

MANIFESTO

**FOR A RESILIENT,
COHESIVE AND
COSMOPOLITAN
METROPOLIS**

METRO
PUBLIC
NET

2025

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This research was supported by Portuguese national funds through the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT, I.P.) under the grant PTDC/ART-DAQ/0919/2020 (MetroPublicNet: Building the foundations of a Metropolitan Public Space Network to support the robust, low-carbon and cohesive city: Projects, lessons and prospects in Lisbon).

MANIFESTO

PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGNING A METROPOLITAN PUBLIC SPACE NETWORK

METROPUBLICNET

A LAYERED AND INTERTWINED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURE AND CULTURE

1 LANDSCAPE

The first pillar of a Metropolitan Public Space Network underlines the importance of acknowledging and work on the interdependent and co-produced relationships between the biophysical and the human-shaped systems. The rich cultural landscape that results from a diversity of accumulated forms of urbanisation and territorialisation, through which resources are exploited and linkages created, is an outstanding repository and a potential tool to bridge the natural, the social and the cultural within a spatialised framework. The landscape is not a static scenery but a living fabric in which public space interventions emerge and find their role. Public space can be understood as a fundamental system embedded in the most complex landscapes – those of large and complex metropolises – but essentially as a landscape device of its own, a cultural ecology of human and non-human interactions. Designing public space requires a deep awareness of the landscape figures, patterns, and processes, and a culturally embedded perspective on its continuous fabrication as a civilisational construct.

CONTINUITY

WEAVING A METROPOLITAN CONNECTIVE FABRIC

As the expression of the multiple lines that bring the diverse elements of the metropolitan landscape together, continuity supports its cohesion, systemic flows, and accessibility. A public space network requires working on the continuities, not only in terms of ecological corridors and linear infrastructure but also in fostering a distributed mesh of nodes, permeating through the social fabric and supporting economic activities. Besides linear structures, such as streets, roads, or informal pathways in large open spaces, continuity can also be explored in outstanding water bodies, as the estuaries, bays, and metropolitan rivers, in which taxi boats and other navigation networks – along with – the possibility of getting close to and enjoying the contact with the water, can be part of a more continuous territory. A fundamental step to designing beyond a collection of individualised parts requires a particular attention to the connective possibilities that weave the fabric of contemporary metropolitan life.

GREEN & BLUE

THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF A BIODIVERSE AND RESILIENT METROPOLIS

Green and blue infrastructure are central to the organisation of a Metropolitan Public Space Network, offering the basic elements of natural and ecological continuity as the reference for structuring a multi-purpose, multi-object, and multi-scalar territorial grid. Not only fundamental supports of biodiversity and ecological flows, green and blue networks enable multiple activities and forms of fruition and conviviality, while providing adequate infrastructural and health conditions for urban life. Integrating the cycle of water in public space, enhancing the capacity for harvesting, infiltration, retention, or filtration, when and where suited, is an important strategy to better manage increasingly scarce water resources, and to cope with climate change and extreme weather events, while sustaining urban vegetation that offer better environmental quality to public spaces. Revealing natural elements in public space may also be a powerful tool to engage citizenship with a holistic awareness of the metabolic processes and natural cycles that frame planetary life.

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THE METROPOLIS AS AN INCLUSIVE LIVING SPACE

HABITAT



UNLOCKING POTENTIAL IN EXISTING STRUCTURES

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RESOURCES

In cities in which the 20th-century expansive production of urban space is currently turning to more selective and coalescing transformations in already built-up areas, the resourceful use of existing and underused infrastructure is a potential tool to shape meaningful public spaces. These structures offer multiple opportunities for creative reuse, as they may be linked to relevant territorial nodes, may be charged with interesting layers of historical and heritage value, are often open to unforeseen and unexpected spatial and functional solutions. Interstitial spaces, derelict facilities, or abandoned rail lines can become wild urban refuges of biodiversity, informal connections in new leisure pathways, or more formal elements of in broader redevelopments. Reclaiming the potential of each case and making it a meaningful part of a territorial system can also be a relevant and cost-effective contribution to the metropolitan circular metabolism.

