Makhanda: Exploring the mise-en-scène of a city under threat

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Abstract
This research uses the concept of ‘urban scenes’ to explore and characterise the economy of the city of Makhanda (Grahamstown). It is argued that this framework can create a thorough situational analysis on which to plan for locally-appropriate Local Economic Development (LED). It does this through characterising a local economic context that situates economic activity within a framework that acknowledges the role and interactions of consumers, culture, clustered amenities and economic activities, and urban place. It thus adds to traditional situational analyses by focusing on the urbanisms, activities, and character of the city—making these factors indivisible from the local economy. The framework reveals that two prominent scenes exist within Makhanda: the Education and Tourism Scenes. Education institutions like top public and private schools and Rhodes University are located within the city, and a tourism product exists in the form of creativity and the arts, festivals, edutourism, heritage, and wildlife safaris and hunting. These scenes bring significant money into the local economy through tourism and temporary education-led migration. They are both, however, under significant threat from a dysfunctional local municipality that has consistently failed in its mandate to support the local economy, engage with local stakeholders, and create an enabling environment for business. Intermittent and unreliable water supply, sewerage spills, and the deterioration of existing infrastructure are just some of the issues faced within the city. Any successful LED programme needs to tackle this issue and others to succeed. In addition to creating an enabling economic environment, cooperation within and between stakeholders in the identified scenes needs fostering. The local municipality also needs to create employment and a more inclusive economy to tackle issues of high unemployment and inequality.

Keywords Urban scenes · LED · Makhanda · Tourism · Education · South Africa

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Introduction

South Africa is seeking development in order to tackle high levels of unemployment and inequality within its economy. The country has been identified as one of the most unequal societies on Earth with a per capita Gini coefficient of 0.65 in 2015 (Statistics South Africa, 2019). The Eastern Cape had the highest inequality levels of the nine provinces in 2015 (Statistics South Africa, 2019). No doubt this situation has worsened since then as the Covid-19 pandemic, and continued governance failures have served to increase unemployment levels to 34.9% in the third quarter of 2021 (Statistics South Africa, 2021). While the country boasts progressive and well-meaning policies and legislation, it often fails in its implementation of them. The country’s LED (Local Economic Development) policy is no different. South Africa adopted the principles of LED as part of its developmental arsenal. This approach to development focuses on economic development on a local scale, aiming to produce robust, inclusive and highly contextualised strategies that utilise local resources and assets (Irvine et al., 2016). Local government is charged with acting ‘developmentally’ and an LED component is required within Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) that are developed by local municipalities (Hoogendoorn & Nel, 2012). Municipalities are, therefore, the facilitators of LED and must consult with community and business stakeholders in formulating locally appropriate development strategies. In practice, however, the planning for and implementation of LED has had many shortcomings (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2016). Put simply, research on small towns in South Africa has shown that poor governance, capacity constraints and institutional shortcomings plague local municipalities and their ability to bring about successful LED (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2016; Van der Merwe & Rogerson, 2018). An important component of successful governance is civic culture and cooperation with stakeholders. This has been shown to be a missing ingredient in many LED initiatives across the country (Donaldson & Vermeulen, 2012; Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2016; Kontsiwe & Visser, 2019; Van der Merwe & Rogerson, 2018; van Rooyen, 2012; van Roy & Marais, 2012). The issues certainly appear to exist within the Makana Local Municipality, which is home to the city of Makhanda.

