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Cultural Planning and Urban Renewal in South Africa

MZO SIRAYI

ABSTRACT. The author explores the role of cultural planning as a planning tool in South Africa. He argues that cultural planning contributes to arts “as an intrinsic part of the way humans operate in the world” (Bamford 2006, 19), thereby focusing on cultural identity, creativity, and the globalization of culture. Arguing that cultural planning, as an engine for community development, is essential in South Africa, the author examines the broad definition and importance of cultural planning; the status of South African cities, particularly Johannesburg and Tshwane in Gauteng Province; and the requirements for successful cultural planning.

The advocates of cultural planning unanimously agree that cultural planning can foster holistic community development. Dreeszen (1998) contends that the term cultural planning originated in 1979. It first appeared in print when economist and town planner Harvey Perloff (1979) recommended cultural planning as a way for communities to identify their cultural resources for the achievement of artistic excellence and community development. Stevenson (2004, 121) places the origins of the term and its formulation as a planning process in the 1980s. She writes:

The origins of, and rationale for, convergence of the Left and the Right in cultural planning are not straightforward. Important in this context was the formulation in 1980s by a number of Labour–dominated councils in the United Kingdom (significantly, the Greater London Council) of an array of cultural...
policies and programmes that were intended, simultaneously, to support marginalized local cultural “communities,” nurture the established arts, and foster cultural industry development and entrepreneurship.

The term was thus conceptualized as a field of public inquiry, scholarship, discovery, and intellectual cross-fertilization. Despite these claims of origins, it could be argued that cultural planning has a longer history and has only recently become more sophisticated with the generation of scientific literature produced and applied by many communities in Europe, Australia, and the United States. Cultural planning has, albeit slowly, entered the mainstream of academic research (cf. Bianchini 1993; Dreeszen 1998; Mercer 2002; Stevenson 2004).

The South African government has attempted to eliminate the practice of “departmentalization” or “standalone planning,” moving toward more corporate and integrated development planning (see Ministry 1998). Nonetheless, the conceptualization of cultural planning “as a way of fostering local cultural diversity, community development, and partnerships between public and private sectors, as well as positioning the arts as an industry” (Stevenson 2004) is relatively unknown in South Africa. The administration, especially the Department of Arts and Culture, is concerned with a national cultural policy that promotes elite art forms and supports high-profile cultural institutions and organizations. Meanwhile, central business areas, small towns, townships, and rural areas are in a state of chaos, degeneration, decay, and decline. The precolonial or indigenous art forms likely to be vibrant in such areas are neglected by the national policy. Cities, towns, and townships have become ungovernable, with community-wide increases in crime, decay in residences and businesses, and other negative effects. This article explores cultural planning as an essential tool in community development in South Africa, particularly in Johannesburg and Tshwane in Gauteng Province.

WHAT IS CULTURAL PLANNING?

Wolf von Eckhardt (qtd. in Bianchini 1993, 2) describes cultural planning as a strategy that involves

all the arts . . . the art of urban design, the art of winning community support, the art of water planning, the art of transport planning, the art of safety and security planning, the art of health planning, and the art of mastering the dynamics of economic development and the art of integrating many local plans into an integrated cultural strategy or the art of integrating culture into an integrated development plan.

Similarly, Stevenson (2004) contends that cultural planning seeks a range of social, economic, urban, and creative outcomes. It is a successful means of
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pursuing a number of cross-cutting policies and goals, including social justice, social inclusion, economic regeneration, active citizenship, and environmental improvements (Stevenson 2004).

Dreeszen adds to the description, stating that “cultural planning is a structured, community-wide fact-finding and consensus-building process to assess community needs and develop a plan of action that directs arts and cultural resources to address those needs” (1998, 9). He further argues that “while such planning may focus on the specific requirements of artists, arts organizations and audiences, increasingly, communities are using cultural planning to address more widespread issues, such as education and economic development” (1998, 9).

Mercer takes a different view, stating that cultural planning “does not mean ‘the planning of culture’ but, rather, ensuring that cultural elements and cultural considerations, culture tout court, are there at every stage of the planning and development process. This is what we mean by bringing culture from the margins into mainstream” (2002, 170).

Some researchers describe cultural planning as the second step in the efficient application of cultural policy at the community level (Les Rencontres 2004). It involves the art of putting different local policies in dialogue for the benefit of the community rather than an institution.