TIME

INCREMENTAL DEVELOPMENT WITH LONG-TERM VISION

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As the most persistent of all the variables shaping our metropolises, time is an unescapable dimension of public space design with a large territorial outlook. The definition of structural lines and strategic projects to be incrementally developed on a long term, must also be leveraged by the nurturing of experimental, bottom-up, or temporary initiatives. The extraordinary diversity and potential of public space means that it can be shaped not only in scale or type but also as a fundamentally time-modelled entity – in its programming and design but also on its rhythmic activation, everyday maintenance, or flexible adaptation. An evolutionary public space network is continuously being reinvented by the multiple players who imagine, build, and use it. Working on a balance between the long-term horizon, grounded in coherent and committed lines of action, and the shorter-term opportunities and possibilities, responsive to the multiple actors' initiatives, is a key mind-set for a proactive metropolitan public space design.

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MOBILITY

PEDESTRIAN, CYCLING, PUBLIC TRANSPORT AS BACKBONES OF METROPOLITAN ACCESSIBILITY

Seamless, affordable, and effective mobility is a fundamental demand and a social right on which metropolitan life is dependent. When considering the urgency in transitioning to low-carbon and more sustainable forms of transportation, active modes and transit systems are utmost priority cornerstones in future urban development policies. Public space can be a key player in such transition by laying a metropolitan scale pedestrian and cycling mobility system that articulates with the primary public transport infrastructure, forming the backbone of an alternative metropolitan mobility network. As such, metropolitan roads can be redesigned as living spaces, with porous relationships with the built fabric. A well-connected and accessible public space is also an imperative for an inclusive, shared, and cohesive metropolis. For that, the allocation of space for individual transport should be minimised in favour of promoting opportunities and spatial conditions for transit and active modes, well-articulated with convivial activities.

DESIGN AS A CATALYST FOR EXPLORATION

Expanding the process of designing of public space to the metropolitan level is a challenge that overlaps the technical and governance frontiers, as it opens extraordinary opportunities to shape a civic and democratic vision for the future of a highly diverse community. Design and visualisation are powerful tools to build on informed discussion and participation, fostering critical thinking and awareness in identifying resources, expectations, and conflicts. As prospective processes they help in creating shared narratives and imagining multiple scenarios, for which different groups can be brought together – the academy by engaging in research-by-design projects; the schools by promoting public space-related learning environments; writers, artists, and other creators by developing storylines, artistic experiences, and cultural content; and the media and digital platforms to foster interactive communication and sharing of information. These contributions can play a key role in the exploration of transformative and innovative design solutions, helping in navigating through the often conflictive and bureaucratic procedures of government and spatial planning bodies.

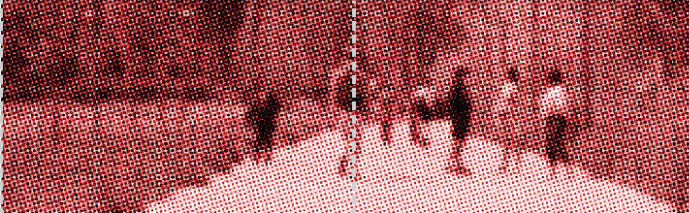


More than a spatial and physical network, metropolitan public space can be an open, inclusive, and democratic common ground for public life. Using it as a resource that we can name, a shared project to which one can feel attached and committed can bridge divides and foster a culture of engagement with the territory and a new, fresh, inclusive sense of belonging to a global metropolis. Monitoring and nurturing this network is a demanding task that requires innovative delving into forms of building collective imagination, debate, design, and above all a generous, progressive, and cosmopolitan perspective on contemporary life.