Makhanda, formerly Grahamstown, is a small city within in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. In addition to being the major urban centre of the Makana Local Municipality, it falls within the Sarah Baartman District Municipality (Fig. 1). The city is under threat because of a dysfunctional local government that has allowed the infrastructure of the city to deteriorate to the extent that basic services are not consistently supplied (Irvine, 2021). The Makana Municipality Final Integrated Development Plan 2021–2022 outlines a long list of services that need maintenance and upgrading—from water and sanitation infrastructure to the roads and pedestrian walkways (Makana Local Municipality, 2021). The IDP also highlights the lack of financial stability within the budget, which only serves to exacerbate the issue (Makana Local Municipality, 2021). In terms of LED strategy, the Economic Profile within the Situational Analysis section of the IDP is merely a list of up-to-date statistics without much discussion as to the
picture that they paint together—a poor foundation for any of the much-needed intervention plans. Likewise, the bulk of the ‘Sectorial Plans’ for LED need review as they date back to the 2009–2011 period (Makana Local Municipality, 2021) and, therefore, do not consider the current economic climate and service delivery issues. The Municipality’s LED Strategy has three strategic objectives which aim to promote: economic growth, sustainable work opportunities and an enabling environment for economic development (Makana Local Municipality, 2021). A SWOT analysis for several themes within the LED strategy is included within the IDP and is somewhat informative although it lacks elaboration in this format and the consultative process is admittedly wanting. This research argues that to achieve these objectives, an understanding of ‘urban scenes’ within the city will provide invaluable insight into the dynamics of the city and economy. It will be argued that it is a useful framework for conceptualising and understanding the development challenges within the city. A fresh perspective on these challenges and a new way to articulate them could certainly contribute to LED planning and policy. The authors argue that a scenes framework can contribute to an effective situational analysis and reveal focus areas for effective LED strategies. A situation analysis is an integral component within the development of LED strategies and should include an exploration of perceived issues and opportunities, a local economic profile and identification of the areas of collaboration, complimentary activities and competition (UN-HABITAT, 2005). With an emphasis on locally-appropriate development, any LED strategy conceptualised on an inadequate foundation will not fulfil its purpose (Xuza, 2012).
Clark (2003) was one of the first researchers to demonstrate the concept of urban scenes. The concept is closely related to the geographic concept of place and emerges from the colloquial use of the term scene vis-à-vis the music or art scenes (Wu et al., 2019). The colloquial use of the term music scene, for example, describes the agglomeration of various music-related enterprises and activities and artists interacting within a specific genre of music (Florida & Jackson, 2010). The Motown music scene in Detroit in the 1970s is an example of this (Florida & Jackson, 2010). Scenes, therefore, are made up of the communities, experiences, activities, interactions, meanings and physical environment that make up a particular place (Silver & Nichols Clark, 2015). The character of the music scene in a particular neighbourhood or city is made up of the people (artists, audiences and so on) who interact within the space and the clustered amenities that support the industry and serve their tastes (Florida & Jackson, 2010). It is important to note that scenes, like the music scene, are identifiable at different scales (Wu et al., 2019). They manifest at a neighbourhood and city level, but are identifiable within the broader forces at play within the regional and global cultural, social, economic and political realms (Wu et al., 2019). The music scene within one neighbourhood or city is, therefore, inextricably linked to the music scene(s) at other scales. The scenes approach could be seen as aligning with systems thinking as it tries to take a holistic view of the city (Wu et al., 2019). It certainly acknowledges the complexity of the urban system and the connections between the different components of the urban economy in context and at varying scales.

Scenes are not just a mode of describing the place-making process, but also linking this to economic forces at play. The concept can be understood in terms of consumers and consumption, in particular the lifestyle consumption characteristic of the post-industrial urban setting (Wu et al., 2019). Likewise, one can conceptualise them as a manifestation of a clustering or agglomeration of cultural amenities that constitute the intangible capital driving tourism and lifestyle consumption (Silver et al., 2010). In this way, the concept can find parallels and connections with Florida’s work on the creative class and their role in driving urban economic and cultural forces (Florida, 2014). Florida (2014) explicitly links the building of a strong knowledge economy to the development of a place identity and amenities that are appealing to the workers within such industries. In other words, the scenes that emerge in particular cities create urban settings that attract residents and economic activities alike. Despite the spontaneous nature of their creation, scenes can, therefore, be utilised by planners and policy makers to promote various forms of economic and urban growth and development (Silver & Nichols Clark, 2015). They can be ‘produced’ by such actors in the sense of the making of a film or theatre production. Scenes can be developed, shaped, stimulated and supported in their continued existence in order to reap the attendant benefits for a city and its community (Silver & Nichols Clark, 2015). It is precisely this connection between scenes, the local economy, and the role of planners that this paper is exploring.

To date, much of the literature dealing with urban scenes relates specifically to the experiences and major urban spaces in the Global North (Wu et al., 2019). As Wu et al. (2019) point out, this concept can easily be extended to ‘capture’ other unique spaces and their interplay with regional and global scenes. Toerien (2012)
used the concept in a study of the economic boom and bust cycles of Prince Albert, a small Karoo town in South Africa. Identifying the contemporary scenes within the town gave insight into the way in which place and the economy interact within the particular setting. Toerien (2012) identified several scenes in Prince Albert: the PDI (Previously Disadvantaged Individuals), tourism, gentrification, retirement, and entrepreneurial scenes. The identification of the PDI scene is perhaps the most important facet of this in terms of the geographies of the Global South. Critically, the study highlighted some of the areas of contestation and complimentary activities between these scenes and called for local government to seek to balance the interests represented in promoting economic development. The insight provided by the use of the scenes framework in the Prince Albert study informed the present research.

There is a definite need for locally appropriate development strategies in Makhanda that are in line with the country’s LED policy. This paper has set out to utilise the concept of ‘scenes’ to explore the economic context of the city in order to build a concrete foundation onto which appropriate LED strategies can be formulated. It is argued that this contextualisation needs to take into consideration the existing major local scenes, the contestations and synergies within and amongst them, and the potential economic gaps or scenes for development. The first step in fulfilling the aim is through a brief overview of the economic profile of the city, which is followed by a description of the scene delimitation process and the identification of themes within and amongst them. The situation analysis will be completed through an exploration of the economy through the urban scenes perspective with a focus on areas of contestation and synergy.

