



DSPACE

<https://dspace.org/>

**Johannesburg as world city: Arts and culture policy in
The Urban African context**

Preston, Lara

2007-03-01T13:06:47Z

<http://hdl.handle.net/10539/2189>

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim

This paper aims to investigate contemporary world city discourse, specifically in terms of how arts and culture have become relevant to understandings of urban regeneration. This paper will also analyse the role of arts and culture in this discourse in the context of African post-colonial cities, and more specifically within South Africa and the current urban regeneration project taking place in Newtown, Johannesburg.

This paper will analyse the language and policy relating to arts and culture from a national government level to a city level. This analysis will unpack some of the assumptions that underpin these policies and will explore the ways in which this language and policy play out within a uniquely African urban context.

1.2 Rationale

The newness of the South African nation-state has created a laboratory of policy where in a short space of time complex policies have been enacted and have impacted communities in various ways. The process of transition from the Apartheid past has been a combination of home-grown ideologies and dominant historical and global discourses. Contesting theories on politics, economics, culture, and nation-building have struggled for dominance, with the perceptions about South Africa's unique development needs playing a strong role in determining the country's path.

Within this context, global trends in policy and planning, such as world city discourse, appear to have taken root within both national and local government policy and practice. Currently, there appears to be the belief within the local government of Johannesburg that to transform the inner city of Johannesburg based on the example of many western European examples will lead to economic regeneration as well as to the creation of an "African world class city". It is crucial to unpack this term – "African world class city" - in order to explore the complexities of African urban spaces and the contradictions and challenges that arise when policies based on Western ideals of regeneration and development are enacted.

1.3 Literature Review

Various types of literature have been utilised for this report, from the historical to the theoretical. As a starting point it is necessary to mention one of the critical techniques used to examine the policy texts, a technique influenced by Norman Fairclough's *Critical Discourse Analysis* (1995). His understanding of the ways in which texts, (and what constitutes texts) need to be examined and unpacked is a valuable tool for examining the power relations and ideologies behind much current policy and rhetoric. This type of analysis has been influential on the examination of the historical and theoretical literature relating to arts and culture and world city discourse that occurs in this research report (see Methodology p. 9).

1.3.1 World City Discourse & the Culture Industries

Before launching into an analysis of world city discourse, this paper provides a very brief overview of previous prominent urban planning theories. Brief reference is made to Le Corbusier's *The City of Tomorrow and its Planning* (1947). This text is critical to understanding the modernist view of urban planning with its basis in reason and order. The overview in this chapter also highlights how thinkers such as Manuel Castells and David Harvey challenged the modernist way of thinking with texts such as Castells' *City, Class and Power* (1978), which brought issues such as social movements and class conflict into the realm of urban planning.

There are a number of key texts that lay out the basic foundations of world city discourse, most of which have been written by Western Europeans or North Americans. These include John Friedmann's *The World City Hypothesis* (1986) which is fundamental in that it spells out the basic criteria and constructs of this global system. David Smith and Michael Timberlake's *Conceptualising and Mapping the Structure of the World City Systems* (1995) elaborates further on this theory and the way in which various cities interact through its hierarchical structure.

The role of arts and culture in the rejuvenation of urban spaces through governmental support of so-called culture industries is also investigated. Much of this theory for urban economic renewal has been put into practice in specific European cities. There are a number of texts that spell out both the theory and the practice of these concepts in select European

spaces. Much of this theory appears to have been foundational for the recent discussions of urban renewal taking place in Johannesburg, as will be shown.

