

## **Public spaces create business opportunities - Klaus Schade**

The purpose of urban development and planning is not only to provide serviced or un-serviced land for business of residential purposes and to provide necessary infrastructure (transport, water, electricity, communication), but it should also support social cohesion, innovation, creativity as well as business and employment opportunities. Instead of separating residential from businesses areas, which consequently results in increasing demands for transport services and infrastructure, these should be combined in mixed developments including residential (low to upper income), office and light manufacturing areas as well as public services such as education, health and civil registration and other amenities such as shops. Such a design would reduce the need for ever larger roads separating neighbourhoods and incentivise other forms of transport including non-motorised transport (walking, cycling). Furthermore, increasing the density of residential areas by building multi-storey flats will not only increase the efficient use of scarce serviced land, but will reduce construction costs and increase the viability of public transport since bus stops serve a larger number of potential passengers.

In addition, urban planning needs to create public spaces in neighbourhoods and city centres, where people from all walks of life can mingle. Beyond connecting people within neighbourhoods, public spaces can create new business opportunities. For instance, closing the Independence Avenue in Windhoek between the Hilton Hotel and the Kudu for traffic (only allowing access for delivery vans in the early morning hours and small municipality busses during the day) will not only reduce air and noise pollution – and would most likely increase the value of properties because the centre becomes even more attractive – but it could create opportunities for a number of income-generating activities and make the centre more lively: Musicians could play their music and sell their CDs, fashion designers can display their latest creations, acrobats can entertain the public and receive a token of appreciation, artists can sell their crafts and paintings and other vendors all kind of other things to locals and tourists. Moreover, the newly created space can attract specialised small shops, cafés, restaurants, etc. that all create jobs and generate income (and may be even generate tax revenue).

The same holds for the proposed (dry) river walk, promoted a few years ago that would run from the Goreangab Dam to the Avis Dam. It will not only connect very diverse communities and strengthen social cohesion, create space for out-door activities, but again provide income-generating opportunities like in the proposed pedestrian mall. A more innovative, creative and inclusive approach to urban development will ensure that we create sustainable cities in line with the Sustainable Development Goal 11 and create business opportunities.

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