**An economic profile of the city**

Makhanda was established in 1812 as a military garrison, which quickly took on economic importance on the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony (Reynolds & Reynolds, 1974). The city rapidly saw the in-migration of a civilian population and the establishment of a trading centre with goods and people in circulation (Reynolds & Reynolds, 1974). For a while it enjoyed economic prominence within the region, hosting a trade fair and a large export economy (O’Meara, 1995). The discovery of mineral resources in the interior of what was to become South Africa shifted focus from the city, however (O’Meara, 1995). In the meantime, he city had become a legal centre, a regional trading centre for surrounding rural hinterlands, and the host to a handful of schools (O’Meara, 1995). The contemporary economy of the city is dominated by education institutions, a legal industry connected to the High Court and an array of festivals including the National Arts Festival (NAF) and SciFest Africa. The education institutions, in particular, have a large footprint through the presence of both public and private institutions in the form of primary and secondary schools as well as Rhodes University and the East Cape Midlands College at a tertiary level (Fig. 1).

Like much of urban South Africa, the contemporary city of Makhanda has high levels of unemployment and stark economic inequalities. These contrasts are manifested spatially and can be seen in the division between Makhanda East (former
black township and coloured Group Area) and Makhanda West (former white Group Area) in Fig. 1. The overview provided in the 2021–2022 IDP for the municipality illustrates these issues (Makana Local Municipality, 2021). Unemployment rates increased within the broader local municipality from 25% in 2010 to 38.3% in 2020. Alongside this increase, the poverty gap rate increased from 31.3% to 31.6% and the number of people living in poverty increased from 48,300 to 57,900 in the same period. The Index of Buying Power, a measure of the ability of the local population to purchase products relative to national purchasing power, similarly showed a decrease over the period. The Gini coefficient, measuring levels of inequality, paints a similar picture with an increase during this period as it rose from 0.61 to 0.628. The figures show greater inequality when broken down into racial groupings—both the African and coloured population within the municipality experienced greater inequality within these designated population groups, while the white population experienced a narrowing of this gap.

In contrast to this bleak economic picture, the education levels of the municipal population are higher than in the district and province (Makana Local Municipality, 2021). This is owing to the concentration of education institutions in Makhanda, which leads to a high number of people with tertiary education within the workforce. This is, however, not a fine-grained statistic and must be seen in terms of the dynamics of the broader population and economy. This is reflected in the economic structure of the municipality which has a comparative advantage (measured by a location quotient) in the community services sector (Makana Local Municipality, 2021). It is likewise confirmed by the fact that the tertiary economic sector contributes 86.5% to the Gross Value Added measure within the municipality, which is over 15% higher than that of the national economy (Makana Local Municipality, 2021). In contrast, the secondary economic sector (manufacturing) makes up a very small proportion of the local economy and despite its mineral deposits, mining (primary sector) makes little contribution (Makana Local Municipality, 2021). This means that large scale employment opportunities are not available to the urban population. In a sense the city is post-industrial, but in truth, it has never industrialised. This goes a long way to explaining the high unemployment and inequality levels within Makhanda. What is needed for mass employment is a diversified economy (the Tress index is high), which provides employment to the less-educated members of the community.

**Methods of data collection and analysis**

This research was conducted in 2021 using semi-structured interviews with key informants (chairpersons, directors or supervisors within their various institutions or organisations), who were chosen because of their overall knowledge of the economic dynamics within the city as well as more specific knowledge about the identified scenes. Participants included representatives from the Makana Residents Association (MRA), Grahamstown Business Forum (GBF), LED and Planning in Makana Municipality, Director of Makana Tourism, and the Red Cross society. Two school principals, the chairperson of a local, education-related NGO (GADRA), and the former director of the Makana Edutourism Project represented the education sector.
In addition, a local estate agent and a community and religious leader were interviewed. The Makana Municipality Integrated Development Plan 2021/2022, websites, academic publications, and news articles were also reviewed. Observation was utilised to explore place and the place-dynamics involved in the specific place ballets, individuals, consumer cultures, and aesthetics. Place ballet, a term coined by Seamon (1979), uses a phenomenological perspective to identifies the convergence of daily routines and movements of many individuals in a particular space. It is thus, a geographically imbedded concept, that reflects the connection between a place, its character and human activity (van Eck & Pijpers, 2017).

Data was analysed through the identification of different scenes, which were then used as themes for analysis. Two primary scenes were identified within the local economy: The Education and Tourism Scenes. In addition to these scenes, two major roleplayers or communities were identified within the city: the local municipality and the economically marginalised communities of the city. After identifying two major scenes, the observed internal and external contestations, and synergies within and between the individual scenes and the other community roleplayers was also used as the third theme.

