

The Interplay between Cultural Heritage and Urban Morphology: A Case Study of uMlazi Cultural Landscape



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ABSTRACT

Historic urban areas are a crucial component of urban heritage, arguably embodying the collective memory of urban development and often possessing distinctive urban textures and cultural attributes. This study analyses the relationship between intangible cultural heritage and urban morphology in uMlazi, a township in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. A dual theoretical framework informs the study. Through the dual lenses of the cultural landscape model and space syntax theory focused on a dynamic township environment, the study examined how intangible cultural heritage in open spaces and public amenities intersects with urban morphology to potentially shape community identity, social dynamics, and the built environment. The study explored how cultural heritage is crucial in defining uMlazi's cultural landscape and influencing urban form and structure. It further examined the influence of key factors that impact the interplay between intangible cultural heritage and urban morphology, including historical context and urban planning policies. The study's findings suggest that cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge systems play an integral role in urban planning and development initiatives to preserve community identity. The findings contribute to the growing research on cultural heritage and urban morphology, offering insights into township contexts' unique challenges and opportunities.

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INTRODUCTION

The growing impact of globalization on the urban environment poses challenges to historic urban areas, including diminishing social recognition, ageing infrastructure, and cultural erosion. The theme of urban structure reconstruction has, in turn, gained significant prominence within the discipline of regional and urban planning and development, intersecting with the increasing complexity of contemporary events. Key aspects of urban structure reconstruction include, among others, public space creation and revitalization. Preservation strategies that safeguard the memory and values embedded in places have thus become imperative to protect urban tangible and intangible heritage. Urban structure, however, does not have a clear or straightforward definition.¹ According to Batty and Longley, urban structure is influenced by the underlying invisible form.² Thus, the urban form can be understood as a reflection of

¹ Richard Shearmur, "Innovation, Regions and Proximity: From Neo-Regionalism to Spatial Analysis," *Regional Studies* 45, no. 9 (2011): 1225–43.

² M. Batty and P. Longley, *Fractal Cities: A Geometry of Form and Function* (London: Academic Press, 1994).

‘structure’³ represented by the manner in which land uses or activities are distributed or ‘located’ in a city. Determinants of the urban structure are land costs, transport and communication, public policy planning, and cultural heritage.

Cultural heritage is important in reshaping cities’ current morphologies, reinforcing a public sense of belonging, cultural identity, and place authenticity.⁴ The cultural landscape of uMlazi, a township in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa,⁵ is a rich entangled tapestry of traditional Nguni, Zulu culture, colonial history, and urban transformation.⁶ This vibrant cultural heritage is intricately intertwined with the township's urban morphology, shaping the daily lives of its residents and informing the community's sense of identity.⁷

Urban morphology originates from the notion of 'urbanism.' Urbanism encompasses diverse interpretations, such as examining human interactions and coexistence in urban environments.⁸ This study investigates the impact of intangible cultural heritage on the spatial distribution and attributes of open spaces and public facilities. In his 1938 article entitled "Urbanism as a Way of Life," Louis Wirth characterized urbanism in the context of urban life. Wirth contends that three fundamental attributes of cities—substantial population size, social diversity, and high population density—facilitate the emergence of a unique "urban way of life" and a distinct urban identity. The cultural landscape of uMlazi is distinguished by a distinctive fusion of traditional and modern features, mirroring the region's intricate history.⁹ The cultural heritage of uMlazi, encompassing traditional Zulu homesteads, cultural events, apartheid-era township design, and current urban growth, exemplifies the resilience and flexibility of its inhabitants.¹⁰

Urban regions are intricate systems defined by dynamic population expansion, variety, and density, necessitating resilience and adaptability to address difficulties and seize opportunities. By 2030 it is projected that the urban population will comprise five billion individuals, accounting for 60% of the global population.¹¹ The swift urbanization and modernization of uMlazi in turn, we contend, presents considerable obstacles to the preservation of its cultural heritage. The susceptibility of cities in developing nations to socio-spatial, economic, and political transformations associated with rapid urbanization adversely affects cultural preservation and the township of uMlazi is similarly affected.¹² The township's growth necessitates an understanding of the relationship between intangible cultural heritage in open spaces, public utilities, and urban morphology, as well as the formulation of strategies for incorporating cultural preservation into urban planning.¹³

According to Inusa, et. Al., urban morphology is synonymous to urban form, the term ‘form’ has varied meanings: shape, configuration, structure, pattern, organization and system of relations.¹⁴ According to Dempsey, et al., it also includes mixed elements of a city such as streets, buildings and open

³ Eliot JB McIntire and Alex Fajardo, “Beyond Description: The Active and Effective Way to Infer Processes from Spatial Patterns,” *Ecology* 90, no. 1 (2009): 46–56; Shearmur, “Innovation, Regions and Proximity: From Neo-Regionalism to Spatial Analysis.”

⁴ Mariam Ayman Abouhadid et al., “Factors Affecting Public Value of Architectural Heritage in Al Darb Al Ahmar,” *Current Science* 4 (2015): 586–95.

⁵ Ismini-Maria Souesi, “The Township Concept in Modern South Africa” (University of Cape Town, 1999), <https://open.uct.ac.za/items/0be18b5c-06b3-4343-8d92-cca5fe324a8f>.

⁶ John L Comaroff, “Reflections on the Colonial State, in South Africa and Elsewhere: Factions, Fragments, Facts and Fictions,” *Social Identities* 4, no. 3 (1998): 321–61.

⁷ Ntokozo Amanda Xaba and Stanley C Onwnbu, “Barriers to the Effective Management of Water Streams in Umlazi Township, KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa,” *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science* 11, no. 3 (2022): 217–26.

⁸ Nicolas Vernet and Anne Coste, “Garden Cities of the 21st Century: A Sustainable Path to Suburban Reform,” *Urban Planning* 2, no. 4 (December 29, 2017): 181–96, <https://doi.org/10.17645/up.v2i4.1104>.

⁹ Vicki Been et al., “Preserving History or Restricting Development? The Heterogeneous Effects of Historic Districts on Local Housing Markets in New York City,” *Journal of Urban Economics* 92 (2016): 16–30.

¹⁰ Jaco Barnard-Naudé and Julia Chryssostalis, “Apartheid Remains: Nomos, Law and Spatiality in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” in *Spatial Justice After Apartheid* (Routledge, 2022), 1–38.

¹¹ A. Panda and D. Amaratunga, “Resilient Cities,” in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Natural Hazards Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

¹² Hamza Bendecheu et al., “Urban Dynamics and Socio-Spatial Transformations of Housing in Djelfa City, Algeria,” *Geomatics, Land Management and Landscape*, 2024.

¹³ Noxolo Msimang and Lovemore Chipungu, “Reflecting on the Inclusivity of Culture in Urban Housing Development—A Case Study of Communal Residential Units in Durban,” *Urban Inclusivity in Southern Africa*, 2021, 273–306.

