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# Learning From Communities' Involvement in the Management of Parks: The Case of Zoo Lake and Thokoza Park, Johannesburg

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# Learning from communities' involvement in the management of parks

The case of Zoo Lake and Thokoza Park, Johannesburg

**Sizakele C. Hadebe**

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## Abstract

Today officials within Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo face the daunting challenge of delivering high quality public spaces that have meanings that are stable enough to accommodate the cultural diversity and social polarisation that are inherent in contemporary Johannesburg. This report examines a recent trend towards joint management of public spaces, where responsibilities are shared between the state and communities interested in these spaces along the lines of what Jones (2010) has called the "Friends of the Park" (FOP). It is argued in this report, with reference to Don Mitchell's (1995) work with People's Park in San Diego, that instances where a particular public space is perceived to be in decline are a reflection of contradictions within that public space's socio-cultural dimension where the introduction of new activities or a new kind of user into the space conflicts with the commonly held meaning of the space. Such a space would thus be characterised by a crisis of meaning.

Although the meaning of public space is contested, there is a tendency over time to move towards a stability of meaning, referred to in this report as *consensus*. While it usually resolves the crisis of meaning, this consensus does not necessarily mean a shift towards justice or towards an equitable end (Castells, 2003). Without making any value judgements on the end result, by studying FOPs' efforts to engage with the management of parks, this research essentially seeks to understand how actors (members of the community, employees of the state, political activists and others) work towards this kind of consensus.

It is noted in this research that an FOP approach risks romanticising participation by thinking of the transition from invented spaces to invited spaces as being organic, natural and perhaps even inevitable; and thereby overlooking the fact that invented spaces today exist in the context of deliberate efforts by planners to mobilise communities for the purpose of absorbing them into the formal planning structure. In the context of neoliberalism it could be said then that such an approach to park management might allow governments to dump their responsibilities on the communities they are meant to serve.

# Chapter 1:

# Introduction

## 1.1. Background

This research hopes to explore the challenges involved in managing public open spaces and parks through participatory processes, from a South African perspective – a perhaps particularly challenging context given the nature of spatial division and social inequalities persisting in post-apartheid cities. City Parks acknowledge in their Corporate Strategic Plan (2013) that there is a need for more active participation by citizens and it is shifting towards the promotion of active community participation in maintaining and looking after City assets which includes parks. This is happening in a context where there have already been a number of instances where communities across the city have stood up against the City's conventional local development processes, objecting against official proposals, negotiating with the state and even using the courts to assert their opposition (for instance, see Benit-Gbaffou's (2011:2) account of "the seventeen houses" in the inner city of Johannesburg). Certain communities have already, for a variety of reasons, mobilised community members around the issue of park management. This report looks at one type of mobilization in particular, which the City has dubbed the "Friends of the Park" (FOP). These are voluntary associations of citizens who (with or without finance or other assistance from the state) come together to formulate objectives and strategies for addressing concerns that they have about the parks with which they are involved. The report is interested in the reasons for this mobilization, the kinds of objectives that communities are attempting to pursue, the challenges in community management of parks, and the extent to which communities cooperate with the state or members of the public sector in pursuit of these objectives.

In South Africa there is limited literature about community involvement in the management of public urban parks. Participation has nonetheless been employed by the post-apartheid state as a strategy for broader planning processes (such as the integrated development plan and the Growth and Development Strategy (GDS 2040)). Participation may be the way to go with park management as well. Yet the suitability of public participation with regards to the management of parks (and in fact what is meant by participation in this regard) remains relatively unexplored within the South African context. It is also not well documented either at international level – with limited academic literature or even 'best practice' type of recommendations. This research report seeks to contribute to bridging this gap in the literature.

## 1.2. Research focus

The research examines FOPs in their efforts to manage parks. It studies the objectives of the FOPs and how these influence each FOP's involvement with the management of public space. The research observes the internal processes of the FOPs as they formulate strategies for achieving their objectives. It investigates how parks (as public spaces) fit into these internal processes. The research also investigates the role played by external stakeholders (namely the state, the private sector and the community at large, as well as the physical park) in informing the nature and behaviour of FOPs.

The research centres on the following two interests. Firstly, it is interested in the extent to which the FOPs in question are actually involved with the management of the parks with which they are involved. This direct involvement in the management of parks distinguishes FOPs from other types of neighbourhood associations or other types of civil society organisations. They are not merely a group who have organised around a common concern; their concern (in part at least) is the park and how it is

managed. This is a critical distinction in terms of research design, as will be explained in the section below on "the selection of the case studies".

Secondly, the research is interested in the role of FOPs as facilitators of interaction. This is an important role because the management of parks is quite fragmented, even within city parks. In this regard the research is interested in the extent to which FOPs facilitate interactions. It also is interested in the kinds of stakeholders involved in these interactions. In terms of interactions between those who are members of the FOP, the research is interested in the internal processes that govern the making of decisions and management of conflict within the organisation. Where the FOP enables interaction between park users and external stakeholders (such as the state, the community, the private sector and the physical park itself), the research is interested in the characteristics, institutional arrangements, networks or connections and specialist knowledge that enable each FOP to facilitate these interactions. In cases where the FOP facilitates interaction between external stakeholders, the research is particularly keen to note how the FOP facilitates interactions with the physical park.

