

**Webinar: Planning Disrupted!**  
**Challenges and possible solutions for the post-COVID-19 planning practice**  
Session moderated by Dr. Greg Mews

# **Public Spaces as Life Line for Cities**

– Manifesto –

## **Public Space must...**

- (1) Be inclusive, safe and accessible to all;
- (2) Reflect the values and cultures of all the people who use or experience them in an inclusive way (but what does this mean in highly divided and unequal societies? Public space is also inherently the space where conflict manifests and unfolds);
- (3) Include temporary uses - this can be cultural performances, meetings, pop-up food courts or other activities. Reflecting the meaning of the local communities. This should be part of a general approach of branding the public space and increasing attractiveness;
- (4) Public space managers must find ways to realise the value of these spaces and places (through charging rent, use charges, or entrance fees) without excluding citizens from enjoying the space because of these charges. There should be full transparency in accounting for revenue and expenditure associated with each public space.
- (5) Be vibrant, multifunctional and have a sense of place. Now hygiene and safety in public spaces are crucial;
- (6) Be designed to be robust and flexible enough to accommodate anticipated and unanticipated uses and practices;

## **We believe...**

- (1) That public spaces are valuable in terms of real estate and amenity. This value should be optimised for all without unduly excluding unanticipated needs or uses;
- (2) In public spaces that bring people together for shared and co-created experiences;
- (3) That public space should be managed pro-actively in order to serve and respond to diverse needs and ambitions; and create opportunities for new uses. When necessary public space managers must mediate competing interests and needs in innovative and inclusive ways to ensure that potential users and uses are not excluded without open debate;
- (4) That partnerships can be used to support the development and management of public spaces, but these should not result in the (explicit or implicit) privatisation of public spaces;
- (5) That the “rules” that govern the use and experience of public spaces should be set through rigorous and regular participatory processes that are inclusive of current and future stakeholders.

It is also important to separate the provision of public spaces with the design and quality of these spaces. In the South African context, there are many unused public spaces and people would choose to travel to quality public spaces rather than make use of those that are provided locally due to various reasons which include safety and quality of facilities available.