¹⁴ Yaktor Joshua Inusa, Doris Hooi Chyee Toe, and Kum Weng Yong, “Urban Form and the Role of Urban Morphological Characters in Town-Plan Regionalization: A Systematic Review,” *Architecture* 18, no. 1 (2022): 43–56.

spaces.¹⁵ Including their size, shape, density, scale and outside appearance of a city. Hunter argues that during apartheid uMlazi had large open spaces. As the population increases, land use changes are inevitable.¹⁶ The study of transformation dynamics and sound space in open spaces and public utilities is important for spatial planning. Despite its importance, the relationship between cultural heritage and urban morphology in uMlazi remains severely understudied. Existing research focuses on the township's history, neglecting the complex dynamics between culture, identity, and urbanisation.¹⁷ However, intangible cultural heritage elements, such as traditional music, community events, and performances in public spaces and community centres, influence the design and management of public amenities, including their form and structure.

This study aims to address this knowledge gap by exploring the cultural landscape of uMlazi, examining the interplay between intangible cultural heritage and urban morphology, and identifying strategies for integrating cultural preservation into urban planning. By investigating the complex relationships between culture and urban form, this research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing urban cultural heritage in South Africa.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A city is a unique historical process resembling products of its own historical and cultural heritage.¹⁸ The form of every city is therefore understood and interpreted by observing its pattern and unique cultural experience. The literature on cultural heritage and urban morphology reveals a complex interplay between culture, identity, and urbanisation. Researchers have also explored the impact of urbanisation on cultural heritage,¹⁹ the role of cultural heritage in shaping livelihood development,²⁰ and the importance of community engagement in cultural preservation.²¹

In South Africa, apartheid-era policies profoundly affected indigenous cultural practices and urban structures. Notwithstanding these problems, cultural heritage is essential to community identity and urban revitalization initiatives. The particular dynamics of cultural heritage and urban morphology in townships such as uMlazi remain insufficiently examined, warranting further research.²² In the South African context, studies have examined the legacy of apartheid on urban planning and cultural heritage,²³ the impact of urbanisation on traditional practices, and the role of cultural heritage in urban regeneration.²⁴ However, there is, arguably, a lack of research that has explored the specific dynamics of cultural heritage and urban morphology in township contexts like uMlazi.

Cultural heritage refers to the tangible and intangible aspects of a community's cultural identity, including traditions, customs, language, and historical sites.²⁵ Morphology, conversely, encompasses the

¹⁵ Nicola Dempsey, Caroline Brown, and Glen Bramley, "The Key to Sustainable Urban Development in UK Cities? The Influence of Density on Social Sustainability," *Progress in Planning* 77, no. 3 (2012): 89–141.

¹⁶ Mark Hunter, "The Bond of Education: Gender, the Value of Children, and the Making of Umlazi Township in 1960s South Africa," *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 3 (2014): 467–90.

¹⁷ Arnold L Epstein et al., "Urbanization and Social Change in Africa [and Comments and Reply]," *Current Anthropology* 8, no. 4 (1967): 275–95; David M Smith, *Living under Apartheid: Aspects of Urbanization and Social Change in South Africa* (Taylor & Francis, 2023).

¹⁸ Jijiao Zhang, "New Functionalism: Rejuvenating Historical and Cultural Heritage through Urban Revival," *International Journal of Anthropology and Ethnology* 3, no. 1 (2019): 8.

¹⁹ Jamal Alnsour et al., "The Impact of Urbanization on Cultural Heritage Buildings in Jordan: As-Salt as a Case Study," *Future Cities and Environment* 9, no. 1 (2023); Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2001); Jacob Petuchowski, *Liturgy of the Synagogue*, 1983.

²⁰ Solomon Gwervevde, "Chilonga Cultural Landscape in the Shadow of Eviction: Living Cultural Heritage, Livelihoods and Minority Indigenous People's Rights under Threat in Zimbabwe?," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 29, no. 7 (2023): 627–42; William B Gartner and Sue Birley, "Introduction to the Special Issue on Qualitative Methods in Entrepreneurship Research," *Journal of Business Venturing* (Elsevier, 2002).

²¹ D. Chhabra, "Participatory Museology: A Case Study of Community Engagement in Cultural Preservation. .," 2005; D Moody Smith, *Johannine Christianity: Essays on Its Setting, Sources and Theology* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006).

²² Ahna Ballonoff Suleiman et al., "Applying a Developmental Lens to Youth-Led Participatory Action Research: A Critical Examination and Integration of Existing Evidence," *Youth & Society* 53, no. 1 (2021): 26–53.

²³ Alan Mabin, "Comprehensive Segregation: The Origins of the Group Areas Act and Its Planning Apparatuses," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, no. 2 (1992): 405–29; Barnard-Naudé and Chryssostalis, "Apartheid Remains: Nomos, Law and Spatiality in Post-Apartheid South Africa."

²⁴ William R Watson and Sunnie Lee Watson, "An Argument for Clarity: What Are Learning Management Systems, What Are They Not, and What Should They Become?," *TechTrends* 51 (2007): 28–34.

²⁵ Smith, *Johannine Christianity: Essays on Its Setting, Sources and Theology*.

physical form and structure of cities, including buildings, streets, and public spaces.²⁶ Harvey argues that urbanization can erode cultural heritage as traditional practices and historical sites are destroyed or degraded.²⁷ Similarly, Jacobs notes that urban renewal projects often prioritise economic growth over cultural preservation.²⁸ In the South African context, the legacy of apartheid has had a profound impact on urban planning and cultural heritage. Mabin and Tomlinson document how apartheid-era urban planning policies forcibly removed communities from their ancestral lands, destroying cultural heritage sites and disrupting traditional practices.²⁹

However, cultural heritage can also shape urban form. We note that Gold, et al., argue that cultural heritage sites can serve as anchors for urban identity,³⁰ while Lynch notes that cultural events and traditions can influence the design of public spaces.³¹ Community engagement is critical in cultural preservation. Chhabra and Smith emphasize the importance of involving local communities in cultural heritage management, while Parnell highlights the need for inclusive urban planning processes that prioritize community needs.³²

In the South African context, researchers have explored the role of cultural heritage in urban regeneration. Watson documents how cultural heritage sites can catalyse urban renewal, while Mabin argues that cultural heritage can be leveraged to promote social cohesion and economic development.³³ There is a growing emphasis on safeguarding urban cultural heritage in the context of urban renewal. Preserving and activating urban cultural heritage enables citizens to retain the memory of a place while simultaneously enhancing the city's cultural distinctiveness and vibrancy.³⁴ Mlazi, a township in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, has a rich cultural heritage shaped by its complex history. Established in 1961 as a result of the apartheid-era forced removals, uMlazi was designed to house African people forcibly relocated from urban areas. Despite its troubled past, the township has evolved into a vibrant cultural hub, reflecting the resilience and creativity of its residents.

