

Raul Pantaleo

With Donald Flint, NMMU
Berry Bradley, NMMU

Assistants: Simon Vries

Urban Farmville

Master plan for mixed use development in the Mermaids precinct, Port Elizabeth

Participatory approach

The main requirement of this approach is that all persons involved in the process of looking at creating a social project have the ability to listen. This is the premise to enable a true participatory process of social and architectural design.

Participation is not a technique, nor a magic formula, and it is not taught. It is the ability to resonate with the place and the people that surround us, and it is a fundamental tool to create and enhance awareness of the roles and values of social environments.

When we speak of participation we are confronted with very concrete concepts, connected directly to the problems that a design team must be able to deal with so as to properly manage the collective project. Not taking into due account the complexity of the problems, underestimating potential social conflicts, and not leaving space for creativity are often the causes of disappointments and failures. Participatory planning involves always trying to give expression to the problems that emerge within a social group, thus identifying paths and strategies whose aim is to turn them into potential shape. It is therefore a location where you recognize and affirm the identity of different views in a collective project.

In our workshops we simulated a participatory process. We wanted to share with the students the spirit of a collective project. The purpose was to point out to students how more attention to social dynamics can lead to a good project, without frustrating their aspirations as designers. We believe that architecture must return to being a "public art," to serve the people and not just benefit the economy or the profit made.

From chaos to a group

There are different mechanisms for individuals to express opinions, and ideally exert influence, from numerous factors such as political, economic, and social influences. The process of participation within a group was key to the notion that each individual becomes involved and engages with the project.

What starts out as chaos, turns to organized chaos, which then alters to a structured group with an objective. The workshop focused on the students generating an analysis of the proposed site and the immediate surroundings, and, considering their findings, exchanging the information obtained to address opportunities and constraints. Now with

a collected understanding of the context, the groups could work together on concepts and drive forward a design approach.

With several concepts being addressed by different groups, participation created composite ideas and a synthesis of styles which resulted in a unique approach to the project, enhancing its success.

Vision

The vision is to uplift the precinct of Central, Port Elizabeth. This will be achieved by means of an economic boost provided through the process of micro farming, which serves as the main platform for an economic, cultural and social upliftment. "Urban agriculture can reflect varying levels of economic and social development."

Under-utilized public spaces within the precinct will be improved by introducing terraced levels implemented within the topography, which will be used to farm and cultivate organic fresh produce, as well as house activities and facilities, such as food markets, public squares, restaurants and cafes.

In addition to this, the precinct will accommodate a culinary and agricultural educational facility which will provide higher learning for those interested in providing for themselves and their community.

This precinct will be a pioneer project for the development of future micro farms situated within Port Elizabeth, creating ties between the different districts, ranging from commercial to low income suburbs.

Mission

The aim of the Urban Farmville community is to promote cooperation in small-scale organic food production in the business district of Central, Port Elizabeth. This program will contribute to a social movement for sustainable communities.

Goals

- > Allow the community to invest in a healthy life style through access to organic produce
- > Provide higher learning of small scale organic food production for residents of Central
- > Increase economic wealth within the precinct
- > Create a network of micro farms around the city of Port Elizabeth
- > Provide opportunities for the youth and adults to be educated and become skilled
- > Provide jobs for the unemployed people within the community
- > Create and promote connections and social gathering among individuals
- > Improve social and emotional well being
- > Create a green zone that gives to the community by detaching people from densely populated urban areas

STUDENTS:

Cantelle de Clercq
Camilla Eagar
Chantal Erwee
Ashleigh du Preez
Tumelo Lesia
Rowan Bursey
Marceline Musisa
Binayka Rama
Grettan Ruiters
Reginald Grobler
Casey Hunter
Bradford Marshall
Lithemba Muku
Phakama Ndzeleni
James Thomson
Joseph Tamale
Jacquiline Modu
Maïke Steffen
Katya Varga
Patrick Vice
Fabian Smith
Walter Labuschagne
Zimkitha Williams
Karien M. van Rouendal
Grant Hartley
Kimon Mare
Ralph Viljoen
Justin Kemink
Shaun Mandimika
Avela Ngqawana
Christopher Branfield
Clarissa Coetzee
Sarah Young
Glen Mcilroy
Lauren Dalton
Chris Howard
Morgan Bolze
Craig Hetherington
Philip Borchers
Arno Struwig
Chiposi Felix
Sinalo Mark
Andrew Fish
Nadia van Schalkwyk
Colleen Koegelenberg
Mandilakhe Hadi
Mpaka Abuyile
Nadia Mjwara
Buhle Fadana
Elri Syfert
Laura Boliter
Sphakeme Vilakazi
Leandrile Roux
Stephanie Fanizza
Bradley Love
Linelle du Preez
Brett Watermeyer
Jeanne Myburgh
Chansa Chansa
Leandri Le Roux
Paul Mackenzie
Sinawo Changa

Phumelele Mbangatha
Mark Fish