Findings

To understand the local economic context of the city of Makhanda, the conceptual model in Fig. 2 has been included. This model illustrates the local economic context which is inclusive of community and stakeholders, culture, consumption and place-ballet, roleplayers, economic activities and place and amenities. Important to the specific local economic context of Makhanda are the local municipality (roleplayer/facilitator) and the economically marginalised community (stakeholders). The specific scenes that are identified within this milieu are the Education and Tourism Scenes which come into existence through an interplay of people, place, and economic activities. These scenes are not detached, but a part of the greater local economic context. They, therefore, interact with the elements within the broader context. The sustainability of each scene is dependent on the interactions it has with these other elements like roleplayers and stakeholders for example. The context or broader environment needs to foster many areas of synergy (cooperation and support) and limit the areas of contestation. This conceptual model will be utilised in order to explore the findings of this research.

The Education Scene

We are really seen as an education hub... [Makhanda is] quite phenomenal in that, where else do you have a university, emerging township schools, elite private schools and then top government schools, all in one place?

Makana Tourism (personal communication, August 2021).

Rhodes University, various tertiary institutions (such as the East Cape Midlands College, Grahamstown Technical Institute, the College of Transfiguration and the
International School of Tanning Technology), as well as more than 35 primary and secondary government schools, 5 private schools, and education-related NGOs were found to be participants within the Education Scene (Makana Tourism, personal communication, August 2021). While there is a collective education scene within the city, there is a diversity of institutions which translates to a diversity of people, consumption patterns and spaces that are occupied. Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of these institutions and shows the private and former Model C schools (semi-private; fee-paying government schools) and Rhodes University to be located in the Western part of the city alongside the CBD. This spatial pattern is a remnant of apartheid urban form—instiutions are divided both socially and spatially. The most prominent members of this scene are the wealthier, education-led migrants who attend the private schools, top government schools and Rhodes University. These institutions form the core of the scene while other institutions linger on the periphery both literally and figuratively. The education-led migrants, their visiting

Fig. 2  Urban Scenes within the local economic context of Makhanda
parents and the highly educated individuals who populate the staff have distinct consumption patterns and a clear impact on the urban spaces they occupy. This is manifested in the clustering of businesses serving these communities in spaces adjacent to the university and three private schools. An enclave of coffee shops, restaurants, guesthouses, and shops serving the urban elite as well as a student-driven nightlife enclave, are highly visible. A particular sense of place and attendant place ballet is created within these spaces. Coffee shops and restaurants are located within the historic centre of the city and its Georgian and Victorian architecture that adds to the aesthetic quality of the space. This aligns with the aesthetics of the campuses which utilise historic architecture to create a milieu of tradition. In a sense, these highly-curated spaces help to define insiders and outsiders by appealing to particular consumption preferences, lifestyles, and aesthetic sensibilities. This is perpetuated by the convergence and choreographed activities of particular individuals and groups within these spaces. The patterns of inclusion and exclusion that are linked to the education spaces of the elite are, therefore, mirrored in these consumption spaces.

As many of the people involved in the scene are temporary, education-led migrants, their presence in the city is seasonal and this has an impact on the manifestation of the scene at different times of the year—a seasonal place ballet that is linked to time-geography and routine. The former Edutourism Project Manager (personal communication, August 2021) suggested that “the town is busier at specific times—there are no people here in December, it’s like a ghost town”. It was argued that during the first COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, in particular, the months merged into each other because the place ballet of the city was completely disrupted (Former Edutourism Project Manager, personal communication, August 2021):

Why? We didn’t have our monthly signifiers that tell you what month you are in. So, for example, in April – for [Rhodes University] Graduation, all the parents are in town. Same thing in March – SciFest, June is the big K-Day weekend between the [Private] schools. July we have the NAF. August is Balloon Week, for all the schools, so again, more parents.

The vast majority of interviewees agreed that the local urban economy was reliant on its existence of the education scene. The local economy is seen to be dependent on university students, the school pupils as well as the parents and staff. Spending in this sector permeates the economy through direct employment at these institutions but also through the property market and local businesses that serve this community. The GBF (personal communication, August 2021) suggested that when students are not in town, businesses are really strained. They highlighted that during the strict COVID-19 lockdown period in 2020, businesses were severely challenged as “there were no kids to buy anything” (GBF, personal communication, August 2021). “… If you look at the city’s GDP, the service sector is our largest contributor, according to our GDP… A huge proportion of this is because of education—we are providing a service” (Makana Municipality, personal communication, August 2021). Pam Golding Realtors (personal communication, August 2021), argued that the scene has been the largest economic contributor to the city, with the GBF (personal communication, August 2021) suggesting that the private schools, were estimated to contribute nearly R500 million to the local economy, per annum. Additionally, the MRA
(personal communication, August 2021) indicated that “Makhanda has the luxury of attracting parents who bring in money because of the schools and the university. Many other cities do not have this”. It is significant that this source of income is largely from outside the city and, therefore, gives the local economy a significant boost.