Research on urban heritage protection has thus evolved from the preservation of individual historic buildings to that of entire historical cities, from safeguarding historical culture to encompassing the preservation of natural, social, and human environments, as well as a profound exploration of the city's historical information and cultural implications.³⁵ Traditional Nguni Zulu culture plays a significant role in uMlazi's cultural landscape. The township has numerous traditional Zulu homesteads, cultural events, and historical sites, which serve as important cultural markers. However, the legacy of apartheid and urbanisation has also left an indelible mark on uMlazi's cultural heritage.

The argument is that protection measures for traditional historic districts often focus solely on the historical value of individual buildings while neglecting the importance of preserving the overall form

²⁶ G. Lynch, "The Role of Mission Schools in the Evolution of Christian Communities in Africa," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 34, no. 1 (2004): 31–55.

²⁷ Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-First Century*.

²⁸ Steven Jacobs, "The Use of Participatory Action Research within Education--Benefits to Stakeholders.," *World Journal of Education* 6, no. 3 (2016): 48–55.

²⁹ Mabin, "Comprehensive Segregation: The Origins of the Group Areas Act and Its Planning Apparatuses"; G. Styles, I. Talks, and H. Tomlinson, "The Attraction of Agroecology and the Barriers Faced by New Entrants Pursuing Agroecological Farming and Land Work," *The Landworkers' Alliance*, 2022, <https://staging.landworkersalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Landworkers-Alliance-The-Attraction-of-AgroecologyFINAL.pdf>.

³⁰ John R. Gold et al., "Complexity and Contradiction: In Memoriam Robert Venturi," *Planning Perspectives* 34, no. 3 (May 4, 2019): 533–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2019.1587927>.

³¹ Lynch, "The Role of Mission Schools in the Evolution of Christian Communities in Africa."

³² Chhabra, "Participatory Museology: A Case Study of Community Engagement in Cultural Preservation.,""; Claire Bless, Craig Higson-Smith, and Ashraf Kagee, *Fundamentals of Social Research Methods: An African Perspective* (Juta and Company Ltd, 2006); Susan Parnell, "Race, Power and Urban Control: Johannesburg's Inner City Slum-Yards, 1910–1923," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 3 (2003): 615–37.

³³ Watson and Watson, "An Argument for Clarity: What Are Learning Management Systems, What Are They Not, and What Should They Become?"; Mabin, "Comprehensive Segregation: The Origins of the Group Areas Act and Its Planning Apparatuses."

³⁴ Yu-Teng Jang and I-Ting Chiang, "Incorporating Desire and Persistence into Understanding Gen Z Learners' Continuance Intention toward Using Youtube for Learning in Digital Learning Context," *Education and Information Technologies* 29, no. 8 (June 23, 2024): 10043–68, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-12202-9>; Ulrich Müller et al., "School Leadership, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Perspectives of Principals in China, Germany, and the USA," *Education Sciences* 12, no. 12 (2022): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12120853>.

³⁵ Jukka Jokilehto, *A History of Architectural Conservation* (2nd edition. | New York : Routledge, 2017. |: Routledge, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315636931>; Ross Anderson et al., "Measuring the Cost of Cybercrime," *The Economics of Information Security and Privacy*, 2013, 265–300.

and character of the Dalian district.³⁶ Liu proposes that historic districts should be modernised and restructured to align with the requirements of contemporary urban spatial configurations.³⁷ In particular, when there is a conflict between preserving historic scenic areas and modern urban development, there is a need for community participation to build resilient communities. According to He et al., the dynamic processes and determining factors of urban vitality may vary from case studies in the United States or Europe due to diverse urban forms and spatial planning concepts in developing countries.³⁸

Closer to home and in the South African context, rapid urbanisation and modernisation have transformed uMlazi's physical landscape, with new developments and infrastructure projects altering the township's morphology. While these changes bring economic benefits, they also threaten uMlazi's cultural heritage. Cultural heritage sites are often destroyed or degraded, and traditional practices are, in turn, potentially eroded by urbanisation. Logan argues that there is a continuous fight between nostalgic memories, modern lifestyle dreams, and aimed economic benefit.³⁹ It is thus urgent to create public awareness and heritage 'guardians' in developing countries as the economic benefits strongly demolish heritage, ignoring their significance and peculiarity.

The review of existing literature has highlighted the complex and multifaceted relationships between cultural heritage and urban morphology, most especially in the historically fraught South African context. While cultural heritage is often seen as a static entity, the literature suggests that it is, in fact, deeply embedded in the urban fabric and influenced by the physical layout of the city. The case of the uMlazi cultural landscape, with its rich history and complex urban morphology, offers a unique opportunity to explore these relationships more deeply. By examining the interplay between cultural heritage and urban morphology in this context, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how cultural heritage is shaped by and shapes the urban environment.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on Carl Sauer's Cultural Landscape Model and Space Syntax Theory. Cultural landscapes include communities, parks, open spaces, public buildings, and sacred locations. Cultural landscapes can have both tangible and intangible aspects. The investigation of a landscape is inextricably linked to its identity.⁴⁰ For the past four decades, cultural geographers have focused their research on the terrain. Cultural geographers have focused on the link between human identity and terrain. The cultural landscape paradigm offers a framework for comprehending the historical urban environment.⁴¹ The landscape is viewed as a cultural construct representing human ideas. The cultural landscape idea is important in urban environments because it aids knowledge of urban conservation techniques centred on urban design within a socio-spatial framework. Punekar Greffe emphasizes an urban landscape perspective that differs from viewing the city only as a collection of architectural marvels from historical settings, pushing for an appreciation of the postmodern city based on sentiments and emotions.⁴² Cultural heritage and public spaces complement each other. Carl Sauer's cultural landscape model provides a framework for reflecting the interplay between site, context, and culture.⁴³

³⁶ Shuai Chen et al., "Exploring the Global Geography of Cybercrime and Its Driving Forces," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 10, no. 1 (2023): 1–10.

³⁷ Wenhui Liu, "Research on Street Reservation and Renewal Based on Historical District Context Inheritance—Take Anpin Street, Qinhui District, Nanjing, China as An Example," 2022, 269–75, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95564-9_20.

³⁸ Qingsong He et al., "The Impact of Urban Growth Patterns on Urban Vitality in Newly Built-up Areas Based on an Association Rules Analysis Using Geographical 'Big Data,'" *Land Use Policy* 78 (2018): 726–38.

³⁹ William Logan, "Managing Cultural Heritage in Asian Cities," *Journal of Urban History* 46, no. 1 (January 5, 2020): 181–88, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144219873341>.

⁴⁰ Ken Taylor and Jane L Lennon, "Introduction: Leaping the Fence," in *Managing Cultural Landscapes* (Routledge, 2012), 1–17.

⁴¹ Maximilian Gregor Hepach, "Sauerian Phenomenology: German Theory and Carl Sauer's The Morphology of Landscape," *Geographica Helvetica* 78, no. 3 (2023): 467–78.

