

IDEAL PLANNING AND MESSY IMPLEMENTATION

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IDEAL PLANNING – ENVIRONMENTAL "NICE-TO-HAVES" VS SURVIVAL MODE

The expressions sustainability, responsible development, appropriate technology and "think global acts local" are being banded around for decades now. Although the intent and commitment are there, the question is how effective can these theories be applied within the African and South African context. Wasteful city building models and planning principles have been followed for decades, but we are now trying to adjust our cities to a new paradigm. Although we, in our firm, are committed to these ideals, we have also been at the coal face of the realities in planning and implementation.

The questions

The thrust for sustainability, specifically in the built or physical environment, is based on the premise that we are destroying the earth by irresponsible development, greed and exploitation. The question arises whether sustainability or the new green movement – now being implemented by the hippies of the sixties – is only a new way of selling products. Or is it a new way of doing things? Further questions come to the fore. Is sustainability driven by good housekeeping (clean environment), or is it driven by survival – the survival of the species of homo sapiens as we know it today? Are we talking about the quality of life or the cost of living? When we build our cities, will we go for economic growth or for financial gain?

Long term sustainable economic growth has its hiccups, especially evident with globalisation. In planning and urban design the balance between public good and private greed becomes a centre of an approach to balance and guide capital flow and energy in investment. A flow of capital and energy through our cities are clearly manifested in the decay of our CBDs and the growth of greenfields suburban security ghetto's. We have gone beyond the economy of waste that was prevalent in the 1960s where consumerism and built-in obsolescence were norms to ensure that capital flow is enhanced and market share is increased. We have, however, evolved from the economy of waste to wasteful economies where globalisation developed to such an extent. It is, however, possible to suck any country or continent dry by means of capital flow and resource market manipulation.

Due to globalisation and the fast flow of capital and energy, it is possible for a country like America to need the rest of the world to be able to sustain the American way of life. It is frightening to think that the per capita energy needs of the United States are ten and sometimes fiftyfold the per capita consumption of other countries. It is clear that globalisation that was supposed to spread information and technology worldwide, is currently waging a new power struggle whereby information is the ultimate tool and weapon.

What are the implications of the above for Africa?

Frail and simple technology dominated for centuries in Africa, supported by a subsistence lifestyle where normal natural rules were applied. This changed overnight by new technologies and new approaches applied to the cosmos – with no sustainable principles in mind. Africa was and is still seen as the backyard of the world, where even nuclear waste is dumped. Furthermore, technological approaches and the level of technology are limited to short term gain and market share. For centuries Africa was exploited by outsiders. Apart from a few cities like Ancara, most cities in Africa were conceived, designed and built according to European models and eventually based upon the American way of life. African cities as we know it today, are fairly new. It seems that Africa has not really assimilated most of the new technologies and urban models.

If you try to answer the previous questions in the African context it is clear that Africa (apart from the fact that it is the dumping ground for old ideas and technologies), cannot even start

to think about clean environments when countries and communities are still in the survival mode. The cost of living is equated with the cost of lives. With the trickle down economic system, Africa will always be technologically disadvantaged. It will, therefore, never be on a competitive edge with the rest of the world as we see it today (we only have to look at the FIFA World Cup decision for 2006 to realise that equity is not the name of the game and social or economic investment is not the agenda).

How do we apply this to city making in South Africa?

Since the core or basis of our cities is by nature colonial, western and based on American models, it is difficult to see how we are going to reverse the trend without a benevolent ecologically-minded dictatorship. As income levels rise, people expand their territorial domain in the city. This means that the dispersed city will continue to grow with low level densities unable to support public transport and suburban housing types requiring 80% of the water consumption to keep a private park going. While the vast majority of the country has little access to private mobility or information technology, the following question arises: If we increase the per capita income and we become an affluent middle class society, will our country be able to support the pressure on resources and land?

