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Cultural Infrastructure as Comparative Urban Metrics: A Scoring Framework for Indian Context Inspired by the Global Cultural Planning Models

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Abstract

Culture is increasingly acknowledged as a key determinant of urban vitality, identity, and social well-being. Yet, in India and much of the Global South, culture remains marginal within formal planning frameworks, in contrast with global examples where culture is treated as measurable infrastructure. This study develops a Cultural Scoring Framework designed to systematically evaluate and compare cultural infrastructure across Indian cities. The framework draws directly from case studies of established international models—including London’s Cultural Infrastructure Plan, the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor, and UNESCO’s Culture 2030 Indicators etc. The research aims to create a comparative metrics system capable of capturing both cultural diversity and disparities across cities. It asks: How can cultural infrastructure be quantitatively assessed and integrated into Indian urban planning systems to enhance livability, equity, and cultural continuity? To address this, the methodology follows a four-step process. First, cultural indicators relevant to Indian cities—spanning accessibility, diversity, heritage property, governance, and participation—are identified and contextually interpreted. Second, these are grouped into thematic sub-indices representing key dimensions of cultural vitality. Third, weightages are assigned using the Analytic Hierarchy Process to ensure evidence-based prioritization of indicators. Finally, a two-tier scoring structure is developed: indicator-level scores and an aggregated corporation-level Cultural Infrastructure Score. Applied to the Kolkata Metropolitan Area, the model highlights pronounced disparities between core and peripheral municipalities. Designed as a comparative metric for data-limited urban regions, the Cultural Scoring Framework offers a replicable approach to embedding culture within planning and policy for socially vibrant cities.

Keywords: Cultural Indicators, Culture Led Development, Cultural Metrics, Urban Vitality, Cultural Property Management, Urban Governance, Creative Economy