⁴² Anwar Punekar, "Value-Led Heritage and Sustainable Development: The Case of Bijapur, India," in *Designing Sustainable Cities in the Developing World* (Routledge, 2016), 103–20; X.; Xavier Greffe, Greffe, "Urban Cultural Landscapes.," *Brisbane* (Faculty of Art, October 2008). P 110

⁴³ Veerle Van Eetvelde and Andreas Aagaard Christensen, "Theories in Landscape Ecology. An Overview of Theoretical Contributions Merging Spatial, Ecological and Social Logics in the Study of Cultural Landscapes," *Landscape Ecology* 38, no. 12 (2023): 4033–64.

Design concepts and strategic design approaches are derived from historical urban contexts.⁴⁴ Bill Hillier and his associates at University College London developed the space syntactic methodology, which has been used in urban studies for the past thirty years.⁴⁵ This article uses this theory to investigate trends in cultural expression in public places, specifically religion, leisure, and cultural practices exhibited through music and dance performances at community centres and parks. Hillier proposes that space syntax consists of four elements. Primarily, it represents metropolitan space. Second, it is a collection of tools for evaluating urban environments as spatial networks formed by structural elements' arrangement, grouping, and orientation. Third, it includes tools for investigating the relationship between spatial networks and functional patterns like social well-being.⁴⁶ According to Froy, spatial syntax can be used to investigate the link between cultural legacy and urban morphology.⁴⁷ This study focuses on how intangible cultural legacy affects urban planning issues, such as the distribution of public space for cultural events, markets, and community activities that promote community involvement and cohesiveness.⁴⁸ Incorporating cultural heritage issues into regional and urban planning promotes the development of more livable, sustainable, and vibrant communities. This research on uMlazi's cultural environment seeks to uncover hidden cultural narratives, direct urban development, empower community initiatives, and preserve cultural assets for future generations. A group's 'culture', norms, and values may alter its perceptions of spatial syntax. According to Smalley, temporal and seasonal variations in cultural landscapes can alter perceptions, use of urban spaces, architectural elements, and cultural and historical contexts.⁴⁹ Cultural heritage affects community well-being through memories, preferences, attitudes, values, and significance. A broad participatory approach is thus in turn required to guide the planning process and build community resilience. This study examines the factors that influence urban morphology in uMlazi regarding intangible cultural assets in public locations.

METHODOLOGY

The research adopted a qualitative case study of uMlazi a township in eThekweni Municipality, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, to gather and analyse data. Qualitative methods comprehensively consider cases and allow a better understanding of context. Qualitative data requires data that are rich and universal, which helps the emergence of findings and themes when it is thoroughly analyzed.⁵⁰ Through field observations, key informant interviews, and document analysis.

Purposive sampling was done with key informants: two council officers for uMlazi township, two private developers involved in spatial planning and development, two councillors and two religious leaders. The participants were selected based on their expertise, experience, and knowledge of uMlazi's intangible heritage and urban development policy. Furthermore, snowball sampling was used to identify six participants from residents in six different sections/ areas of the township. Field observations were conducted to validate the information and observe public spaces and community events. Finally, document analysis of historical records, community and council reports, government records, and publications was used to discuss findings. The data was presented and analysed through content thematic analysis by identifying and analysing themes related to intangible cultural heritage, urban morphology, and community engagement.

This research adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring the protection of participants' rights and dignity. Prior to the initiation of data collection, institutional ethical approval was obtained from the College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, designated by project number G-1804-05755. Furthermore, permission from the gatekeeper eThekweni Municipality was obtained, allowing the

⁴⁴ M. Leus and M. Arckens, "Preservation of Archaeological Heritage: The Spell of Interpretation," *Structural Studies, Repairs and Maintenance of Heritage Architecture* xii, no. 118 (2011): 375.

⁴⁵ Graeme Evans, *Cultural Spaces, Production and Consumption* (Taylor & Francis, 2024).

⁴⁶ Kerstin Sailer and Petros Koutsolampros, "Space Syntax Theory: Understanding Human Movement, Co-Presence and Encounters in Relation to the Spatial Structure of Workplaces," in *A Handbook of Theories on Designing Alignment between People and the Office Environment* (Routledge, 2021), 248–60.

⁴⁷ Francesca Froy, *Rebuilding Urban Complexity: A Configurational Approach to Postindustrial Cities* (Taylor & Francis, 2024).

⁴⁸ Akkelies van Nes, "Space Syntax in Theory and Practice," 2014, 237–57, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-08299-8_15.

⁴⁹ Denis Smalley, "The Listening Imagination: Listening in the Electroacoustic Era," *Contemporary Music Review* 13, no. 2 (1996): 77–107.

⁵⁰ Patrik Aspers and Ugo Corte, "What Is Qualitative in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Sociology* 42 (2019): 139–60.

researcher to access the study area and conduct fieldwork. This authorization ensured that the research was conducted in collaboration with relevant authorities and stakeholders.

The subsequent ethical considerations were addressed to protect participants' rights. Participants were provided with detailed information about the study's objectives, scope, and associated risks and benefits. Written consent was obtained before participation in interviews. The identities of participants were kept confidential, and all collected data was managed with strict confidentiality. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw at any time without facing penalties.

The researcher acknowledged cultural sensitivities and ensured that the study did not disrupt or disrespect traditional practices or customs, and adhered to ethical standards, safeguarding participants' rights and dignity, and conducting research responsibly. By adhering to these ethical principles, this study ensured that the rights and dignity of participants were respected and protected and that the research was conducted ethically and responsibly.

The Study Area

uMlazi is a township in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, located southwest of Durban. Organisationally and administratively, it forms part of the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality and its South Municipality Planning Region. It is the 4th largest township in South Africa. The population of uMlazi is estimated to be about 500,000 people, making it the largest township in Durban. uMlazi is divided into 26 sections from A to Z, except for I, O, and X, and the addition of AA, BB, and CC. It also has a rural area called eNgonyameni, which stretches inland along the eZimbokodweni River.⁵¹ The Church of England founded the uMlazi location in 1862 to provide a rural existence for the natives (sic) pursuing pastoral and agricultural occupations. In 1962, it was designated as a periphery township to house Cato Manor residents relocated due to the slum's rule.⁵²

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings highlight the intricate relationship between cultural heritage and urban morphology in uMlazi. Intangible cultural heritage influences the spatial distribution and use of public spaces, fostering community identity and social cohesion. The analysis of the cultural landscape model and space syntax theory reveals a complex interplay between cultural heritage and urban morphology in uMlazi.

a) uMlazi's Cultural Landscape

The black African population in uMlazi comprises Nguni population groups (Zulu, Xhosa). It is the only place or location that has the name of its dominant ethnic group as part of its name. According to Mkhize et al., Zulu is the dominant group in uMlazi among other Nguni groups which include the Mpondo, Xhosa, and Mfengu.⁵³ The main language in uMlazi, is isi-Zulu.⁵⁴ At the root of urban history in South Africa is apartheid, a social and spatial ideology or racial segregation policy.⁵⁵ The section V councillor noted that the current Zulu king is King Misizulu ka Zwelithini who succeeded his father King Godwill Zwelithini ka Bhhekuzulu in 2021. The King is also known as iNgonyama (Lion). He is a symbolic figure representing the Zulu nation domestically and internationally.