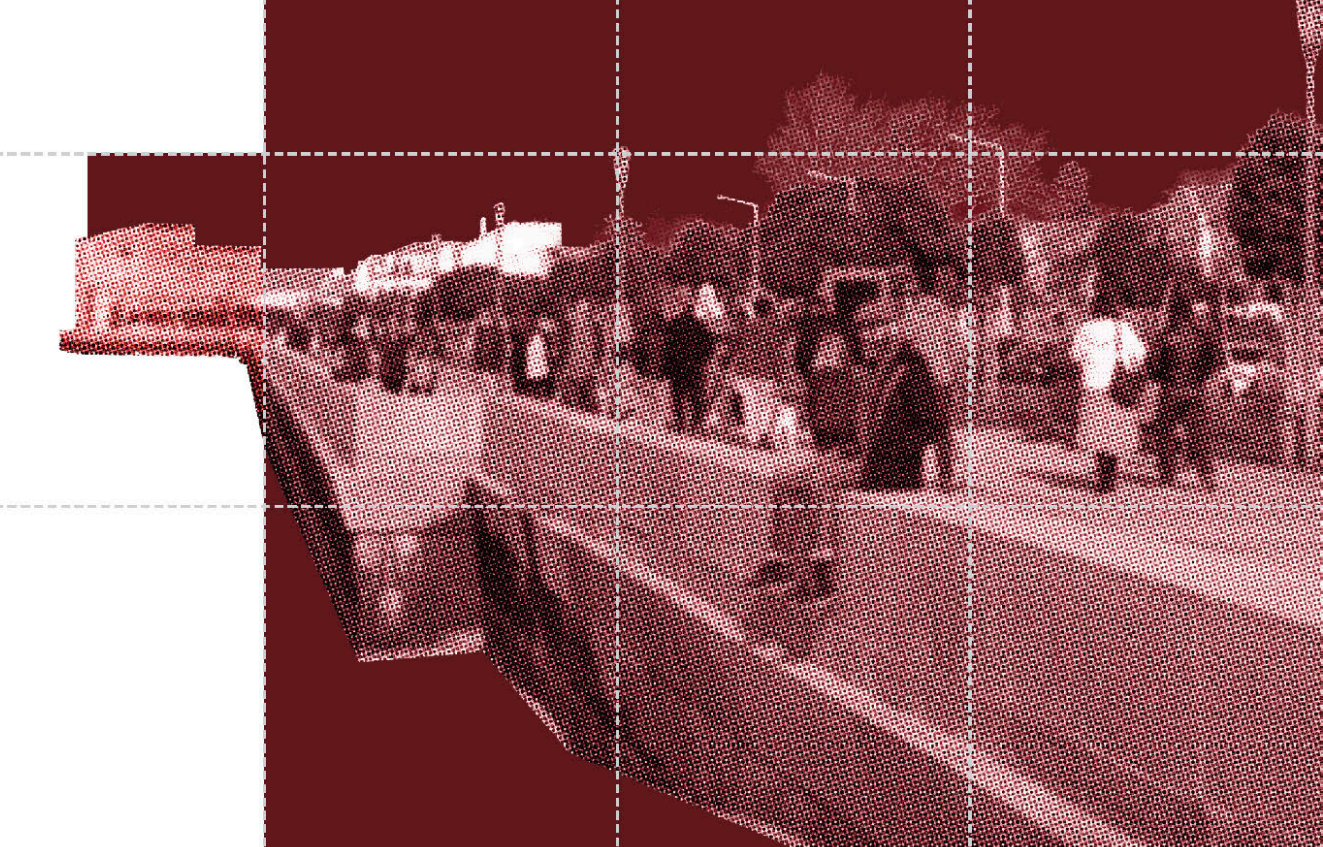
A METROPOLIS FOR PUBLIC LIFE

COMMON GROUND

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MetroPublicNet is a research project developed between 2021 and 2025, aiming to explore the evolution of public space qualification in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) over the 25 years following Expo 1998. Within this framework, it considers the potential creation of a Metropolitan Public Space Network as a tool for conceptualization, policy development, and territorial design at the metropolitan scale. To achieve this, the project critically examines various public space improvement projects, their underlying principles, objectives, and outcomes. Its central hypothesis and argument propose that a metropolitan perspective can offer more integrated, robust, and cohesive solutions to the challenges of environmental resilience, low-carbon mobility, and territorial cohesion.

An engaging public space metropolitan strategy can react both to the multiplying potential of micro-events implemented at local scale and to the large-scale projects that impact strongly throughout a wide area of influence. Acknowledging that public space is often the realm where diverse planning rationales and systems converge, the need to work on the intermediary and the overlapping levels is a fundamental requirement. The same goes for a multi-level governance in which productive dialogue and compromise can be achieved at a consistent metropolitan level institutional and technical platform between local authorities and the national and sectoral bodies of public administration. Such articulation is a key step in achieving an integrated approach that incorporates as many rationales and systems as possible into the planning, design, and financing of projects.

MULTI-SCALE

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MULTI-SCALE

BACK AND FORTH, IN-BETWEEN, FROM THE LOCAL TO THE GLOBAL

9 IMAGINATION

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