In mending our urban past our firm was involved in a number of projects of which the Marabastad project will be discussed further by Annemarie Loots. This project was the kind of project where we not only believed in the cause, but also in the people. Marabastad survived apartheid, a highway scheme, forced removals, total neglect and institutional indifference. With the introduction of the Environmental Management Plan for Pretoria and the establishment of the Innerscity Partnership a new fresh wave of hope was introduced. We were privileged to be part of the process. However, Annemarie will show the kind of efforts, frustrations and hope that was experienced through this incredible learning curve. Through our involvement in the environmental planning for the past thirty years, we experienced implementation that is by nature messy, time consuming and sometime disheartening. We know we cannot solve all the problems in a small area like Marabastad, but Marabastad is more than simply a piece of city – it is a symptom of our schizophrenic urban life. Marabastad is a backyard of Pretoria, a servant's quarter and a dumping ground. The efforts by the Council to turn this process around to try and make Marabastad one of the front doors of Pretoria is commendable and brave. With large numbers of people moving through this part of town, we wonder what kind of urban experience is really felt by its inhabitants. Urban life is threatened while we complain about the minutes we have to wait at a robot and consequently motivate for wider roads through urban fabrics that took decades to develop.

As development needs social, economic, physical and institutional components we believe that the first three are probably the easiest. The challenge does, however, lie in institutional strategies (city management, political will and allocation of resources) to push our cities towards sustainability. The words of Marco Polo to the Kublai Khan in the book *Invisible Cities* by Italo Calvino are significant. The Kublai Khan asked: "Why do you talk about the stones – it is only the arch that matters?". Marco Polo answered: "Without the stones there will be no arch". In the way we arrange the development components, or the stones, we determine what kind of gateways we create for the future.

MESSY IMPLEMENTATION – THE LIFE AND DEATH OF TWO PROJECTS

Welcome to the narration of the highly applauded and intriguing play "The Life and Death of Two Projects" featuring the amateur players who received no training but showed a remarkable and enduring spirit in their performance.

The setting: Marabastad

- Marabastad the *backyard* of the city of Pretoria: It has a long and painful history of social injustice, political agendas, neglect and physical decay.

- Marabastad the *foyer* of the Pretoria CBD: It is located a mere 10 minutes walking distance from the core of the Central Business District (CBD) of Pretoria. 180 000 people are streaming daily through the Belle Ombre Railway station, two official but informal taxi ranks, numerous unofficial and informal taxi assembly points and two bus terminals between homes and work opportunities.
- Marabastad the *scullery* for the Greater Pretoria Metropolitan Area: The city's fresh produce market providing wholesale fruit and vegetables to almost all green grocers, supermarkets and street vendors is situated in the area.
- Marabastad the *bedroom* of hundreds: Squatters living in unhealthy and unsafe conditions are occupying vacant land, street reserves and parking lots.
- Marabastad the *spaza shop* as life blood for many: Informal buying and selling takes place on a large scale with informal traders (struggling to make a living) operating in Marabastad being ten times more than in the rest of the CBD – an area more than ten times smaller than the rest of the CBD. On the other hand formal traders sell all types of household items at the most affordable prices in the city, providing a treasure-trove for all bargain hunters.

The build-up: A sequence of events

- In the *1950s and before*, Marabastad was the hub for "alternative entertainment" in Pretoria (the "Marabi culture"). It was a vibrant area where living, trading and socialising were intertwined. The vibe that characterised those days, still relives in the hearts and minds of the elderly in the community. Stories of a multi-cultural, closely knit community are often told with a tear in the eye.
- In the *early 1960s* Marabastad excelled as the exhibition platform for engineering skills. The majority of built structures were demolished to make way for grand plans to build highways and other infrastructure such as the sewage works.
- In the *late 1960s* Marabastad evolved as the playground of politicians. During those years, Marabastad had mainly three groupings, namely Indians, Blacks and Coloureds. However, in the high days of "apartheid", the inhabitants were forced to move out of the area, respectively to newly established Indian, Black and Coloured townships on the periphery of the city.
- In the *1970s and 1980s* Marabastad lied there, exposed and abandoned – the step child of all authorities (national, provincial and local). The vast tracks of land still lying vacant between Marabastad and the CBD are in many ways a living monument to the past.
- In the *1990s* with a new political dispensation, a new interest in Marabastad arose – neglect became inexcusable. A Local Agenda 21 Programme and Integrated Strategic Development Framework were compiled and progress are being made on addressing the land claims. However, Marabastad is still characterised by derelict built structures and vacant land, with power plays between various group leaders occurring daily and impacting on processes. Yet, it still has a vibrancy brought about by formal and informal, legal and illegal, positive and negative activities competing for attention.