A respondent highlighted that: *The main intangible cultural practices in uMlazi comprises traditional zulu dancing known as (ukusina), umemulo which celebrates a girl child's growth to maturity, isicathamiya (traditional music and dance), indlamu (traditional dance), Umngqokolo (traditional poetry), ubufazi (traditional storytelling). The tribe is well-known for celebrating festivals such as reed*

⁵¹ Sihle Hlophe, "The Representation of Minority Languages on SABC 1: The Case of Siswati." (2014). P 65

⁵² Londeka Ngubane, Sazelo Mkhize, and Sogo Angel Olofinbiyi, "Taxi Violence in South Africa: Insight from Mpumalanga Township, Kwazulu-Natal Province, South Africa," *African Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies* 9, no. 3 (2020): 81. P3

⁵³ Lusanda Ncisana et al., "A Comparative Study of Teaching Approaches in Agro-Ecology: An Investigation of 10th-Grade Agricultural Sciences Learners in Selected Schools," *Sustainability* 15, no. 5 (2023): 4048.

⁵⁴ Ngubane, Mkhize, and Olofinbiyi, "Taxi Violence in South Africa: Insight from Mpumalanga Township, Kwazulu-Natal Province, South Africa."

⁵⁵ Been et al., "Preserving History or Restricting Development? The Heterogeneous Effects of Historic Districts on Local Housing Markets in New York City."

dance (*Umhlanga*), first fruits ceremony (*Umkhosi Wokweshwama*), King Shaka's Day, and Heritage Day.

According to a respondent from one part of the township called section AA: *A common cultural practice is umemulo, the ritual done for a Zulu girl whose behaviour is deemed to be good.* While this is clear, what constitutes good behaviour is of course highly (and rightly) contested. Further inquiry reviewed that being 'good' in Zulu culture means '*ukuziphatha kahle*' which means to be a virgin. This ritual is normally done for females at the age of 21 but it can be done at any stage of a woman's life. It varies and depends on the circumstances. *Ukwemula* also refers to the public recognition of a woman's marriageable status.

According to the councillor of Section C: *The main ceremony takes place in a large open area, where young women, dress in traditional attire and are initiated into womanhood. The ritual begins with a series of dance performances, led by the elder women of the community, who wear intricately beaded skirts and sing traditional songs. The dance conveys a sense of pride and identity.*

After dance performances, the girls take part in symbolic rituals, such as the *imbeleko*, where they are presented with gifts to give their parents as a sign of respect and gratitude. The event also reinforces the interconnectedness of the community, as friends and family come together to support and celebrate the young women as they transition into adulthood. The *umemulo* stands as a testament to the enduring strength and beauty of Mguni Zulu traditions, and the community's resilience in preserving their cultural heritage.⁵⁶ Umazi township has various cultural landscapes such as Inkumba Forest which was planted by Baba Cele the respected world-famous traditional healer who has been awarded locally and nationally for his contribution to the community. He normally hosts normally hosts researchers from all over the world.

A notable cultural space in uMlazi is the Ezimbuzini Market. A council official noted that Ezimbuzini trading stalls, which are located close to the v section adjacent to uMlazi Glebe hostel, is a project that was launched in uMlazi by the eThekweni Metro Government to bring people together despite their cultural differences and beliefs.



Figure 1: Photographs of Ezimbuzini Herbal Market
Source: Photos by Leonard Chitongo, 2024

Ezimbuzini Herbal Market is a traditional pharmacy space where uMlazi people or community stock up *umuthi* (traditional medicine) as part of medical help and wellness. This place is a sprawling outdoor area packed with herbs, brews, and other concoctions to remedy all kinds of ailments, not only physical but spiritual and supernatural as well. Visits to the herbal '*muthi*' market appear to be an essential part of many of the isi-Zulu residents of the township. Various herbs and animals are sold including goats for different traditional ceremonies for example Umemulo requires to slaughter a goat. Traditional

⁵⁶ Sam Griffiths and Laura Vaughan, "Mapping Spatial Cultures: Contributions of Space Syntax to Research in the Urban History of the Nineteenth-Century City," *Urban History* 47, no. 3 (2020): 488–511.

apparel is also being sold. There is an infrastructure with various vendors selling different traditional products.

The cultural landscape of uMlazi is characterised by a unique urban morphology, shaped by its history, culture, and environmental context. The following section examines this morphology, with a focus on activities done in public spaces.

(b) Urban Morphology

Historically, as early as 4000 B.C., elements of planning could be seen in the layout of cities and, in particular, the design of public buildings.⁵⁷ However, the emphasis was on planning for temples, the geometric layout of cities, the construction of sewage systems, the building of city walls, and different scales of irrigation works. Settlement morphology has evolved from the Greek ancient city to the modern city. Initially, the uMlazi township layout had vast open spaces, and the land use patterns were developed without the aid of town planners or spatial planning guidelines. The resultant form was irregular, and nongeometric, with an incidence of crooked and curved streets and randomly defined open spaces.⁵⁸ The spatial distribution of public amenities in Umlazi is a critical factor in determining the quality of life for residents. Figure 1 below shows the distribution of open spaces and public amenities in uMlazi.