Cultural planning implies that at the heart of the actual practice lies the imperative to “join-up thinking” and to link arts to mainstream agendas in economic, social, and human development; regeneration; and physical and human resource management. Effectively, a cultural-planning approach is the strategic and integral use of cultural resources in community development (Bianchini 1993; Mercer 2002). Cultural planning links all cultural activities to human development and community development.

The beauty of the term cultural planning lies in the fact that it can assume multiple meanings and can be applied to different contexts. For example, the planning process is sometimes used as an integrative strategy for community development. The term has legitimate links with physical, economic, industrial, recreational, and housing and public-works planning. Furthermore, cultural planning may be referred to as a tool to implement cultural policy, regeneration projects, and cultural diversity programs. Cultural planning has the potential to broaden the understanding of “the arts and culture” beyond the traditional and perhaps narrow definitions (Mercer 2002). Thus, a single cultural-planning project may simultaneously deal with heritage and youth; remembrance and international cooperation; and education, economic fallout, and infrastructure (Les Rencontres 2004).

The cultural-planning process should be understood as a process that considers the issues of community relationships, shared memories, experiences, identity, history, and sense of place. It also considers the value and signifi-
cance of the cultural backgrounds of all communities, whether large or small, rich or poor. Cultural planning links the past, present, and future in various ways. Importantly, these values and experiences should be seen as unique (see Eurocult21 2005).

Although cultural planning may involve strategic planning, integrated development planning, and cultural policy, the term should not be confused with these endeavors. As Dreeszen (1998, 9) attests, “cultural planning differs from strategic planning and integrated development planning within an organization in several important respects. Most notably, cultural planning is a public process, usually led by a temporary citizens’ steering committee that has been appointed by the municipal or local government.” Schorgl argues that cultural planning is adaptable and portable and serves as a “bottom-up” strategy for integrated community development. Cultural planning offers a clear and succinct guide that respects the region’s unique urban, suburban, and rural character. Cultural planning is developed with the people, not for them (Schorgal 2006, 2). Strategic and integrated development planning are rigid, top-down approaches that are developed for an institution.

As Stevenson observes,

... at a national level, cultural policy continues largely to be concerned with elite art forms, including supporting many high-profile arts institutions and organisations, or with film and media policy. ... Although the “charter” of national cultural policy is to ensure the nation is able to represent itself to itself and to the world, it has never been responsible for nurturing (regulating) everyday ways of life to the same extent as local government, and it has a relatively small part to play in dealing with cultural activity as it is lived “on the ground.” In addition, Cultural Policy Studies is [sic] also primarily concerned with the national ... (2004, 124).

She adds:

cultural planning, however, is focused on the local, and debates and prescriptions developed in terms of the nation take on very different and quite idiosyncratic complexions in this context. Indeed, cultural planning is fundamentally about cities, towns and neighbourhoods and “local communities”. In other words, it is about place ... “my flat, street, city, region, and country—even if I see myself as a citizen of the world.” (2004, 124)

Thus, cultural planning could be referred to as “the theology of a community and a street.”

Although Stevenson’s observation is based on Western European countries, it holds true for the South African context. South Africa’s national cultural policy is concerned primarily with high-profile arts and cultural institutions and elite art forms and gives only lip service to indigenous arts forms, townships, and rural areas. In fact, this elitist model is demonstrated by the South African constitution, which states that the Parliament and provincial legislatures have
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concurrent legislative competence in the functional area of cultural matters (see schedule 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996).

WHY IS CULTURAL PLANNING ESSENTIAL?

As previously mentioned, cultural planning is a tool for assisting municipalities and communities to develop cultural industries and to focus their plans on areas that affect the quality of life of the people. It also serves as a tool for linking culture to other types of plans. It becomes an instrument for helping municipalities to address and tackle the communities’ challenges, such as social exclusion or cohesion, racism, discrimination, xenophobia, and cultural identity. Furthermore, it is incumbent on those responsible for the cultural planning process to create job opportunities, improve community well being, and encourage health reform (cf. Robinson 2005a; Bianchini 1993). It could be argued that cultural planning synthesizes culture and commerce; promotes cultural norms and values; celebrates cultural differences; and encourages urban, township, and rural development and beautification as well as tourism development and attraction.

Dreeszen (1998, 2) writes about the effect of cultural planning on the community in the sense that it increases and improves programs and services in response to identified needs; improves communication and cooperation between different groups in the arts; integrates arts better into the community; and increases both the visibility of artists and arts organizations and the larger civic community’s awareness of the potential of arts and culture to contribute to community and economic development; improves public access to the arts and increases the audience base for arts activities; improves arts facilities; and increases or sustains the level of public and private funding for the arts.