The actors: Professional amateurs

- Vusani, the main actor and major attraction drawing the crowds – actually the main reason for the show. (R1 million was provided from the Vusani Amadolobha Fund for the physical upgrading of Marabastad in 1997. The Vusani Amadolobha Plan is a provincial plan with the main aim to upgrade town and township centres through regeneration and integration. The Plan has the following objectives: (1) to build vibrant economies; (2) to create clean and safe centres; (3) to promote compaction and densification of cities; and (4) to establish regeneration partnerships.
- The Pretoria Innerscity Partnership (PICP) with the project manager Mr Black Sheep as main actor.
- Pretoria City Council featuring the Solid Waste Department with numerous talented actors.
- Mrs Consultant from Holm Jordaan & Partners – in this case also the narrator.

- The Marabastad Development Forum (MDF) with the chairman, Mr Diplomat as main actor.
- The Adjudication Panel appearing and disappearing from the scene throughout the play. They consist of a group who was elected at a public meeting in Marabastad. Some of the members could be contacted via phone, some via fax and some via the grapevine. Some of them totally disappeared from the Marabastad scene through the show – for reasons unknown.
- The Marabastad community featuring various actors in different scenes of the play – in fact, these are the most talented actors causing the real hullabaloo in the show

Scene 1 – The Vusani Cleaning Team

Actors making a special appearance in this scene

- Roy and Abram, two buddies of Marabastad who saw a "business" opportunity.
- Mr Cleaning Contract and his team consisting of supervisors and workers in Marabastad. The company of Mr Cleaning Contract is the official contractor of the Pretoria City Council.
- Mr I-Deliver-And-Everybody-Else-Is-Corrupt coming from somewhere in Africa but allegedly with an engineering degree from somewhere in Europe, appearing unexpectedly but also disappearing as suddenly from the scene.
- Mr GPMC – being perceived by the community as the "big brother watching everybody else".
- G7, a mysterious group of seven people whom everybody in Marabastad knew but nobody understood why they were together. They emerged as heroes at one meeting, but failed to live up to their reputation in the long run.
- Mrs Black-Empowerment-Without-White-Involvement making a swift but extremely dramatic appearance towards the end of the play.

The plot

In February 1999 two people turned up at the offices of Mrs Consultant. This was the first day she met Roy and Abram. They brought her a project proposal in which they asked R 250 000 for one year to clean up Marabastad. Mrs Consultant phoned Mr Black Sheep, telling him about this. However, he already knew because they brought the same proposal to him. Somebody else also contacted him regarding the cleaning of Marabastad. A third person also requesting a contract to clean Marabastad, came to see Mr Black Sheep. Interestingly enough, the proposal looked the same as Roy and Abram's – only on a formal letterhead. Allegedly, they copied it from Roy and Abram and, allegedly, Mr Diplomat originally compiled the proposal of Roy and Abram.

