

9.0 Conclusion

World city discourse has become the dominant urban planning discourse over the past two decades. Much recent thinking in this area has revolved around the use of culture to re-energise and rejuvenate inner cities. A number of Western cities that have supported their cultural industries and created cultural quarters have in fact seen increased investment, growth, and improved standards of living for residents, which within the neo-liberal context are indicators of success.

But this understanding of growth and success is predicated on specific Western capitalist assumptions about the benefits of infinite and continued growth and economic modernisation. There is little if any space in this discussion for alternative understandings of successful cities. World cities have to meet certain capitalist criteria based on a view of history as an inevitable march towards growth and Western order and enlightenment.

Africa and its cities struggle within this paradigm, as it has been shown, it is this very system that made New York, London and other European centres world cities, that has rendered African cities as economic dependents. African cities struggle to meet all the economic and developmental criteria that determine world cities because they have been exploited and restricted from ever actually competing fairly. These cities also struggle under huge perceptual discrimination in that the ways in which African cities may have developed over the past forty years are viewed as deviant and pathological as they do not follow the normative course of development. The perceived chaos, disorder, and informality of African cities are perceived as weaknesses as opposed to an understanding of the complex cultural and social networks and rituals that are actually driving these cities.

Within that context, it becomes even harder for African cities to compete within this hierarchical system. One of the mechanisms that cities such as Johannesburg are using is the model of the culture industries as catalysts to redevelop and rejuvenate the inner city. Basing their attempts on the successes of Western cities to use the arts and culture for urban renewal, these cities are now adapting policies to promote the culture industries. As has been pointed out, these industries are expected to achieve two goals for cities; economic renewal and creating strategic advantage within the global system by creating new African identities

that are appealing to the West. Cultural Tourism has been highlighted as one of these culture industries pegged with achieving these goals. Cultural Tourism though, also highlights how this process is fraught with complexities in regards to culture, social interactions, and identity. African culture within this model becomes a means to an end, simple content that is packaged within a Western paradigm to attract tourists and investors.

Alternative approaches, such as a more Africanist approach that celebrate much of what the West perceives as chaotic and negative about Africa, seem doomed to lose this struggle, at least in terms of major urban planning on the continent. Cities such as Johannesburg have appear to have accepted the assumptions that underpin the world city system. Therefore in order to compete within this system and in order to attain competitive advantage within it, Johannesburg has had to package its Africanness in ways that are palatable to the Western gaze. The Newtown development has been analysed in regards to these processes. The way in which the project has been described is openly and unabashedly operating within the world city discourse.

The way in which the project has been described, and the infrastructural interventions, despite what may be argued by those involved, will help to determine the content of the art and culture that is created within that space. The implications are that once again African voices are subjugated by a hegemonic Western paradigm. The harnessing of the arts in service of creating a new African identity that is designed to attract business and investment will ultimately determine the nature of the content. Therefore, it is clear why Newtown can be viewed as a space where major issues of identity and power are being played out in the name of urban renewal. The outcomes that take place within Newtown will be critical for the future of arts and culture as they are defined within the world city system. Whether the arts are used to pursue this project, or if they instead become a space for opposition to this system remains to be seen.