For these reasons, cultural planning should be taken seriously by South African communities or municipalities as a new form of partnership and cross-fertilization among sectors such as academics, industry, and government. History has proved that the cultural-planning approach contributes to the social, economic, and physical development of communities in many countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany (cf. Bianchini 1993; Dreeszen 1998). Without the synthesis of academics, industry, and government, cultural planning is not realized. That suggests that South Africa will continue to grapple in vain with problems of crime-infested cities, towns, and townships, as well as declining rural areas. Also, these locales will continue to be regarded as cultural deserts.

Cultural planning promotes and uses “arts as an intrinsic part of the way humans operate in the world” (Bamford 2006, 19), thereby focusing on cultural identity, creativity, and the globalization of culture. Stevenson refers to this “as artefacts or creative activities or as part of a civilising process” (2004, 122).
On the other hand, it encourages the “instrumental cultural plan” that employs cultural venues and cultural investments to attain goals (Vestheim, qtd. in Skot-Hansen 1998, 31).

In promoting culture as an intrinsic value, cultural planning encourages the development of cultural identity, creativity, artistic thinking, and technical skills to ensure that artists are qualified to promote original knowledge production and are able to provide solutions to problems and contribute to the collective vision of the community. Cultural planning is used to confirm the cultural identity and self-worth of groups and communities. Different social groups such as women, children, and immigrants are given the opportunity to express their own cultures within the organizational frameworks made available. Such an approach gives marginalized and oppressed groups a new identity (Bianchini 1993; Skot-Hansen 1998). Bamford (2006, 126) argues that cultural planning contributes to creativity and imagination, and can contribute to more creative and interesting approaches to teaching.

Cultural planning promotes tools of communication and therefore teaches effective communication. This is especially important because South Africa is now part of the “global village,” which requires new technology as a principal medium of communication. In the knowledge society of the twenty-first century, dominated by information and communication technology and subject to constantly changing labor-market demands, cultural planning plays a critical role. New technology, through cultural planning, could provide an avenue to preserve and foster indigenous knowledge and cultural practices and to promote and add value to indigenous arts and crafts (Bamford 2006).

In terms of instrumentality, cultural planning has turned culture into an engine for social, economic, and physical regeneration in many countries. Cultural planning has contributed to increased understanding of the dynamics of the metropolis and towns both large and small as well as the character of varied rural environments. It has become a pillar of any given society’s development and is also the cement that binds communities. Cultural planning is essential for countries in distress, warring communities, declining cities, dilapidated settlements, remote villages, and inaccessible mountainous areas. It is a powerful tool, with which communities are built, constructed, and reconstructed (Ruiz 2003).

Many researchers have argued that cultural planning helps to maintain the vibrancy of city centers and the process of urban renewal and contributes significantly to improving the image of a city. For example, in Schorgl’s view, cultural planning helped to turn northeastern Ohio into an exciting place. Cultural planning is the most critical requirement for sustaining cultural institutions and improving people’s quality of living; it also strengthens education for citizens of all ages and contributes to northeastern Ohio’s social and economic well-being (Shorgl 2006, 2). The Creative Columbus Policy
Steering Committee agreed that cultural planning was long overdue as a tool to transform Columbus into a vibrant city where people would like to stay and work. Stevenson (2004, 124) adds that cultural planning is concerned with how people live in places and communities (as regulated), with the ways in which they use the arts and other forms of creative endeavour to enhance, consolidate and express these attachments. It is also about the way in which local government plans and manages these processes for a range of political ends, including social control and place management.

Cultural planning removes arts and culture from the periphery to the center, from the margins into the mainstream. To do their job, cultural planners need to know how people live, how they accomplish their daily activities, and how they relate to one another and to their environment. In the planning and execution of a program or project, cultural planners and advisers must be visible and outspoken from the outset. Examples include the conscious presence of arts and culture at the conceptualization of any plan—be it an arts community center or the planning of new villages, at the first notion of a new residential or commercial development, at the initial signal of new local industry development strategy, and at the mooting of a dam or agricultural improvement project (Mercer 2002).

Cultural advisers must be involved in all cultural-planning development projects, not as outsiders shouting from the wings, but as vital components of a “development coalition” (Mercer 2002). In other words, cultural planners must integrate their knowledge and skills in development planning to ensure that all cultural elements are considered. The early involvement of cultural advisers in cultural-planning projects overcomes the elitist or ivory-tower approach to community development and promotes community engagement.