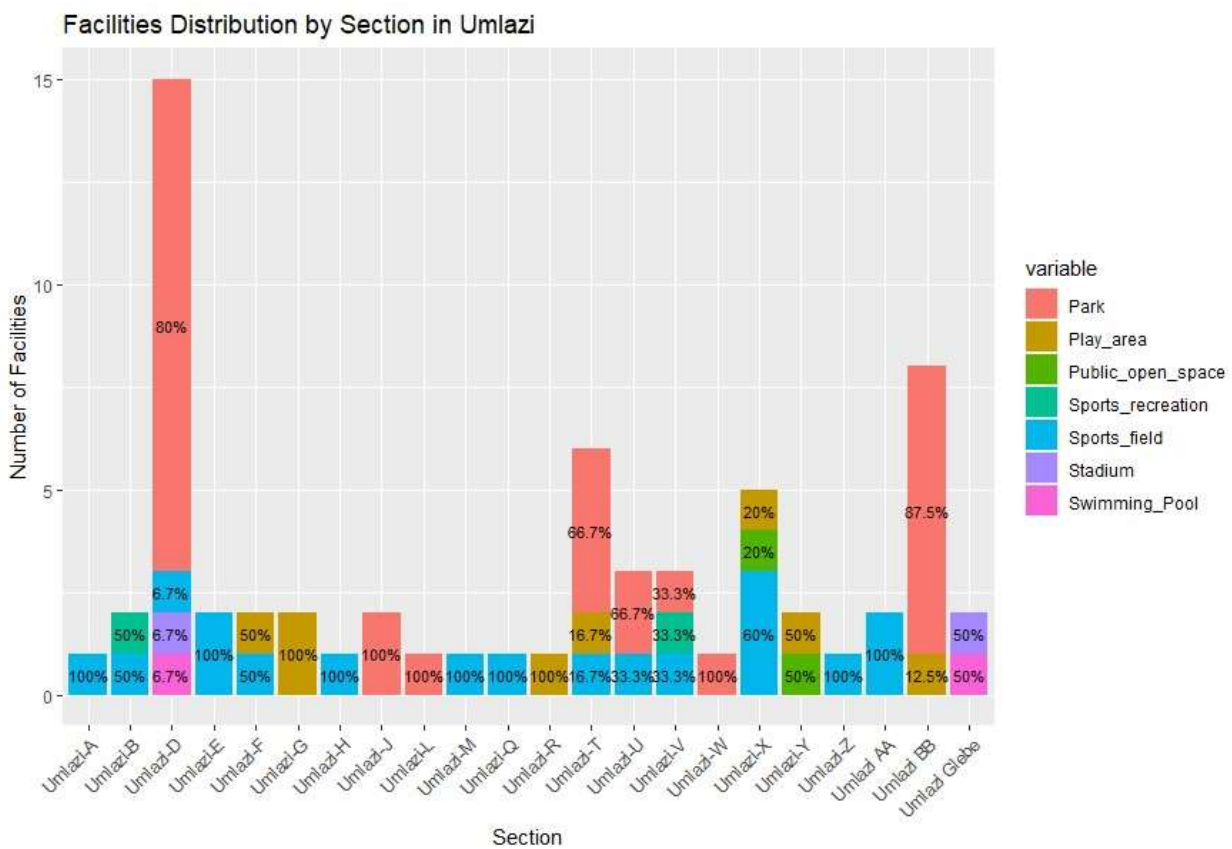


Figure 2: Distribution of open spaces and public amenities
 Source: eThekweni Municipality Report 2023, figure author created 2024

As shown in Figure 1, the distribution of public amenities such as parks, recreational areas, and community centres is uneven, with some areas in the township having better access to these amenities than others. This figure highlights the need for more equitable planning and distribution of public amenities in uMlazi. Parks are ideal venues for festivals, fairs, and many activities designed to unite the community. In uMlazi, parks serve cultural and religious functions; hence, urban planners should consider cultural considerations during the planning process. The main intangible cultural practices in

⁵⁷ Phillip C Edwards, "A Long History of Home-Bases, Huts, Houses, Villages, Towns, Cities and Megacities," *Journal of Big History* 7, no. 4 (2024): 1–37.

⁵⁸ Buyani Nkabinde, Lawrence Mpele Lekhanya, and Nirmala Dorasamy, "The Push Factors in The Patterns of Rural-Urban Migration and Its Impact on Service Delivery Case of Ethekewini," *Seybold Report* 19, no. 3: 138 - 152.

uMlazi comprise traditional Zulu dancing known as (*ukusina*), *umemulo* or puberty rites, which celebrates a girl child's growth to maturity, *isicathamiya* (traditional music and dance), *indlamu* (traditional dance), *umngqokolo* (traditional poetry), and *ubufazi* (traditional storytelling). The group is well-known for celebrating festivals such as reed dance (Umhlanga), the first fruits ceremony (*umkhosi wokweshwama*).

uMlazi's traditional cuisine and leisure scene come alive at vibrant centres like 'Max Lifestyle and Eyadini Lounge'. These recreational hubs not only serve up traditional cuisines but also embody the intangible heritage attributes of the community, including traditional music, dance, and storytelling. As public spaces, they foster social interaction, cultural exchange, and a sense of community pride, making them beloved gathering places for locals and visitors alike. Max's Lifestyle is located in uMlazi V Section. This place is a 'one-stop' restaurant and recreational centre that prides itself on uniqueness and quality ingredients. According to a respondent: *It is the only location where visitors and residents may appreciate, sense, and experience distinctive township culture in an upscale, stylish, and secure setting. The place has a large parking area and security area where visitors can comfortably enjoy themselves.*

According to a respondent, *Max's Lifestyle is one of the 'best' restaurants in uMlazi, and it has a traditional "Kasi" (so-called ethnic township) culture. Tourists and locals experience unique township culture in upmarket, trendy, and secure surroundings.* Observations showed that people from all walks of life, cultures and races, young and old, come together in this space. Renaissance cities reflect this intellectual growth through the use of grand avenues, large public squares, ornate facades, and the careful use of views and vistas.

Another local cuisine spot, Eyadini, is close to Maxi's in V section. The manager of Eyadini highlighted that: "Eyadini Lounge, located in the heart of uMlazi Township came to life in 2008; Eyadini is a highly sought *shisanyama* (meat cuisine) restaurant and premium event venue popularly known for its "Eyadini walk," where patrons are photographed sidewalk *as they enter Eyadini Lounge. Specializing in a unique Shisanyama township experience, the award-winning Eyadini Lounge is one of the fastest-growing businesses in KZN, catering to the young and trendy, meat and music lovers alike. Not only do we have the best meat in town we also host the craziest out of this world events, private functions, birthdays, baby showers, product launches and brand activations.*"

Apart from local cuisine spots, Marx's Lifestyle and Eyadini uMlazi have a leisure centre that values Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). A private developer highlighted that: *Engonyameni is located within a radius of 100 kilometres from the centre of Engonyameni suburb of uMlazi (NL), the nearest place in the area is uMlazi C3 suburb of uMlazi, KwaZulu-Natal. The incredible scenery and the excellent chances of great encounters with wildlife species are some of the features that define the area of Engonyameni, which lies on the outskirts of uMlazi Township. This area is also adorned by the beautiful hills of Inwabi and Tafelkop, with the latter being believed to be sacred, and no one is encouraged to go there. Hence, there is currently no sign of normal habitation there.* Engonyameni provides an unparalleled experience for those who are determined to crisscross the unique hunting safaris and trail photographic safaris. Plans to have more wild adventures in Engonyameni are underway.

As the spiritual heartbeat of uMlazi, the area's diverse range of religious spaces reflects the community's deep-seated values of faith, tradition, and cultural identity. From the majestic architecture of the Umlazi Methodist Church to the vibrant atmosphere of the Islamic Centre, uMlazi's religious spaces serve not only as places of worship but also as community hubs, fostering a sense of belonging and social cohesion among residents. The iconic uMlazi Islamic Centre, located in the W Section, holds the distinction of being the very first Masjid (mosque) to be constructed in uMlazi. A religious leader highlighted: that *The Islamic Centre was founded in 2001 as a response to the growing Muslim population in the region. As the Muslim community in the area was expanding rapidly, it became apparent that there was a need for a dedicated place of worship and Islamic support to cater to their spiritual needs.* According to Kaarsholm, prior to the establishment of the Islamic Centre, a Muslim family opened their home for the uMlazi Muslims to use as a Musalla and Madressa to offer support to

the Muslims as this area had no Muslim Community.⁵⁹ The Centre has done outstanding work supporting the Muslims of uMlazi and has served as an anchor in the community.