One such text is Charles Landry's *The Creative City*, (2000) which is a practical hand book for city planners who want to use the arts to rejuvenate city centres. The strong neo-liberal view of the arts is explored further and in practical detail in Derek Wynne's *The Culture Industry: The Arts in Urban Regeneration* (1992). A number of key essays on the implications of such policies can also be found in Anthony O'Connor and Derek Wynne's *From the Margins to the Centre: Cultural Production and Consumption in the Post Industrial City* (1996). Their book lays out the processes whereby a Fordist economy has been replaced by a more service oriented economy and how this has, in turn led to the rise of a new form of so-called cultural production. For a more specific context in which this process has taken place, Graeme Evan's *Cultural Planning: An Urban Renaissance* (2001) provides useful insights into the normative definitions of terms such as culture industries, and also the specifics relating to these industries in Manchester, The United Kingdom. *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration*, (1993) edited by Franco Bianchini and Michael Parkinson is another important text that looks at the implications of this new cultural economy for cities. Saskia Sassen looks at these issues in more of a global context in her essay, *Cities and Communities in the Global Economy: Rethinking our Concepts* (1996). Her analysis provides the context of globalisation within which these processes are taking place.

For a more theoretical perspective that gets to the heart of many of the issues that emerge from such policy, is Susan Zukin's *The Culture of Cities* (1995). She probes beyond the policy rhetoric and the simplistic economic perspective of urban cultural policies and explores what these policies mean in regards to power relationships and identity. Her analysis of public space and the conflicts that emerge when cultural policy merges with urban policy is especially relevant when one looks at the implications of these policies for African cities.

1.3.2 African Cities

Within world city discourse, African cities are generally considered to be lagging behind the rest of the world. This perception, while sometimes based in urban realities, is often the product of a specific way of thinking. This way of thinking is based on Western standards that describe African cities as disorderly and underdeveloped in relation to modern Western

cities. Within normative world city discourse, to be “African” is to take on specific meanings which need to be explored. It is also necessary to understand the historical legacies that have led to this situation in order to open the space for alternative views of African cities that do not simply subscribe to the current dominant global discourse.

David Simon’s *Cities, Capital & Development: African Cities in the World Economy* (1992) provides a thorough analysis of the historical, social, and economic legacies of colonialism in regards to African urban spaces. He provides an insightful analysis of the lingering effects of colonialism on the spatiality and psychology of African urban environments. Texts like this make it possible to understand how African cities operate within the world city system and how the system is actually stacked against them.

The introductory essay in the journal *Public Culture: Johannesburg the Elusive Metropolis*, by Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall, entitled *Writing the World from the African Metropolis*, (2004) is a powerful analysis that deconstructs the dominant discourse on African cities. The authors demonstrate how Africa is usually analysed either through anthropological or developmental discourses and the inevitable implications of this analysis. By deconstructing these normative discourses, Mbembe and Nuttall open a space for other thinkers, such as those listed below, to be revisited.

There are a number of Africanist thinkers who are trying to find a subjective voice for Africans and African cities. These writers attempt to open a space where African voices can speak for themselves, without being defined by dominant discourses such as world city discourse. Texts such as those by Chabal and Daloz’s *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, (1999) and Achille Mbembe’s *On the Post Colony* (2001), offer alternative views to the dominant Western neo-liberal voice. Mbembe rejects the dominant Western narratives about Africa, including those that romanticise Africa in a state of perpetual primitiveness. Mbembe, Chabal, and Daloz propose that much of what is perceived by the West as “other” or even deviant, is in fact a space of resistance where Africa can find its own voice. While none of these authors define what this voice is, they are at least opening up a space where it can be heard.

1.3.3 South African Arts and Culture Policy

Arts and culture policy in post-Apartheid South Africa has not been extensively analysed in the light of global economic policy or discourse. Therefore this research relies mainly on primary sources from the National Department of Arts & Culture, including annual reports and other reports issued by local and national government. In terms of the early post-Apartheid era, the most notable analysis has been done by Annie Coombes in her *History after Apartheid: Visual Culture and Public Memory in a Democratic South Africa* (2003). This text is useful in providing insight into the way the early ANC government utilised the arts in aid of their Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP). However, her work only covers the period until about 1997 and therefore my research into the government's shift in arts and culture policy is not covered in this book.