Four internal contestations were identified within the Education Scene. These are illustrated in Table 1 and relate to the diversity of education institutions within the Education Scene. This diversity comes down to how the schools are funded (public, private, semi-private) and this has a knock-on effect in terms of their resources (teachers, stationary, facilities) and affordability (fee paying or non-fee paying). While the private and former-Model C schools and their staff, students and parents are more visible within the Education Scene, there are obvious disparities that make scene more nuanced than it first appears. The Section 21, non-fee-paying schools located in Makhanda East have virtually no footprint in 5 of the elite. In terms of synergies, some attempts are made by the more-resourced to engage with under-resourced schools through community engagement initiatives (Kingswood College, 2020; St Andrews College, 2016). Rhodes University is on a drive to make itself more accessible to students from a diverse set of schools and to assist schools which are under-resourced through Community Engagement initiatives (Rhodes University Community Engagement, 2022). These initiatives are, of course, outreach programmes and though they have positive impacts, these are limited and do little to bridge the vast divide within the scene.

The Tourism Scene

Like the Education Scene, the Tourism Scene focuses on temporary migrants to the city, but it largely focusses on their leisure consumption instead of consumption of education-related services. Makana Tourism (personal communication, August 2021) suggested that the Tourism Scene within the city remains an ever-evolving industry, comprised of overlapping practices which are often unacknowledged. The nature of the Tourism Scene was detailed to have evolved dramatically over the years, with some contributors becoming less prominent owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, for example. There are several constituents within the Tourism Scene and each component was suggested to exhibit distinct ‘types’ of tourists—Edutourism, MICE tourism, heritage tourism, wildlife safaris and hunting and creative city (festivals) tourism. Edutourism links the Tourism and Education scenes and includes the education-related events and festivals that occur in the city. Sporting events, private school open days (Balloon Week), and Scifest Africa are among these. The MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Conference and Exhibition) market is made up of business tourism. Heritage tourism and wildlife safaris and hunting forms a large part of the international tourism market.

The traditional international market was suggested to encompass foreign nationalities, particularly of German, American and English origin. “Heritage tourism is very important to Makhanda” (Makana Municipality, personal communication, August 2021). Many of these internationals “have ties to Grahamstown, maybe
| Theme                                      | Description                                                                 | Evidence from participants                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Inadequate Learning Environments          | Some students do not have access to acceptable learning environments        | “Some houses are too small... there is no electricity, it is overcrowded... this is not a place where learning can take place spontaneously”                      |
| Disparity in Resources                    | There is a wide inconsistency in resources and facilities within each institution | “There is such disparity between schools... there is a shortage of stationary and resources [in some], whereas [other schools]—they have an abundance”  |
|                                           |                                                                             | “The way I am looking at it, the top schools are just going further and further [ahead] of the poverty-stricken... the children born into poverty, how are they going to catch up?” |
|                                           |                                                                             | “You know it’s frustrating... the one [independent] school is busy paving their walkways... Are you kidding me? Who needs bricks for pavement when I would kill to build more classrooms... it’s just frustrating that’s all” |
| Imbalanced Relationships Between Schools   | Every institution seems to be working singularly—with no collaboration        | “The schools are not on the same page... we want a common goal, but no one wants to share”                                                                 |
|                                           |                                                                             | “It’s kind of a ‘every many for himself’... the private schools are in their bubbles, the University is just trying to keep its head above water and what about the rest of us? ... we should be working together” |
| Division in ‘Classes’ of Schools           | Specific schools were highlighted to display specific economic groups of pupils | “The danger is, now that we have these ‘classes’ of schools”                                                                                                     |
|                                           |                                                                             | “Some schools are definitely favoured”                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                           |                                                                             | “But now we are seeing a division in class [of different schools]. So, those who can afford to send their children to private schools, or former model C schools will. But then what about the other children?... so that separation between [economic group] is getting wider and wider” |
through the Settler lineage or through one of the private schools” (Makana Tourism, personal communication, August 2021). Additionally, Makana Municipality (personal communication, August 2021) highlighted that many international tourists are drawn into the city because of the historic architecture, museums and national heritage sites. It was suggested that this branch of tourism also supported hunting or game drive tourism, for the surrounding reserves. Makana Tourism (personal communication, August 2021) proposed that the Eastern Cape was also well renowned for its hunting. “Of course, South African Tourism was started because of hunting… We are lucky in that we have the Big Five here in the Eastern Cape and we have no Malaria or Bilharzia” (Makana Tourism, personal communication, August 2021). “One of the smaller lodges brought in R42 million in the first quarter of the year last year. They were only a small enterprise” (Makana Tourism, personal communication, August 2021).