The city of Birmingham in England offers an excellent example of culture-led urban renewal. Birmingham was in a state of decline and degeneration in the late 1970s and early 1980s. During that period, the city lost nearly 200,000 manufacturing jobs, and unemployment topped 20 percent. No one wanted to visit the city center, and there was no civic pride (Robinson 2005b). However, after the Labour Party took over in 1984, the Birmingham City Council adopted a culture-led urban regeneration approach. Development started with Digbeth, a district marked by empty warehouses and industrial buildings. Media-related businesses moved into the district, which was later referred to as “Media-Zone.” Next, the areas around the International Convention Centre (ICC), which opened in 1991, aimed at improving the ambiance of the city center and regenerating Birmingham’s image as an international business destination (Bianchini 1993). A new concert hall for the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra was also included in the ICC. The council launched new festivals (focused on jazz, literature, cinema, and TV), which attracted prestigious arts...
organizations. Decorative art and sculpture boomed. The four districts around the ICC—the Media Zone in Digbeth, China Town, the crafts-based Jewellery Quarter that houses both businesses and residences, and the theater and entertainment district (Bianchini 1993)—are distinctive features of the city.

In addition, to ameliorate against the transformation of low-rent areas through gentrification, affordable houses were built in Birmingham with community development strategies, individual needs, and networks in mind. The cultural-planning approach guided the concern for social inclusion and empowerment. Restaurants, bars, and other businesses support the infrastructure for low-income earners, and small- to medium-sized enterprises are in place.

THE STATUS OF SOUTH AFRICAN CITIES

The traditional town-planning approach and apartheid regulations guided the establishment of South African cities. Cities and towns were meant only for the white minority. The planners did not foresee the day when all the races in South Africa would be free to move from rural areas to townships and cities, and vice versa.

Many scholars have noted this fact. For example, Potter and Lloyd-Evans (1998, 124) refer to South African cities as “apartheid cities” because of their most extreme forms of social segregation and economic division. The regulated apartheid cities led to what Potter and Lloyd-Evans called “separate development” (1998, 124) and the forced removal of the black population from cities to townships located on the periphery. It could be argued that apartheid laid a solid foundation for the creation of cities with high levels of crime. The inefficiencies of the system and political mobilization brought about the collapse of apartheid in the early 1990s and the beginning of the negotiation process that led to the national liberation in 1994.

The post-1994 democratic process in South Africa created a mass exodus of South Africans from rural areas to cities. According to Cross and Harwin (2000, 7), the exodus from rural to urban areas was caused by the search for work. Many immigrants also came from their countries of birth to South African cities.

The mass migration to cities has led to high rates of unemployment, poverty, traffic congestion, and rising crime; these conditions have created difficulties in governance. O’Donovan (2000, 10) observes that the impact of unemployment must be understood in the context of migration; individuals respond to changing economic conditions with migration, which, in the case of South Africa, caused declining employment opportunities in its cities.

For example, 120-year-old Johannesburg has a crumbling city center in urgent need of regeneration. Local government officials and politicians, recognizing this decline, assembled relevant players—the private sector, local community groups, nongovernmental organizations, civic organiz-
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itions, and trade unions—under a broad strategy, the Integrated Development Plan (IDP), to attract investment, fight crime, and address poverty. In addition, the Gauteng provincial government created the Blue IQ (an economic development organization) as an attempt to rejuvenate the entire province (including Johannesburg). The Blue IQ has commissioned the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) to identify megaprojects that have a potential to regenerate Johannesburg. The projects center on industries (such as Gautrain, a new rail line from Johannesburg to Pretoria), manufacturing (such as the Johannesburg International Airport free zone), and tourism (such as the Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site, Constitution Hill, Newtown, Dinokeng, and Kliptown).

Some projects—such as Constitution Hill, Newtown, and Kliptown—are beginning to make a difference to Johannesburg in terms of rejuvenation. A JDA-commissioned audit of the city’s cultural assets assessed their potential as elements of a measured strategy to deliver real cultural strength to the heart of the city by 2010 (see Stark 2001). Although the Johannesburg urban-regeneration projects are in progress, the absence of a cultural-planning approach is noticeable.

The failure to use cultural planning as a strategy for social development, economic development, city marketing, and physical regeneration has contributed to Johannesburg’s continuing problems with crime and ungovernability. Proper cultural planning would outline how the problems plaguing Johannesburg—traffic congestion, the absence of evening and late-night public transport, poor street lighting, and poverty—could be integrated with other Johannesburg urban policies. Burtenshaw envisioned such cultural planning, arguing that it involves “reconciliatory policies” aimed at creating a “saleable tourism product,” on the one hand, while providing an “environment for living and working” (qtd. in Chang 2000). Johannesburg is in dire need of a cultural plan not only to enhance economic development and physical regeneration but also to develop the society as a whole.