The utilization of open spaces for religious purposes is common in uMlazi and the dominant church is Nazareth Baptist Church (Shembe), which utilizes open spaces as their shrines and integrates African traditional religion and Christianity. A church leader highlighted that: *Nazareth Baptist Church (Shembe) is the second largest African initiated church based in South Africa, founded in 1910. It reveres Shembe as a prophet sent by God to restore the teachings of Moses, the prophets, and Jesus. Members are Sabbath-observers, and they avoid eating pork, premarital sex, and smoking. This religion is a combination of Zulu culture and Christianity that has been based on the old Bible.* A respondent noted that the sticks that have always been used as weapons are now used for healing, and *Shembe culture rests on teaching people healing and peace all the time.* There are several Shembe temples in uMlazi; the big branch is in the J Section. Other prominent branches are the uMlazi Glebe hostel and the V section park close to Mega City Mall. The people of Shembe gather to pray they believe in God, Jesus the Prophet, including Shembe.

While the traditional Zulu culture continues to play an important role in the lives of many residents in uMlazi, the rapid growth of informal settlements in the area has brought new challenges to the community. As the population of uMlazi continues to grow, the demand for housing has led to the proliferation of informal settlements, which often lack access to basic services such as water, sanitation, and electricity. According to Jones, informal settlements in culturally significant areas pose a complex challenge of balancing the preservation of heritage with the need for affordable housing and community development.⁶⁰ It threatens cultural heritage sites and historical landmarks, disrupting traditional structures and social cohesion. The councillor in the M section noted that uMlazi has several informal settlements. *Notably, Emalandeni is opposite the V section and close to uMlazi Glebe, Silver City is opposite the S section, and Emhlabeni is close to the S section and in the vicinity of Mangosuthu University.*

The proliferation of informal housing in uMlazi has significantly impacted open spaces and public amenities in the area. The rapid growth of informal settlements has led to the encroachment of open spaces, such as parks, playgrounds, and sports fields, as well as the degradation of public amenities, such as community centres, libraries, and healthcare facilities. According to a respondent in the V Section, *One of the primary impacts of informal housing on open spaces in uMlazi is the loss of recreational areas. Many of the open spaces in uMlazi have been taken over by informal housing, leaving residents with limited access to recreational areas.* This can have negative impacts on the physical and mental health of residents, particularly children and the elderly. Another impact of informal housing on open spaces in uMlazi is the degradation of environmental quality. A respondent highlighted that informal settlements are often located in areas prone to flooding, exacerbating people's vulnerability. *As a resident of Umlazi, I am worried about the safety and well-being of my community.*

According to Weimann and Onni, The lack of proper waste management and sanitation infrastructure in informal settlements can lead to the pollution of open spaces, posing health risks to residents.⁶¹ In addition to the impacts on open spaces, informal housing has also significantly impacted public amenities in uMlazi. Many public amenities, such as community centres and healthcare facilities, have been overwhelmed by the rapid growth of informal settlements. This can lead to a decline in the quality of services provided and a lack of access to these services for many residents.

c) Interplay between Cultural Heritage and Urban Morphology

The Cultural Landscape Model and Space Syntax Theory share three common components: place, culture, and cultural landscape. The geographical setting of uMlazi, especially its climate and hilly topography, has had an impact on the structure and use of public areas. The social, economic, and political

⁵⁹ Preben Kaarsholm, *Migration, Islam and Identity Strategies in KwaZulu-Natal: Notes on the Making of Indians and Africans* (Institute of Development Studies Kolkata, 2008).

⁶⁰ Paul Jones, "Formalizing the Informal: Understanding the Position of Informal Settlements and Slums in Sustainable Urbanization Policies and Strategies in Bandung, Indonesia," *Sustainability* 9, no. 8 (2017): 1436.

⁶¹ Amy Weimann and Tolu Oni, "A Systematised Review of the Health Impact of Urban Informal Settlements and Implications for Upgrading Interventions in South Africa, a Rapidly Urbanising Middle-Income Country," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, no. 19 (2019): 3608.

structures that create the Umlazi cultural environment, as well as its history, customs, and cultural practices, reflect the interactions between the site, culture, and cultural landscape in public areas.

Planning is no longer simply focused on the basic city infrastructure and the location and separation of land uses. The Cathedral and Zocalo public square in Mexico illustrates that Renaissance city-building principles were used to dominate local indigenous cultures, for example, St Paul Cathedral in London.⁶² In uMlazi there is a mutual influence between cultural heritage and urban morphology, with cultural events and traditions shaping public spaces and urban development impacting cultural heritage sites. uMlazi's cultural landscape is rich and diverse, with traditional Zulu homesteads, cultural events, and historical sites playing important roles in city development and management.⁶³ A respondent from the eThekweni Council Department of Planning and Engineering highlighted that: *As a council, we recognize the importance of preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of our community. When planning for public amenities, we consider the cultural events and traditions significant to our residents. For example, when designing public spaces, we ensure they are adaptable for use during cultural festivals and events, such as the annual Reed Dance ceremony. We also engage with local community leaders and stakeholders to ensure that our planning decisions are sensitive to our community's cultural needs and aspirations. By doing so, we aim to create public amenities that not only meet the physical needs of our residents but also foster a sense of community and cultural identity.*

In the face of growing globalisation, maintaining cultural diversity is considered to be important for the long-term resilience of cultural heritage.⁶⁴ An intrinsic part of the latter is intangible heritage, which, together with Hillier's notion of creativity as the city's fourth sustainability, can contribute to building inclusive societies and strengthening the economy.⁶⁵ Intangible cultural heritage is an evolving heritage, where tradition and innovation coexist,⁶⁶ its 'safeguarding' is crucial in protecting cultural diversity and urban structure due to its centrality to the community.⁶⁷ This paper argues that the resilience of a township should incorporate cultural dynamics in urban development through configurational, morphological, and perceptual characteristics. Enabling socio-spatial diversity and maintaining a life cycle of events is essential for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage since communities together generate a self-reinforcing process. This paper further highlighted the fine balance between the conservation of sacred places and the spatial management of resources. Urban planning should consider the role of Indigenous knowledge systems in facilitating the intercultural preservation of places in order to develop sustainable community development. There are opportunities for integrating cultural heritage into urban planning, and community members should be engaged and participate in urban planning and cultural preservation efforts.

The development of uMlazi borrows from the history of city development. In the Graden city concept, new services such as shopping centres, new employment nodes, recreation and leisure services, and public infrastructure developed on the outskirts of cities to service the growing suburban population.⁶⁸ This is in line with the location of Mega City Mall in uMlazi. Its 'modern', iconic stature has not affected its cultural heritage. Since it is located on the outskirts of uMlazi. Cultural heritage should be integrated into urban development, incorporating traditional designs and promoting cultural tourism.⁶⁹ Rohit Jigyasu discusses the nature of intangible values in historic environments and the process of their representation and preservation.⁷⁰ Through the lens of some selected case studies in Asia, he concluded that intangible values are associated with planning and management processes.

⁶² Göran Therborn, *Cities of Power: The Urban, the National, the Popular, the Global* (Verso Books, 2017).

⁶³ W Utami, "Managing Toba Area as Cultural Landscape Heritage," in *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, vol. 780 (IOP Publishing, 2021), 012059.