Festival tourism linked to the Creative City branding is perhaps the most visible form of tourism to the city. Festivals include the National Arts Festival (NAF), SciFest Africa, Highway Africa and Masicule. Many of these festivals attract South African craftspeople and creatives. Makana Municipality (personal communication, August 2021) adamantly suggested that Makhanda “is renowned for its arts and culture, because of the [National Arts] Festival. It is obviously an important sector”. Drummond and Snowball (2019) support this characterisation of the economy, showing that the city has high CCI (Cultural and Creative Industries) levels which include areas of cultural heritage, performance and celebration, and visual arts and crafts. The NAF, together with Makana Tourism, Rhodes University, the Eastern Cape Government, and the National Lottery, was identified as founders of the ‘Creative City’ (GBF, personal communication, August 2021). The idea was formulated to bring more attention to the Arts and Culture, particularly within the day-to-day functioning of the city. “There was money being donated from [Europe] that was really the driver behind this operation” (Makana Tourism, personal communication, August 2021). It aimed to link various dramatic art institutions and initiatives together, with a particular focus on festivals, in the hopes to build one of the most ‘creative’ cities in the country (National Arts Festival, 2014).

The peak tourism season in Makhanda is during the June/July school holidays because this is the time when the NAF is usually hosted by the city. This is in contrast to the rest of the country; according to Makana Tourism (personal communication, August 2021):

*Our off-peak is in December! We must be the only ones in the whole country... Everyone goes off to the coast, the kids [pupils] and [university] students aren’t at school... it’s dead.*

While the other forms of tourism to the city do not distinctly change the city space and are, therefore, somewhat invisible, the festivals bring about a transformation. During the NAF, the urban space experiences a complete transformation. School and community halls become venues for theatre, dance and music performances. Art exhibitions are held around the city and guesthouses, restaurants, coffee shops, taverns and bars buzz with patrons. The streets are filled with tourists and the place ballet of the city undergoes a complete transformation. Three market spaces
appear in the city centre during this period. The first space is the pedestrianisation of the area surrounding the Anglican Cathedral at the centre of the CBD. The second is the transformation of the sportsfields of a local school into a tented ‘Village Green’. The third space is the transformation of Fiddlers Green to a carnival space with stalls and rides. To illustrate this transformation of the city, the NAF contributed R94.4 million to Makhanda’s local economy in 2017 (Schmidt, 2018).

Four internal contestations were identified within the Tourism Scene (Table 2). Probably the most important issue is the contestation over the nature of the tourism industry in the city. This product is seen very differently by stakeholders, who variously suggest the industry is driven by heritage, edutourism and arts and culture. With a lack of consensus, the tourism industry runs the risk of suffering with a lack of cooperation and contradictory marketing. A clearly defined tourism product is essential to success because it enables marketing to a specific niche of tourists (Kontsiwe & Visser, 2019). Linked to this, the tourism market was characterised as being highly competitive, which means that planning and cooperation is essential to attract the city’s share of tourists. In terms of the tourism product, some participants highlighted the fact that the Creative City project seemed to be inactive and had not been a well-planned or appropriate concept in the first place. It appeared that it had not been a consultative project and the city had been marketed as the ‘Creative City’ without widespread buy-in and support. Variable access to funding for projects within this sector and other financial challenges are another issue. This is exacerbated by a lack of cooperation and alignment within the industry. In addition to the issues that came up in interviews, the Municipal IDP points to the fact that township tourism is stagnant (Makana Local Municipality, 2021). This means that greater cooperation between township tourism businesses and the rest of the tourism industry is something that needs to be tackled.

In the interviews, synergies within the Tourism Scene were not identified, but there is certainly some level of cooperation that is brought about through the existence of Makana Tourism. Makana Tourism runs a tourism information centre within the city of Makhanda and provides support for the tourism industry and local tourism-centred businesses by providing information to tourists and potential tourists (Makana Tourism, 2022). They offer services like advertising and promotion to member businesses as well as providing some coordination of the local brand (Makana Tourism, 2022). They receive some funding through local government and, while tensions exist with the municipality, there is generally cooperation and positive interactions. Certainly, some of the internal contestations could be lessened or eliminated through this organisation with support from local government.

External synergies and contestations

The interviews revealed that areas of synergy are few and far between. Synergy exists between the Tourism and Education Scenes under the banner of Edutourism (Fig. 3). This is a relationship that has naturally arisen and could be fostered through further strategising and cooperation between roleplayers. Much of the consistent and persistent tourism throughout the year is related to the Education scene. Sports
| Theme                              | Description                                                                 | Evidence from participants                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Marooned Creative City Concept    | The Creative City concept seems to be non-functioning/dormant at the moment. Participants disagree about its importance | “At the moment, the Creative City [concept] is lying dormant and it isn’t running… there really just isn't enough money and excitement for it”  
“I think we must stop trying to create something new… We must focus on how to better what we have”  
“The Creative City concept is overplayed”  
“We are spending money on things that will not work… these are schemes and dreams” |
| Access to Funding                 | There are numerous financial challenges                                     | “[the industry] faces the same problem that our country faces… they have to incentivise projects which there is funding for”  
“If and when there is funding, it has been far more about the pretty stuff”  
“What I am seeing more and more, is that there is this big push for the tourism industry, but there is no link with the rest of the city” |
| Competing in a Highly Competitive Market | The local tourism industry contends for a finite number of tourists | “The tourism game is highly competitive… it is difficult to be [really] years ahead with your planning” |
| What is the Tourism Market?       | Stakeholders disagree about the tourism market. There tends to be three schools of thought | “We have a very narrow sense of what tourism actually is…”  
“Heritage tourism is very important to Makhanda”  
“We are renowned for our Arts and Culture”  
“We should be marketing ourselves as an education hub … that is actually our tourism industry” |
Fig. 3 External contestations and synergies within the local economic context
fixtures, conferences and other school or university-related events bring an influx of tourists during periods where other tourism activities dissipate.

