

# Spatial planning in kenya and the appreciative approach of societal values and no...

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Spatial Planning in Kenya and the Appreciative Approach of Societal Values and Norms Said Athman Nairobi, Kenya February 2013 CONTENT Cover Page Table of Contents Introduction Page 3 Values, Norms, Culture and Social Structure Page 3 Planning in the Context of Norms and Values Page 5 Conclusion Page 7 References Page 8 Introduction Friedmann in 2005 noted that urban and regional planning and development are to be understood and practiced differently depending on their institutional settings and cultural roots that vary significantly across countries and regions (Friedmann 2005, 29; CEC 1997).

This statement remains true to date even in the face rapid globalization. Therefore there cannot be expected in any spatial planning processes to have two identical plans that is a result of different geographical and socio-cultural settings.

Even if, in the rarest situation, this were to happen, this will be more in the exception. It therefore begs the reverse question, as to what happens when values and norms are ignored in spatial planning.

Could it be true that when planning is done, there is a complete absence of considerations of norms and value of a people, or could it be the omission by the planners to consciously and visibly highlight this criteria that in fact ensures that the norms and values of the planners themselves or the dominant community they belong to permeate and influence the planning process and product?

Leonie Sandercock, in her paper, *When Strangers Become Neighbours: Managing Cities of Difference* makes an impressive review of this subject

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(Sandercock, 2000). One reason for the greater awareness of cultural contexts for urban and regional planning can be found in the 'cultural turn' in the 1990s which marked a watershed in recognising the significance of culture (and also space) compared to the discussions in the 1970s and 1980s when culture specific contexts and settings among nations and regions were neglected.

Thus, Sandercock traces answers to this question from the work of the Royal Town Planning Institute which had, in 1992, commissioned researchers to explore the sensitivity of the British planning system to the needs of specific cultural communities.

Their report, having surveyed over 100 local planning authorities, concluded that there was a great deal of ignorance of the existence and nature of racial/ethnic disadvantage in planning, and they recommended creating an institutional framework which would give greater priority to the issue (Krishnarayan ; Thomas, 1993).

This work inspired, certainly other similar studies in Australia and Canada which have drawn attention to a number of issues: from the overall failure of the planning system to respond to the increasing cultural diversity of the city, to the ways in which the values and norms of the dominant culture are reflected in plans, planning codes and bylaws, legislation, and heritage and urban design practices, to planners' inability to analyse issues from a multicultural perspective or to design participatory processes that bring racial and ethnic groups into the planning process (Ameyaw, 2000, p. 105).

Values, Norms, Culture and Social Structure In the preamble to the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), culture is defined as "...the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs" Anna Katrina Davey in her Across Cultures website and articles describes culture in the following terms: " Culture is a framework of behavioural patterns, values, assumptions and experiences shared by a social group.

Culture is a mostly automatically or unconsciously applied orientation system of collective values, which makes its group members' behaviour comprehensible and to a certain degree predictable for each other. Culture is communication, it impacts how we send and interpret messages.

Culture shapes human conduct within a cultural group. Culture is something we learn. Culture is like mental software and has accordingly been defined as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others.

Culture acts as a kind of filter or lens through which we view others, affecting the way we see them and creating multiple perspectives". Therefore different societies or social groups are identified uniquely by their cultures- that set of values, norms, systems, patterns, features, characteristics or material elements.

While culture is the full range of learned human behaviour patterns; values and norms form the building blocks. Values and norms are the glue that

binds most social groups; they determine the behaviour (acceptance, cooperation, anxiety) of a community

Talcott Parsons wrote that all human societies have certain problems that have to be solved if life is to be maintained. Such problems can be approached and solved in a variety of ways, and the choice of how to solve them is governed by our values. Values are beliefs that we all have about what is important both on an individual and societal level. A value therefore is a belief (whether right or wrong) about the way something should be.

An example of a value might be that it is better for a child to be raised by its natural mother and father than for society to take responsibility. Some values are personal to us as individuals whereas others are more widely held by large groups. In such an instance, values may become morals; that is, they become absolute and of fundamental importance that we believe everyone should hold the same values. For example, the moral belief that killing is wrong. It is therefore apparent that values by definition involve judgements, be they personal or societal. Values are general guidelines to behaviour which tell us what is right or wrong.

On the other hand, they do not tell us what is right and wrong in specific situations but in a more overall kind of way. For how to behave in specific situations we are guided by norms. Norms (short for normative or normal), on the other hand, are expected, socially acceptable ways of behaving in a given social situation. Like values they differ from person to person and society to society. While norms are specific rules dictating how people should act in a particular situation, values are general ideas that support the norm.

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We use the term norms loosely, but there are three distinguishable types.

Firstly folkways are weak norms such as responding when someone says hello to you. Failure to follow this norm will have no implications except that the other person may consider you rude. Secondly, there are mores which are a stronger type of norm and will result in a stronger social response, for example telling a teacher to “bugger off”. The third and final type of norm is laws. A law is an expression of a very strong moral norm that exists to control people’s behaviour.

The idea of norms is useful in two ways.