1.3.4 Tourism

There has been much written about the recent trends in cultural tourism and its implications for the Third World. Much of this theory is very relevant when analysing cultural tourism as a culture industry within the world city system. A text that covers the theoretical underpinnings and implications of cultural tourism is S. Britton's *Tourism, Capital, and Place; Towards a Critical Geography of Tourism* (1990) which looks at some of the sociological forces that drive tourism and how tourism is a by-product of a capitalist system.

Jennifer Craik's *The Culture of Tourism* (1997), also looks at tourism within the context of globalization, and examines the implications of tourism for culture in so called tourist destinations. CM Hall's *Tourism, Culture and the Presentation of Social Reality* also looks at issues of authenticity within cultural tourism and uncovers the inherently imbalanced power relations that are at play in these forms of cultural tourism. Erik Cohen, in *Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism* (1988), discusses how cultural tourism inevitably leads to the commercialization of culture which has serious implications for artists and cultural practitioners.

A text that looks specifically at the South African situation is Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz's *South Africa: The World in One Country* (1993). Rassool and Witz look at how packaged tours of South Africa help to perpetuate stereotypes that romanticise Africa. They argue that

in order to compete in the global tourist market, South Africa has needed to package itself in simple ways that perpetuate these stereotypes and thereby freeze culture within narrow parameters that are determined by Western discourse.

1.3.5 Johannesburg and Newtown

While there is a growing body of writing that examines Johannesburg, many of them are written from strictly historical or sociological perspectives.¹ Recently however, scholars and academics have been looking at Johannesburg as a space where various power relationships are being played out, and specifically in regards to the use of arts and culture within the city's economic and developmental policies.

These texts include Teresa Dirsuweit's *From Fortress City to Creative City*, (1999) which is a detailed analysis of the various cultural industries operating within the city. She investigates the various successes and failures of these industries in their attempts to transform the city from a walled-in and defensive space, to an open and public one. Lindsay Bremner's *Johannesburg: One City Colliding Worlds*, (2004) contains a number of essays that explore the contradictions inherent in the growth of the city. Her essay on the way in which Johannesburg is attempting to position itself as a world class city is especially useful in light of the discussion around cultural tourism and the city's regeneration policies.

The journal, *Public Culture: Johannesburg – The Elusive Metropolis*, vol 16 number 3 (2004), edited by Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall, contains a number of useful essays. Mbembe's *Aesthetics of Superfluity* examines the ways in which Johannesburg has been portrayed over the decades and what that means for today's perceptions of the city. AbdouMalik Simone's essay, *People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg* also has interesting insights into what makes Johannesburg a uniquely African city, *Emerging Johannesburg: Perspectives on the Post-Apartheid City*, (1994) edited by Richard Tomlinson et al., contains a particularly useful essay by Jennifer Robinson entitled *Johannesburg's Futures: Beyond Developmentalism & Global Success*. This essay explores how Johannesburg's future is linked to world city discourse, but also to developmental discourse. She analyses how these two opposing forces pull the city planners in often conflicting directions. She examines some

¹ Most notable of these is Charles van Onselen's 2 volume history of the city during the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, entitled *Studies into the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand*.

of the very real implications for the city in simply following Western discourses and proposes that space for other voices needs to be made.

A text that deals specifically with some of the issues relating to the history of Newtown is Sally Gaule's, *Alternating Currents of Power; From Colonial to Post-apartheid Spatial Patterns In Newtown Johannesburg* (2005). Her historical and spatial analysis of the specific Newtown area provides a useful background for current policy discussions relevant to the area.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

In order to investigate the way in which arts and culture are understood and utilised within the world city discourse, and furthermore how these policies play out within the African urban context, specifically Johannesburg, it will first be necessary to examine some of the theoretical discourses that are foundational for these current policy discussions.