The possibility of including a cleaning project on Vusani's list, was discussed at a Adjudication Panel meeting and accepted as a project. It was just after that, that the "How?"-dilemma popped up. The money of Vusani should go to the people of Marabastad, but Vusani was a public figure. He could never expose himself to possible allegations of corruption, mal-administration and misuse of public funds. How could community members who know nothing about people management, work management or money management be trusted with such a sum of money? Vusani could not reach the people directly. It was decided to send him to the people through Mr Cleaning Contract. At least he had insurance for workmen's compensation covering injuries, knowledge about the employment act and management and organisational skills. After all, neither Mrs Consultant nor Mr Black Sheep had the time, the authority or the knowledge to manage two unskilled locals, to hire people and to organise workers in a field they had no experience in. In short, Mr Cleaning Contract was already appointed by Pretoria City Council through an open tender procedure. In turn he only had to appoint people from Marabastad and had to provide two of the workers with in-service training. This was discussed with the people who submitted cleaning proposals. Everybody accepted this and Roy and Abram were appointed by Mr Cleaning Contract. They also had to bring 13 other people to work with them.

The first few weeks were characterised by MDF office visits and phone calls to Mrs Consultant from Roy and Abram taking turns with typical questions: "When are we issued with cell phones because this communication between you and us is very difficult? When do we get more money because we are the supervisors? When are we going to the classrooms to get training? When is Mr Cleaning Contract going to listen to us because this is our project?" Mrs Consultant explained, Mr Diplomat pacified and Mr Black Sheep heeded allegations.

Mrs Consultant endeavoured to create a group spirit. On the Marabastad Environmental Awareness Day the team members were issued each with gum boots and an overall stating: Marabastad Vusani Team – Whacking Waste in Place. On their own initiative the team staged a play (imagine songs and drama when one doesn't expect it and after one had to intervene in a media interview where Abram vilified everybody else). That night Abram appeared on television explaining to the whole country how happy he is and how he is going to be Mr Cleaning Contract one day. The following day an edutainment day was organised by a team of Delta Environmental Centre where the Vusani Cleaning Team and Security Team of Marabastad were involved in discussions on how to teach people not to litter during the course of their day's work. The morale was high and the expectations of success even higher. It just seemed that maybe we will get it right...

However, soon thereafter the MDF office visits and telephone calls started again: "My boots are too small; I wanted a two-piece overall; we never see Mr Cleaning Contract; we want to fire one of the team members so that we can divide his money between us, the two supervisors; somebody stole my equipment etc. etc. A meeting was convened by Mrs Consultant to clarify the roles and responsibilities of all the role players (Roy and Abram, Mr Cleaning Contract, his supervisors, the Solid Waste Department and Mrs Consultant) and to make final arrangements for the in-service training of Roy and Abram. The meeting started with an official agenda. Roy and Abram were given a chance to raise all their concerns and ask all their questions. One of the first questions was "Can Mr Cleaning Contract 'borrow' us some money for the festive season?". Mr Contract answered that he has a large contract from Council and was not paid for two months. He had to pay wages out of his own pocket and could not carry the extra burden of people borrowing money from him. Upon this answer Roy and Abram stood up to walk out of the meeting. The person from the Solid Waste Department warned them that if they walked out of the meeting, they would lose their jobs. Mrs Consultant tried to clear the air and gave them until two o'clock that afternoon to make a final decision. The meeting was closed.

Later that day Mrs Consultant went to Marabastad to attend to other matters. Roy and Abram were waiting for her at the MDF office. The issue was discussed and both of them indicated that they want to go back to work. In her naivety (maybe plain stupidity) Mrs Consultant agreed to lend each of them R600 and a formal agreement to settle the debt after January was signed between the parties. A follow-up meeting to discuss training would be held after the festive season.

The echo of crackers announcing the year 2000 was still filling the air when Abram made his first phone call: "Mrs Consultant, we want to see you. There is a BIG problem." The problem was so big it couldn't even be discussed over the phone. Mrs Consultant went to Marabastad to see Roy and Abram. Introduced to her as a newcomer to Marabastad and lifesaver of the people was Mr I-Deliver-And-Everybody-Else-Is-Corrupt. In short, according to Abram he was fired and threatened by Amapogo-Amatamaga, a vigilance group. According to Mr Cleaning Contract, Abram stole a cheque of one of the other workers and when being confronted, decided to resign. Possibly in grievance for his buddy's treatment Roy did not pitch for work and told everybody he was fired too. This allegation was proved to be untrue and he was sent back to work.