Several external contestations exist within the local economic context of the city (Fig. 3). The most conspicuous of these contestations, the failures of the local municipality, came up in both interviews and in the IDP. As outlined briefly in the introduction, the decline of basic services provided by the municipality has become very apparent within the last decade, which has led to the visible deterioration of the urban space and local amenities. The SWOT analysis conducted as part of the IDP identified aging infrastructure, a lack of cleanliness and a lack of inner city development as threats to the tourism industry (Makana Local Municipality, 2021). While the IDP and its LED component does not directly consider the Education Scene (or industry), the issue was raised by interviewees as likewise affecting this scene. In essence, intermittent, and poor provision of basic services were highlighted as driving away education-led migrants and tourists. In terms of the effects on the Education Scene, Fig. 3 highlights issues such as poor learning conditions for students, the difficulty in retaining staff and students at institutions, and a lack of conferencing/marketing opportunities. In terms of the effects on the Tourism Scene, the city is seen as an unattractive tourism destination and marketing strategies are counteracted by bad press about the municipality (Fig. 3). A respondent summed this up: “what the municipality doesn’t understand is that when people [tourists] are deters from a place—they aren’t replaced by other tourists…. word gets around … we are known as the city without water and lights”. The dysfunction creates a risky environment in which existing and potential business owners must operate, which could bring about economic stagnation. Certainly, it is listed as one of the threats to SMMEs (Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises), trade and investment within the city (Makana Local Municipality, 2021). In these ways, the dysfunctional municipality is seen as undermining the economic viability and continued existence of the two scenes. This is largely because the visible urban blight and the experiences of visitors adds negative perceptions to the sense of place that is created.

Another major contestation within the local economic context is the exclusionary and exclusive or elite nature of the Tourism and Education Scenes. This is identified as particularly problematic given the prominence of these scenes within the cityscape, community, and economy. These issues were mentioned briefly in the characterisation of the scenes and their internal contestations but exist within their external interactions with other elements of the local economic context. The Education Scene in centred on a handful of the many education institutions and there are vast inequalities within the scene. Likewise, the Tourism Scene has inequalities in terms of the development of the township tourism sector and the involvement of previously disadvantaged individuals (Makana Local Municipality, 2021). This means that the economically marginalised people of city, mostly living within the township area of the city’s eastern side, are largely excluded from the activities, amenities, and economic benefits of these scenes. The post-industrial nature of the economy and high unemployment and inequality levels are indicative of this imbalance.

Making these issues worse, was the fact that many interviewees identified and the IDP confirmed relations between the municipality and local communities as limited, strained, and lacking cooperation. As mentioned above, the exception to
this is Makana Tourism, who reported mixed experiences with the municipality, but received funding through them and worked alongside them. Many interviewees identified their relationship with the municipality as ineffective and tarnished. “We have lost complete faith in them; we reach out to help and there is no reciprocation… there is no trust anymore and they don’t want our help…”. Negative perceptions within the community have also overshadowed the few positives: “Because we have lost trust, people are really digging for things that are ‘wrong’, even when we have positive things happening”. The community has lost trust in the municipality, and this has also led to some residents refusing to pay rates and taxes to the local municipality, which further hinders their ability to provide services and maintain infrastructure (Fig. 3). Certainly this lack of trust and cooperation is illustrated in the poor engagement with the community in formulating the IDP (Makana Local Municipality, 2021) and in poor voter turnout of 44.18% in Makana for the 2021 Local Municipal Elections (Independent Electoral Commission 2021). That figure is the average voter turnout in the 14 municipal wards; the turnout ranged from 18.5% to 59.61% across the board (Independent Electoral Commission 2021).

Discussion and Conclusion

As discussed earlier in this paper, the municipality’s strategic objectives for the implementation of its LED Strategy include economic growth, sustainable work opportunities and an enabling environment for economic development. Certainly, the success of the first two objectives is heavily reliant on the creation of an enabling environment. This research has explored just how disabling the current environment is for the existing scenes and any future economic development. The inability of the local municipality to fulfil its mandated responsibility in providing basic services and infrastructure is a marked threat to the city, its communities, and the economy. Part of this failure can be linked to the fact that the sense of place—part of what attracts visitors, students, and residents to the city—is threatened. The place identity created by the fabric of the city, including the historic architecture and infrastructure, is certainly being eroded by the dysfunctional local government. The negative perceptions and experiences are detracting from the mise-en-scène that is such a vital component of the economic ecosystem (Fig. 2).

