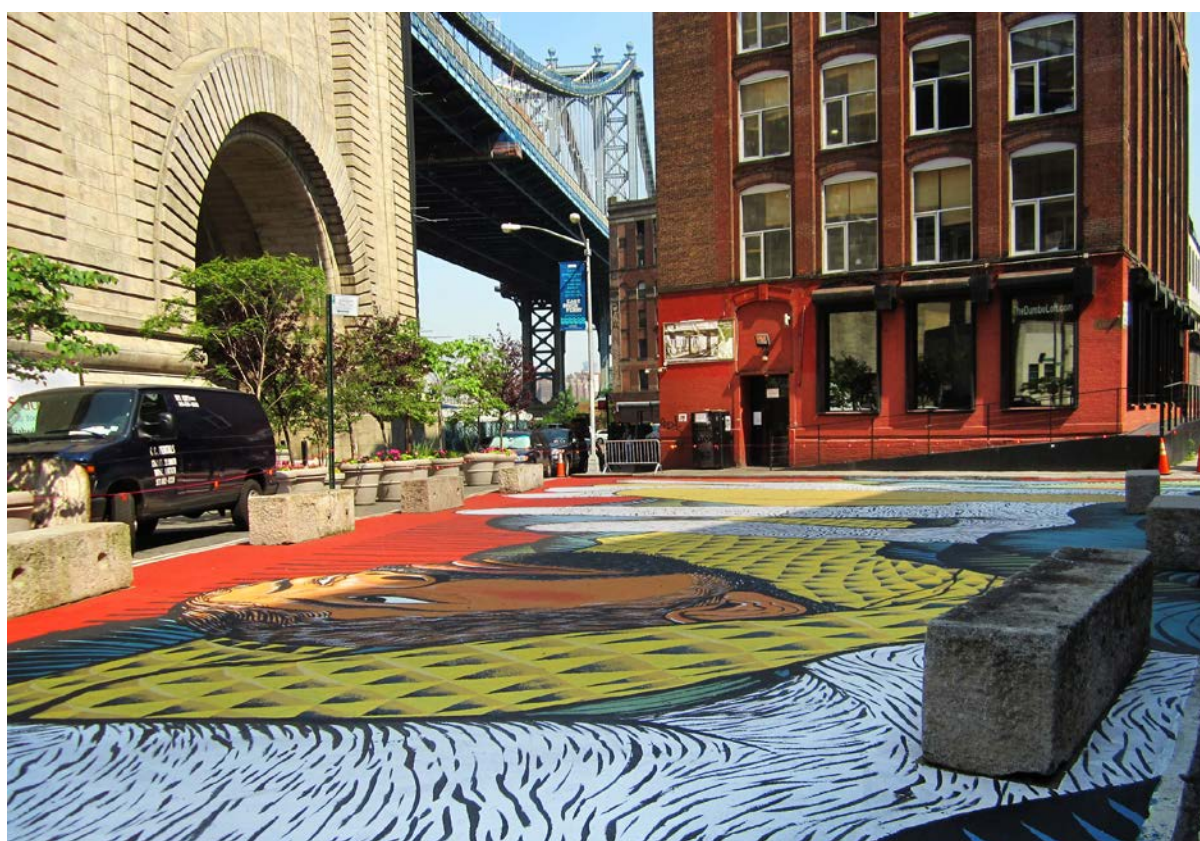

Figure 3: The Pearl Street Triangle was one of the first new open public spaces in DUMBO, Brooklyn. Photo: New York City Department of Transportation

Ahmedabad's Commercial Center, India

Ahmedabad's central business district is currently highly fragmented, highly polluted and congested with traffic, with restrictive building bylaws. A plan developed by the Ahmedabad Urban Redevelopment Authority aims to change this by taking advantage of a new planned metro, increasing residential density and doubling green cover. This also involved loosening rules for redevelopment of housing to allow for larger buildings, pedestrian passages separate from the street, as well as a large program to redevelop the riverfront for public access. The

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[32]   Kaw et al., 2020: p. 9

city is working closely with developers and housing societies to direct funding and develop a cohesive plan for development and new public spaces.[33]

Figure 4: The redevelopment plan for the Ahmedabad riverfront
Photo: HCP

PARIS, FRANCE

In 2014, the City of Paris launched a competition, Reinventing Paris, inviting designers and urban planners to develop innovative and sustainable renovations to disinvested infrastructure, helping to turn tunnels, garages, abandoned electricity substations and parking lots into pedestrian-friendly parks and walkways. To encourage smaller, less-established designers, the city relaxed its planning rules. Instead of aiming for grand designs or attracting foreign capital, the municipality sought to encourage experimentation and collaboration between different groups. For example, the redesign of a railway station involved "a sustainable agriculture collective, a university, a contemporary arts gallery and a music venue [and] will include a vertical urban farm, alongside a restaurant, a music venue and a mix of social and private housing."[34] The designs were selected on the basis of their economic viability but also mandated the construction of social housing. Each winning project thus integrated public space, retail, leisure and housing.