Mr I-Deliver-And-Everybody-Else-Is-Corrupt intervened and turned a project issue into a political issue. The matter was discussed in great depth at PICIP management meetings (somehow Mr I-Deliver managed to worm himself in there) and a mass meeting (also by demand of Mr I-Deliver) was organised and chaired by Mr GPMC. The issue was left in the hands of a task team named G7 ("incidental Mr I-deliver was one of the team). For all practical purposes Mrs Consultant, Mr Black Sheep and Mr Diplomat disappeared from the scene. However, phone calls and questions from Roy asking what is happening, did not stop. The answer was, however, simple: "The issue is in the hands of G7. Ask them." Roy later admitted to Mrs Consultant (probably caught in a weak moment, who knows?) that he believed Abram was guilty and that he was fed-up with Mr I-Deliver who came somewhere from Africa and could not even speak their language. Relieved at this confession, Mrs Consultant had new hope for Roy, for the project and for Marabastad. She started arranging for the training of Roy (which did not materialise up to this point because of the turmoil). The next hiccup came very unexpectedly. Roy phoned to say he was fired. Mrs Consultant said it couldn't happen without reason and sent him back to his job. Apparently the supervisors would not take him back, upon which Mr Cleaning Contract was phoned. He knew nothing and promised to consult with his supervisors. The outcome: Officials from the Solid Waste Department, under whose overall supervision the team works, had complaints from Roy's co-workers and caught him, supposedly red-handed forsaking his job to carry vegetables for shoppers at the Fresh Produce Market. Roy was indeed fired whilst Mrs Consultant was busy scheduling some training sessions for him!

Now – 15 people from Marabastad had jobs for almost a year and Marabastad was a bit cleaner than it was before. But – although everybody tried as hard as they possibly could, nobody from the community took ownership of the project and no empowerment took place. Everybody's lying in sackcloth and ashes and along came Mrs Black-Empowerment-Without-White-Involvement with scornful allegations: "There was no public participation!".

Scene 2 – The Vusani Recycling Market

Actors making a special appearance in this scene

- Between 50 and 60 people busy with recycling activities in Marabastad – not for a noble environmental cause they believe in, but for survival.
- Mr Property Owner, making a very unexpected appearance when the show is well in its stride. The show ends abruptly with the arrival of this phantom.

The plot

The show starts on a very positive note with numerous recycling activities spread out through Marabastad looking for a "recycling home". When mentioning is first made of the Vusani Recycling Market, faces light up and commitment is shown from all roleplayers. National Departments encourage the project with official involvement and an official opening by the deputy minister. City Council of Pretoria approves the project by putting words into action. Private companies (such as PPC and Pick 'n Pay) support the project through donations. Recyclers eagerly await the project by moving willingly to and fro to allow for construction work on site. In the meantime, Mrs Consultant arranges for the design of the centre, drafts business plans to obtain more (even international) funding and plans for the sustainability of the project with the potential proceeds of the project even funding the MDF office in future. All this hustle and bustle working hand in hand towards an ideal, came to a sudden halt when Mr Property Owner unexpectedly brings legal evidence that the property does not belong to the City Council of Pretoria, neither is it part of a road reserve anymore. The property was sold to him in 1994 and it was rezoned for "Business" purposes in 1995 – nothing of this is reflected in the data basis of the Pretoria City Council. The encore of questions (e.g. How could this have happened in the light of all development being frozen in anticipation to finalise the land restitution process?) could, however, not convince the actors to appear on stage again.

Finale

The above provides a mere window on the area and its intrigues, illustrating the tangible vibrancy of Marabastad. Mrs Consultant was appointed for a fixed amount with intended delivery within six to eight months. Now – after three years, 96 meetings, nothing-on-the-ground and R 500 000 of Vusani left – how does sustainable implementation look and how should it be approached?