Firstly however, it is necessary to clarify the use of the term arts and culture within this paper. It is acknowledged that this is a historically and politically loaded term that can lead to many conflicting understandings. For this paper, it is used as it is applied within world city discourse and within official government policy and rhetoric. This paper does not seek to explore the various levels of meanings around the term, but rather to look at how it is utilised within the discourses discussed.

This paper will begin by mapping the global historical context for the way in which world city discourse has evolved. The global urban and economic trends that have been the context within which this discourse has arisen will be investigated. Similarly, an investigation into the ways in which arts and culture have become part of this discourse will be covered. This paper will look at the way in which arts and culture industries are defined and utilised for specific goals within world city discourse.

Once this theoretical framework has been established, a historical examination of post-colonial African cities and how they are perceived within world city discourse will be undertaken. This historical framework will lay the foundation for an examination of how the

tensions and assumptions inherent in world city discourses are played out within the space of the urban African environment such as Johannesburg

The role of arts and culture as it is expressed in world city –driven policy will then be looked at within the specifically South African context. This investigation will examine world city discourse as it is currently being expressed through publications and policy from within the national government, down to local city governments such as the City of Johannesburg. This apparently dominant policy voice is obviously not that of just one person, and nor has it gone unopposed, however when one looks at the majority of language and policy generated by the National Department of Arts and Culture, as well as at documents released by the City of Johannesburg, it is clear that over the last few years, this neo-liberal economic perspective on the arts has superseded the previous language of nation-building and reconciliation. Within this neo-liberal² context, arts and culture are seen as tools with twofold purposes, firstly to create jobs and growth specifically within urban environments, and secondly to re-imagine a new African identity that is appealing to the dominant ideology of the West. This proposition will be explored by an overview and analysis of national and local government policy and official releases and documents.

This paper begins from a global theoretical perspective by analysing world city discourse. It then includes an analysis of how arts and culture has become defined within this discourse, and specifically in regards to urban renewal. The paper then moves to a more specific perspective relating to the urban African context and shows how the legacies of colonialism still manifest within this new dominant discourse. Within this context, the paper attempts to demonstrate the implications for issues around identity and power within African cities such as Johannesburg when this global policy becomes the dominant policy direction.

The way in which this policy is articulated has real implications for arts, culture, and identity and this process will be explored through an analysis of the urban regeneration project of Johannesburg, and more specifically, the Newtown Development Project. The ways in which the city planners are attempting to frame the city within world city parameters, and thereby

² By neo-liberal, it is referring to the current trend of globalization whereby free markets, and free trade are seen as positive and inevitable economic outcomes. Concepts such as “good governance” and “fiscal responsibility” also emerge from this discourse, often in relation to Africa.

redefine so-called African space in a way that attracts Western business and investment will be analysed through the Newtown project.

It is necessary at this point to acknowledge that within the Johannesburg environment there are several development and policy discourses that apply to different sectors of the city. This paper is mainly interested in the discourse and policy around the arts and inner city regeneration and not so much with the more developmental aims of township renewal.

1.5 Methodology

Much of the basis for this report will be the examination of various texts and therefore it will be necessary to employ some of the key tools of critical discourse analysis as spelled out by Norman Fairclough in his book, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. (1995)

As a starting point of this analysis, this paper will investigate the language of world city discourse and how it is possible to unpack certain assumptions and ideologies contained therein. However, it is important to state that this paper is not a rigorous discourse analysis, but rather uses some of the tools of discourse analysis which prove useful when unpacking the power dynamics and underlying assumptions that are accepted as hegemonic in current world city discourse. These tools are especially useful when looking at the ways in which Africa is defined within Western discourse.

As Fairclough points out, all discourses include, whether implicitly or explicitly, ideologies that need to be examined. Since discourse is employed in “producing and reproducing the social order” (Fairclough, 1995: p. 219), it will be necessary to look at the context of this language and its implications for cities such as Johannesburg. The “technologization of discourse”, according to Fairclough, is part of “attempts by dominant social forces to direct and control the course of major social and cultural change.” (Fairclough, 1995: p. 91) Furthermore, when looking at policy relating to arts and culture in an environment where “the arts are being drawn into commercial and consumerist modes of operation” (Fairclough, 1995: p. 101), it is necessary to look at how the language being used around the arts is creating a new social reality through a process of marketization and commodification.