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[33] Kaw et al. (2020) p. 63

[34] Robin, E. (2016). "Paris is leading the world in progressive urbanism – here's how." *The Conversation.* Retrieved from: https://theconversation.com/paris-is-leading-the-world-in-progressive-urbanism-heres-how-54792
      Kaw et al. (2020) p. 62

Figure 5: One of the winners of the Reinventing Paris competition
Photo: DGT Architects

BALYKCHY, KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

A lakeside park, which included a beach, a club, rides and restaurants, was being mismanaged by a company and saw a lack of investment in infrastructure. Local leaders decided to start a pilot project to place the park under a type of private management that was to partner with civil society and NGOs through a joint working group. This led to a series of planning and proposal initiatives, including the drafting of new regulations and feasibility studies, modeled on British and Canadian private-public partnership manuals. The process involved 220 experts, professionals and local leaders.[35]

COLNE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK, UNITED KINGDOM

The Colne Valley park near London, England is funded by multiple partners, including government agencies, private partners and local government, which has together significantly increased the total funding available for park management. The park is maintained by eight local government units and an environmental charity. Private companies support the project by making land available or providing funding through a taxation scheme, and the park also collaborates with several non-profits.[36]

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[35] Kaw et al. (2020) p. 85; Kaganova et al. (2012)
[36] Daniel & Syrickland (2017); CABE (2006)

JAKARTA, INDONESIA

In 2015, the city launched a campaign to create hundreds of child-friendly spaces. By 2019 there were 290 public spaces created. Adopting designs from Copenhagen, Denmark, Jakarta's child-friendly public spaces were funded by the city and through corporate social responsibility schemes, and built by a private contractor. These parks, plazas and playgrounds conform with existing regulations for green spaces in the city. The project is now halted, with a new project being planned to renovate existing parks and open new ones involving citizens in the design and management of the parks.[37]

Figure 6: One of the 290 new child-friendly public spaces in Jakarta, Indonesia
Photo: Sungai Bambu

KIBERA, NAIROBI, KENYA

Kibera is Nairobi's largest informal settlement and faces extreme disinvestment. The Kounkuey Design Initiative is a not-for-profit international network of engineers, urban planners and architects that creates low-cost built environments that improves people's daily lives. A river which runs through the settlement was used as a playground, laundry area, gathering space and also as a garbage dump. However, it experienced poor drainage during rainy seasons leading to flooding as well as pollution. The network developed a close partnership with the community to create, amongst others, a drainage channel to mitigate flooding, a playground, a community centre, a laundry site and a health clinic. Through community workshops with residents, the initiative eventually settled on a wider plan that transformed the area and provided public space as well as basic services for residents and opportunities for micro-enterprises, using locally-sourced material.[38]

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[37]   Kaw et al. (2020) p. 68; Asyariefah (2019)
[38]   Daniel & Srickland (2017); Project for Public Spaces (2012)

CONCLUSION

Private involvement in open public space is growing worldwide. One driver of this phenomenon is that **governments are strapped for finances** and see the private sector as offering much-needed financing, in great part due to outsized investment capital in the hands of developers globally. Another driver is **the common perception that the private sector is better equipped and has more incentives to manage public space**, due to its efficiency and innovation. However, without oversight, planning, regulations and public participation, **private sector involvement in open public spaces can eventually lead to underused, inaccessible or poorly maintained public spaces, not integrated into the urban fabric**.[39]

This report highlights the many barriers faced by municipalities in partnering with the private sector to create open public spaces, as well as the ways to overcome these barriers. It also describes six cross-cutting best practices and takeaways, aimed at helping leaders and officials to identify the strategy they want to take in working with the private sector to guarantee high-quality public spaces. Eight examples of innovative public-private initiatives are included to inspire experimentation.

By far the most important lesson from the literature is **that individual open public spaces are only as good as the holistic strategic approach that they are a part of**. This means that big-picture planning, visioning exercises and bringing stakeholders together to identify institutional gaps is necessary when involving the private sector in open public space design and management. Here, governments can be leaders, even if they are cash-strapped. The outsized power of investors and developers can often skew development in their favour, leading to short-term gains and the construction and management of public spaces but possible long-term disuse, inaccessible spaces and lack of coherent vision. However, governments can position themselves to make agreements that benefit both municipal budgets and the public—through leveraging their role as regulator, oversight body and strategic planners. **These strategies and best practices can help turn the situation around, from making municipalities work for the private sector to making the private sector work for the public.**

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[39]   De Magalhaes & Trigo (2017)

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