⁶⁴ N Crawhall, "Auditing and Managing Cultural Resources with Displaced Indigenous Peoples: A South African Case Study" (Paris: UNESCO, 2001).

⁶⁵ Julienne Hanson and Bill Hillier, "The Architecture of Community: Some New Proposals on the Social Consequences of Architectural and Planning Decisions," *Architecture et Comportement/Architecture and Behaviour* 3, no. 3 (1987): 251–73.

⁶⁶ Crawhall, "Auditing and Managing Cultural Resources with Displaced Indigenous Peoples: A South African Case Study."

⁶⁷ J Blake Snider, Andrea Clements, and Alexander T Vazsonyi, "Late Adolescent Perceptions of Parent Religiosity and Parenting Processes," *Family Process* 43, no. 4 (2004): 489–502; Rohit Jigyasu, "The Intangible Dimension of Urban Heritage," in *Reconnecting the City* (Wiley, 2014), 129–59, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118383940.ch5>.

⁶⁸ Ndimiso Camngca, "The Role of Urban Land as a Lever for Strategic Urban Restructuring in Frontier Towns: A Case Study of Post-Apartheid Spatial Planning in Graaff-Reinet" (Cape Peninsula University of Technology, 2024).

⁶⁹ Theano S Terkenli, "Tourism and Landscape," *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Tourism*, 2024, 166–80.

⁷⁰ Jigyasu, "The Intangible Dimension of Urban Heritage."

Physical processes, economic, social, political, and religious, determine the establishment of industries, markets, residential, parks, schools, places of worship, and other services and facilities,⁷¹ natural context, which covers relief soil type and quality, climatic conditions, etc influences the establishment and organization or layout of different elements of a city. For instance, the uMlazi local development plan made special provisions for places of worship, allocating space for various religions throughout the township, per functional and aesthetic needs. However, Shembe and other so-called 'white garment churches' 'illegally' use open spaces to worship. This shows significant expressions of spiritual capital, human activity, and endeavour, which warrants consideration for heritage preservation. Open spaces in uMlazi are also used to express culture through cultural events.

However, the study also found that urbanization poses significant threats to cultural heritage in uMlazi. The expansion of urban areas and the development of new infrastructure have led to the destruction of cultural heritage sites and the erosion of traditional practices. This highlights the need for urban planning and policy-making to consider urbanization's impact on cultural heritage. Overall, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between cultural heritage, urban morphology, and community engagement, and highlights the need for inclusive and sustainable urban planning practices that prioritize cultural heritage preservation and promotion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study's findings yield the following recommendations to guide policy, practice, and future research in the conservation and management of intangible cultural heritage within urban settings.

For Urban Planners and Policymakers:

To inform the development of culturally sensitive and sustainable urban planning strategies, the following recommendations are proposed for urban planners and policymakers.

1. Incorporate cultural heritage factors into urban planning: Acknowledge the importance of intangible cultural assets in influencing the spatial allocation and utilization of public places. Integrate cultural landscape evaluations into urban planning procedures to guarantee that development projects honour and safeguard cultural heritage.
2. Safeguard and enhance culturally valuable public spaces: Safeguard and improve public areas such as parks, recreational facilities, religious sites, and traditional marketplaces (e.g., Ezimbuzini Herbal Market) that possess cultural importance. These areas must be incorporated into urban planning initiatives to promote community engagement, social cohesion, and cultural identity.
3. Promote community-driven urban development initiatives: Promote community engagement in urban planning and development to guarantee that their cultural values, norms, and practices are acknowledged and integrated into the constructed environment.
4. Formulate urban design rules that are culturally attuned: Develop urban design principles that consider the cultural importance of public places and the requirements of local populations.
5. Allocate resources and extend support for community-driven cultural heritage initiatives: Dedicate resources and offer assistance for activities that foster the conservation and management of cultural assets.

For Cultural Heritage Practitioners

To support the effective conservation and management of cultural heritage in urban environments, the following recommendations are proposed for cultural heritage practitioners.

1. Document and protect intangible cultural heritage: Record and maintain the cultural practices, traditions, and knowledge linked to public spaces. This will assist in preserving intangible cultural treasures for future generations.
2. Formulate cultural landscape management plans: Establish management strategies that reconcile urban development with the preservation of cultural resources. These plans must be guided by community involvement and participation.

⁷¹ Lorcan Dempsey, *The Network Reshapes the Library: Lorcan Dempsey on Libraries, Services and Networks* (American Library Association, 2014).

3. Advance cultural tourism and education: Establish activities that highlight cultural history, including guided tours, cultural festivals, and educational programs. This will enhance awareness of the significance of cultural heritage and foster cross-cultural comprehension.
4. Partner with local communities to formulate strategies for the conservation of cultural heritage. Collaborate with local people to formulate conservation plans that honour their cultural values and traditions.
5. Formulate training programs for cultural heritage management: Design training initiatives that provide cultural heritage professionals with the requisite skills and knowledge for the management and conservation of cultural heritage in urban settings.

For Future Research:

To deepen the understanding of the interplay between cultural heritage and urban morphology and to address emerging challenges the following future research is recommended.

1. Investigate the utilization of spatial syntax theory in the research of cultural landscapes: Persist in advancing and honing the use of spatial syntax theory to examine the correlation between cultural heritage and urban morphology.
2. Formulate culturally attuned urban planning frameworks: Develop urban planning frameworks that integrate cultural landscape evaluations and honour the cultural values and practices of local populations.
3. Examine the influence of cultural heritage on fostering sustainable urban development: Research the utilization of cultural heritage in advancing sustainable urban development and alleviating the effects of climate change.

CONCLUSION

The integration of the cultural landscape model and space syntax theory provided a powerful framework for analyzing the complex relationships between intangible cultural heritage and urban morphology in the uMlazi cultural landscape. This study has explored the cultural landscape of uMlazi Township, examining the interplay between cultural heritage and urban morphology. The findings highlight the significance of cultural heritage in shaping the township's identity and sense of community, while also revealing the threats posed by urbanization to cultural heritage sites and traditional practices. The study's results emphasize the need for urban planning and policy-making to prioritize cultural heritage preservation and promotion, and to engage with community members in decision-making processes. The research also highlights the importance of considering the interplay between cultural heritage and urban morphology in urban planning and development. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between cultural heritage, urban morphology, and community engagement. It provides insights into the application of theoretical frameworks to real-world urban challenges. The findings have implications for urban planning and policy-making in uMlazi and similar townships, emphasizing the need for inclusive and sustainable practices prioritizing cultural heritage preservation and promotion. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that cultural heritage is a vital component of urban identity and community and that its preservation and promotion are essential for building sustainable and inclusive cities. By prioritizing cultural heritage and engaging with community members, urban planners, and policymakers can create vibrant and meaningful urban spaces that reflect the diversity and richness of urban cultures. Contemporary planners should recognize the importance of involving the community in the planning process and understand the need for a multi-disciplinary approach to designing human settlements.

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