Tshwane, like Johannesburg, is associated with crime, unemployment, and empty buildings. Apart from these problems, the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (CTMM) approved an IDP in 2002 with two main principles: Planning must be development-oriented and must take place within the framework of cooperative government (The Pretoria News, December 18, 2002, 9).

Furthermore, the CTMM’s key strategic focus areas included the following:

- The promotion and development of small business.
- The creation of an economic development agency for Tshwane.
- The development of the Automotive Industry Development Centre.
- The revitalization of Church Square.
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- Support for government spatial development initiatives.

As a result, the inner city is undergoing a transformation into a “place of beauty.” This project, estimated at 11-billion-rand (approximately US$1.4 billion), aims at combating crime and improving the working conditions of public servants in nearly forty national departments or agencies in the inner city. Some expect this project to bring about acceptable norms, thus attracting private investment and ensuring security, public space, and accessibility in the urban environment. Yet it should be noted that the community-planning process was top down and did not involve multiple stakeholders; it has not yielded the desired results as seen in the case of Birmingham.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SUCCESS OF CULTURAL PLANNING

A number of preconditions and different local contexts play an important role in the success of cultural planning\(^1\) as a tool for social and economic development, city marketing, tourism, and physical regeneration.

**The Government Attitude**

Government must adopt the broadest understanding of culture, regulate cultural planning as a planning tool, and integrate it into other development policies. When a government adopts cultural planning as one of its planning tools—a culture-led social, economic, and physical development approach—more results will be realized at the local level.

**The Levels of Autonomy**

The success of a cultural plan depends to great extent on the autonomy of local government. The notion of autonomy implies that the financial resources, the powers, and the statutory responsibilities lie with local governments. Local government, which has financial statutory responsibilities, is better positioned to influence the cultural-planning process. Cultural plans are more stable in countries where cultural expenditure is a statutory duty of a local authority. However, municipalities such as Johannesburg, Tshwane, Cape Town, and eThekwini now have an opportunity to formulate their own cultural plans, as these areas have been given greater powers, resources, and scope to address inefficiencies and inadequacies.

**The Size and Nature of the Local Market for Cultural Activities**

The scope and ambitions of cultural plans are influenced by the size of the local market for cultural activities, which, in turn, is related to the social and...
educational profile of urban populations. The level of arts education of a population plays a large role. To raise arts education, local universities should use a broad-based approach to arts education, one not limited to the arts sector alone, but one that includes heritage, cultural management and policy, culture and urban regeneration, culture and rural development, cultural planning, culture and economic development or creative economies, citizenship and immigration, management of cultural diversity, management in entertainment, cultural law, and arts education pedagogy and teacher preparation.

The Commitment of the Investor Class to Local Economic Development

The degree to which the investor class—developers, banks, other major financial institutions, and national and international companies—is committed to a city is crucial. It affects the potential for developing the public-private partnerships that are essential for the successful implementation of cultural plans (Bianchini 1993).

Furthermore, collaboration and intellectual cross-fertilization among academic, community, industry, and government sectors must be encouraged. The academic sector, with its competencies in the application and refinement of conceptual frameworks and methodologies, is best suited to facilitate the cultural planning process. The community sector can provide all the necessary “local knowledge.” The industrial and government sectors should be provided with sectoral or departmental objectives and legislative powers and resources for planning and implementation beyond those of other actors.

The Influence of External Models on Policymaking

The extent to which different municipalities have been influenced by regeneration strategies of other cities also contributes to the rejuvenation of cities. The European, American, and Asian models may have a positive influence if properly applied to South Africa.

CONCLUSION

This article has debated the importance of cultural planning as a planning tool, as well as some of the challenges facing some South African cities. It has been argued and demonstrated that cultural planning has become a solution to issues of social, economic, and physical development in many international cities. In view of its success stories elsewhere, cities in South Africa, such as Johannesburg and Tshwane, could be revitalized through the use of cultural planning. This implies that it would be necessary to seriously rethink the generative potential of cultural planning.
KEYWORDS

community development, cultural identity, cultural planning, globalization of culture, South Africa, urban revitalization

NOTE

1. I have modified the requirements that were developed by Bianchini in 1993.

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