A specific urban site, the Newton Cultural Precinct, will be analysed in regards to the use of language and rhetoric to describe the project, and how this rhetoric impacts the outcomes of the project itself. Various perceptions from city planners and stakeholders will help to showcase some of the ramifications of applying an imported urban theory to an African city environment.

While a number of interviews with city planners, project stakeholders and business owners from the area were conducted, none provided concrete data in the way originally expected. Collectively however, they do highlight the symbolic importance of Newtown as a space where issues of identity and culture are played out. The interviews also did not follow a rigorous line of questioning, but rather were structured as informal conversations around perceptions of Newtown as well as certain experiences within the project or the space itself.

There are clearly limitations to the interview format, such as people withholding information or trying to promote their particular point of view, however these kinds of tensions and silences will also provide powerful points of analysis especially in areas where there is contestation of the issues. Please see Appendix A for a list of conversations.

There appeared to be no ethical considerations in terms of the interviews conducted.

1.6 Chapter Outline

Chapter 2: World City Discourse

This chapter examines the historical context of world city discourse as an outcome of a particular economic and social situation. This chapter also examines the underlying assumptions of the discourse and how they are played out within its language and rhetoric.

Chapter 3: World Cities: Arts & Culture

This chapter examines how arts and culture have become embedded in much of world city discussion and relevant policy in cities in the West. The chapter will look at how the arts have come to be perceived as a tool for urban regeneration and economic renewal, through the co-called culture industries, as well as the symbolic value that arts and culture have to create city identities.

Chapter 4: Africa; Post-Colonial vs. World Cities

This next chapter investigates the historical context of African cities within the world city system. An overview of the legacy of colonialism on the spatiality and psychology of the African city, as it is relevant to world city discourse will be undertaken. This chapter also examines some alternative views and perceptions of Africa that do not rely on the dominant discourse, but rather reject it outright. The chapter also looks at what these perceptions mean for African cities both symbolically and in terms of their place within the global system.

Chapter 5: South African Arts & Culture Policy: From Nation-building to Urban Renewal

In this chapter, the policy of the Department of Arts and Culture over the last ten years is analysed. It is argued that the policy and language of the Department has shifted over the last decade in line with the government's overall policy shift from Reconstruction and Development (RDP), to Growth, Employment, and Redistribution (GEAR). This chapter looks at how current national policy in terms of arts and culture appears to be based on the language and underlying assumptions of world city discourse, specifically when looking at policy relating to the cultural industries.

Chapter 6: Tourism: Africa's Cultural Industry

Tourism has become one of the more powerful cultural industries especially in the Third World. This chapter analyses some of the ways in which cultural tourism is a by-product of a specifically neo-liberal and globalised context. This chapter also demonstrates some of the specific ramifications of this industry for Africa in light of its place within the world city system. The chapter also briefly looks at how South Africa and Johannesburg have embraced tourism as an economic and symbolic tool to help compete in the global market.

Chapter 7: Johannesburg African World Class City

This chapter looks at the specific example of Johannesburg in light of how its city planners appear to be openly operating within the world city discourse. The city's policy and official documents are examined as an example of how National Arts and Culture policy is being played out at a local level. The urban renewal project of the city and the various plans to improve the city are examined in the context of world city discourse and their economic and symbolic ramifications for an African city.

Chapter 8: The Newtown Project

The Newtown project is examined in terms of how the language and the goals of the project have been influenced by and operate within, world city discourse. This chapter also examines how perceptions of the Newtown project and its success or failure are based on the highly symbolic and charged language of the project. This chapter demonstrates that this project is powerfully symbolic and has become a flashpoint for opposing views on development and progress within the African urban environment.