Primarily they show the ways in which human behaviour is structured and secondly they highlight how society can be seen as a force as when we disrupt the normative expectations of society we can measure the effects on people’ behaviour. A culture represents all of the norms and values that people in the society share. The concept of culture is therefore derived from things that people value and the way they obey and express these values. In its most simplistic form a culture is a general way of life characteristic of a particular society.

A cultural society therefore organizes itself in social structure that is identifiable by their social norms, social values, social roles and statuses and social institutions.

It is these institutions that are the carriers of the culture of the society. The institutions include the family, religion, education, law, government, science, politics, mass media amongst others. These institutions are expected to represent, express, manifest and articulate the culture of its society. Social  
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structure is the patterned and relatively stable arrangement of roles and statuses found within societies and social institutions.

The idea of social structure points out the way in which societies, and institutions within them, exhibit predictable patterns of organization, activity and social interaction. Stability of organization and behaviour provides the quality of predictability that people rely on in every day social interaction.

Planning in the Context of Norms and Values Planning refers to the methods used by the public sector to influence the distribution of people and activities in spaces of various scales.

Spatial planning includes all levels of land use planning including urban planning, regional planning and national spatial plans (Alterman, 2002). Planning is concerned with “ the problem of coordination or integration of the spatial dimension of sectoral policies through a territorially-based strategy” (Cullingworth and Nadin, 2006, 91). More complex than simple land-use regulation, it addresses the tensions and contradictions among sectoral policies, for example for conflicts between economic development, environmental and social cohesion policies.

The key role of spatial planning is to promote a more rational arrangement of activities and to reconcile competing policy goals.

A cultural group or society, or simply a society would always have immediate needs to fulfil and aspirations to pursue. The planning process creates the environment within which a society becomes aware of itself (its values and norms), expresses its priorities, and interacts with others (Sayrs, 2011). It is

through planning that communities become functionally aware of their goals and the values that propel them forward .

Planning therefore, connects the values of a culture with the policies they adopt to make the society/environment they would like. Since communities are unique in the characteristics and differ in their needs, effective planning results in a plurality of plans to suit the needs of a diverse public (Buriyadi, 2000) Urban and regional planning and development are strongly rooted in and restricted to the cultural contexts or traits of a society (Joerg Knieling and Frank Othengrafen).

Therefore the understanding of the values and norms of every community become a critical aspect in determining appropriate approaches to a wide variety of planning actions (Brabec, 2010). It is the culture of a community guides the planning process. A community is built on shared common beliefs, values, concerns and interests (Deberlin, 2007). In Kenya planners have to consider and take into account norms and values of communities as they lead and facilitate the planning the process.

Actions such as gaining support for protected areas (Lewa Conservancy (Samburu)), designing new developments, and integrating tourism facilities in existing communities (Maasai Mara, Lamu) all depend on an understanding of cultural norms and values. Culture also transforms the urban structure and landscape.

The emergence of ethnic enclaves (Somali in Eastleigh for instance), ethnic bazaars and malls affects the residential and commercial organization of a city.

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Sandercock notes that spatial planning is undertaken with the aims of creating a more rational territorial organization of land uses and the linkages between them, to balance demands for development with the need to protect the environment and to achieve social and economic development objectives. It embraces measures to coordinate the spatial impacts of other sectorial policies to achieve a more even distribution of economic development between regions than would otherwise be created by market forces, and to regulate the conversion of land and property uses.

Therefore, planning takes place within a context and is strongly influenced by this context. A planner who does not take time to study, internalize and be responsive to the context, would but be undertaking an exercise in futility and almost inevitably the rejection of the plan (Sandercock, 2000). Further, in the early stages of the planning process social analysis is undertaken to get a better understanding of the socio-cultural, institutional, historical and political context within which the plan is being undertaken.

Through social analysis the planning team assesses whether its proposed strategies and programmes are likely to meet their social objectives and identifies measures that will ensure that these objectives are achieved. Social analysis also helps to assess the likely outcomes, impacts and social risks that need to be considered in the design of projects and programs, including the views and priorities of relevant stakeholders. A key component here to be analysed include the 'social' characteristics of an area or society whose key parameters are the demographic structure (e. . size and density of population, age and sex structure, household structure and composition), ethnic characteristics, social structure (e. g.

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leadership structures; class, caste or other social divisions), religious and cultural beliefs and practices, and general attitudes. However, there have been arguments against placing too much premium on norms and values in the planning process. As society become more modernised, particularly in the digital age, differences in time and space have become very reduced giving the concept of the global village.

Norms and values are therefore said to also becoming globalized. This is evident with the greater role played by the United Nations and international bodies, to which most nations of the world are members of.

These institutions regularly reach global agreements that are enshrined in international instruments that carry with them universal norms and values, such the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. These values bind all nations and their citizens.

**Conclusion** This paper has demonstrated that the planning process is intimately associated with the people in the area being planned for. The ideal process, and indeed the only viable process, is the one that involves the people and take in consideration the context in which they live in, appreciate the social structure of that community and ultimately the product of such a planning process becomes the mouth piece of their aspiration in terms of the future society they desire to live in.

In so doing norms and values of the people are what the planner of today is compelled to creatively identify, integrate and amplify in the planning proposals she proffers.

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