Towards inclusive post-covid public spaces

by Maha BOUTAHRAY | Safae ACHOURI | Architect & Urban Planner - PhD student and researcher at TER EMADU-UEMF / AMUP INSA Strasbourg | Architect & Urban Planner - PhD student and researcher at TER EMADU-UEMF / FAU UMons

Public spaces are hubs of social connections and activities within the cities. The major book "Dictionnaire de l'urbanisme et de l'aménagement" defines public spaces as "Unbuilt part" of the city "assigned to public uses, formed by a property and by an assignment of use" (CHOAY, 1988). They are considered by urban communities as physical and social landmarks. The current global health crisis has confirmed once again that viruses are attracted to cities because of their narrow and dense morphology, thus compromising the fundamentals of urbanity, which aim to maximize social interactions between diverse individuals, primarily in public space (LECROART, 2020). The experience of the pandemic has highlighted the need to rethink public space in a healthier, even sanitary way, and question the conventional way of planning public spaces in urban fabrics as defined by urban planning tools and legislation, in order to enhance its resilient aspect. During the pandemic, Morocco have adopted strict measures (lockdowns, curfews, physical distancing, etc.). Street markets, roundabouts, sidewalks, medians, squares, etc and gathering places were deserted, community and social activities had stopped. Therefore, once the restrictions were loosened, a growing interest in the use of public spaces has been noticed through surveys and field trips. The findings and outcomes of the research has revealed the crucial role of these urban components in social inclusion.