The lack of communication and cooperation between stakeholders in the municipality will be a huge impediment to the successful implementation of any LED strategy. Again and again, civic culture and cooperation have been highlighted as key issues within failed LED strategies and implementation. This is an element that needs sincere and sustained attention. The local municipality needs to learn to communicate with stakeholders and foster transparency, trust, and cooperation in both directions. In addition, this research has shown that within the Tourism Scene there is a need for alignment of purpose and vision. Stakeholders could not agree on the nature of the tourism product, and this makes marketing, planning, and expansion difficult. The municipality needs to bring stakeholders together for this purpose and they could co-opt Makana Tourism and their links with stakeholders to do this. The Education Scene and its prominence within the economy is also something left
unacknowledged within the LED component of the most recent IDP. This research has revealed this scene to bring money into the town, create direct employment and have clear snowballing effect within the rest of the economy. Students and their parents have significant buying power and this needs to be acknowledged in order to be fully exploited.

There is a need to include the economically marginalised communities and peripheral spaces of the city within the existing scenes. Stark geographies of exclusion and inclusion have been revealed within exploration of their nature. There are certainly strategies one could implement to expand participation in the tourism industry while strengthening it and diversifying offerings. A strategy identified within the IDP for expanding the impact of the tourism market is using the clay deposits found locally to produce ‘crafts’ that could be sold to tourists (Makana Local Municipality, 2021). This is perhaps too narrow a strategy to bring about impactful LED. Other employment opportunities and large-scale economic activities need to be sought to create widespread employment. This would fulfil two important requirements for LED: inclusivity in and robustness of the economy. The 2021–2022 IDP has quite a thorough SWAT analysis of the township economy that could inform implementation strategies. Research into the less prominent economic activities could indicate where there is room for expansion or development of an embryotic scene. For instance, larger scale employment could best be generated through the revival of pottery and ceramic manufacturing or through the expansion of the small agro-processing industry. Whatever the strategy, it will be necessary to harness the scenes of the city in a way that includes permanent residents and the majority of citizens and consumers. By nature, the two dominant scenes have been shown to be directed towards the consumption patterns of an elite group of largely temporary migrants. Tenuous relationships between producers and consumers, migrants and permanent residents, and low income and wealthy communities, therefore, are brought into existence. A more robust economy may, in fact, cater to the needs, tastes and consumption patterns of the local consumer majority as well as providing economic inclusion through the provision of broad-based employment opportunities. What is also essential, however, is that these economic activities do not create contestations with existing scenes. A balance will need to be struck and a thorough understanding of the city’s scenes, their components and dynamics will be essential to this. Place-making and identity, for example, is vulnerable to those who do not understand their value.

The use of the urban scenes framework and the conceptual model created through this research (Fig. 2) has contributed much to the situation analysis in which appropriate and contextualised LED strategies can be built. The framework has been shown to explore the local economic context beyond a simple understanding of economic facts, figures, and a list of existing activities. It does the important job of including place within this context—the urban features and cityscapes that contribute to the economy. It also reveals the community dynamics—who is included and excluded within specific parts of the economy. It is worth noting that the two dominant scenes within the city are largely exclusionary of the majority of citizens and consumers in the space. This is particularly important in a city and a country of stark contrasts and inequalities, often spatial in form. In addition, scenes illustrate
the clustering of businesses within them—the way in which economic activities support and sustain each other within an economic milieu embedded in place. Most important of all, the framework has been shown to bring these elements together for the development of a holistic understanding of the local economic context—its strengths and weaknesses. It is for these reasons that this research recommends that the urban scenes framework be utilised in conducting a situation analysis forming the foundation of LED strategies. Certainly, this perspective could assist the local municipality and others in fulfilling their strategic objectives for LED. It is hoped that this research can inform the planning of the municipality as they engage in the formulation of updated sectorial plans. Likewise, urban scenes have been shown to be a useful framework for research in South Africa by both this paper and the research in Prince Albert by Toerien (2012). Future research could use the framework in exploring the economy of various urban settings within the country. The existing studies focus on a small town and a small city, and the framework could be applied to other localities within the urban hierarchy.

In addition to these suggestions, future research could further our understanding of Makhanda’s tourism and education industries. This research has touched on a city branding exercise in the form of the Creative city concept—the successes and failures of this project need to be evaluated. The present research found some tensions in the adoption of the brand as well as questions relating to its sustainability. This would make an interesting case study in terms of place-making and place-branding, and the strategy could perhaps be evaluated through an urban scenes framework. In addition to this, the synergy between the education and tourism scenes in the form of Edutourism could be explored further. This research identified the synergy, but further exploration of the nature of edutourism in the city and its contribution to the local economy would be useful in understanding its true impact and the way it’s positive contributions to the local economy could be sustained and fostered.

Declarations

Ethical Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Conflict of Interest Author A declares that she has no conflict of interest. Author B declares that she has no conflict of interest. Author C declares that she has no conflict of interest.

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