## 1.3. Problem statement

City Parks has a relatively bad reputation as a state agency managing public open spaces

A number of challenges in park creation (rebalancing the city) and park management: huge challenges in an unequal city, limited resources.

There is a need and a growing (political) will to define a new approach for the management of public parks in Johannesburg as manifested in strategic documents (City Parks Corporate Strategic Plan 2013)

City Parks is interested in learning lessons from the experiences of those communities or groups that have organised themselves around the issue of park management, in order for City Parks to better institutionalise forms of participatory management structures.

Currently, there is limited literature, models or documented and sustained experience of such forms of management.

There are a number of parks in JHB where communities have set up resident's management structures – their history and practice is yet to be documented

## 1.4. Selection of case studies

The extent to which FOPs are involved in the management of parks is a critical distinction in terms of research design and in terms of the selection of the case studies. This is because FOPs, like most other civil society groups, are likely to involve many elements that are mostly unrelated to the parks that they are involved with. It is quite probable, for instance, that a given neighbourhood association with certain objectives (such as preserving property prices perhaps) might have a park within the vicinity within which it operates. However the existence of the park on its own is not enough to make the neighbourhood association a viable case study as a potential FOP.

This research asserts that the key determining factors are that the association must have certain objectives for the park or that the association must have strategies that involve the park. This would also mean then that instances where a given association has problems with a park but is unable to suggest any solutions are also not admissible as potential case studies because the association in question does not have clear objectives for the park and they do not have any strategies that address their concerns regarding the park. There are two problems with such a case, given the research focus of this report as stated earlier. Firstly, it would be difficult to make conclusions about the

effectiveness, success or desirability of the association's internal processes in the absence of objectives. When an association has objectives (or strategies from which objectives may be deduced), internal processes may be assessed against these objectives in order to determine their effectiveness. Secondly, if an association has identified problems but does not yet have objectives or strategies involving the park, then the "FOP" aspect of the case study would be too underdeveloped to allow an effective comparison with the literature and such a comparison is necessary in order for the research report to make a contribution to the existing body of work.

The scarcity of literature on *community involvement in park management* necessitates a rather narrow restriction of possible case studies, in order to align the research findings with the theoretical framework and thus to allow effective analysis and the testing of hypotheses. The key tenets of the theoretical framework are summed up as Model A and Model B, which are presented in Chapter 2 in the literature review and then later used in Chapter 3 as the analytical tool to interpret the research findings.

### 1.4.1. Physical description of the parks

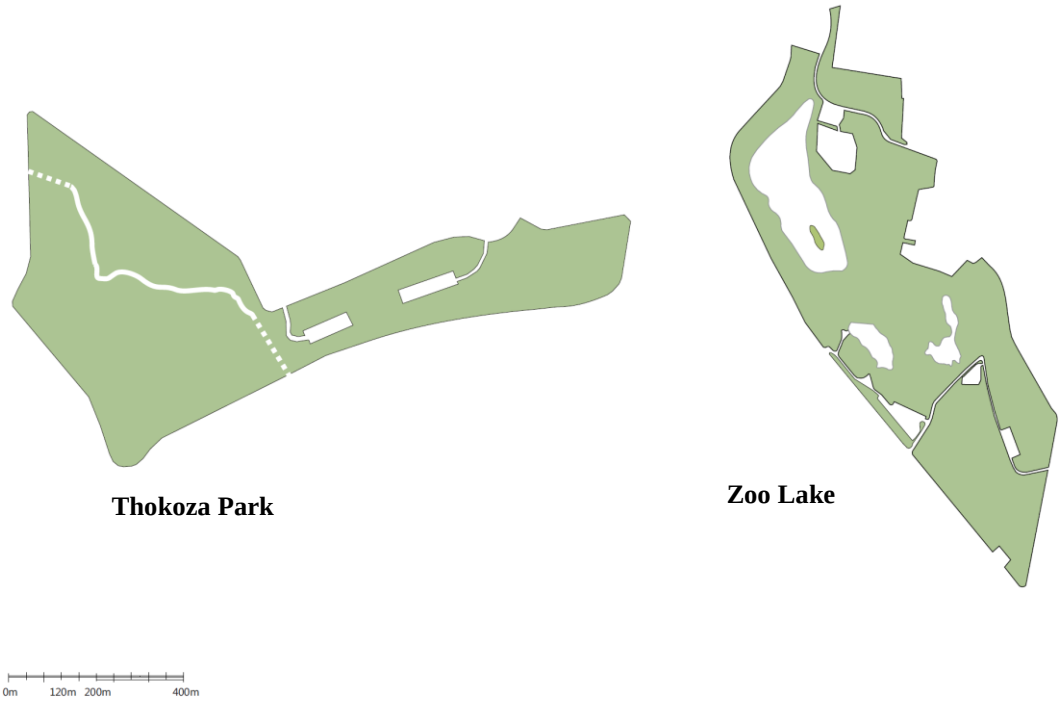



**Figure 1: Comparative sizes of the two selected parks**

### 1.4.2. Location of the two parks: two regional parks with good accessibility, residential surroundings

#### *1.4.2.1. Zoo Lake*

Zoo Lake is located about 5km from the Johannesburg inner city, 12km from Sandton and 3.5km from Rosebank. These three areas are the three largest economic nodes in Johannesburg and the Johannesburg inner city remains the largest in terms of both population and economic activity (although in the last 20 years it has lost a significant share of upmarket residents to the other two nodes which also have higher rates of growth).

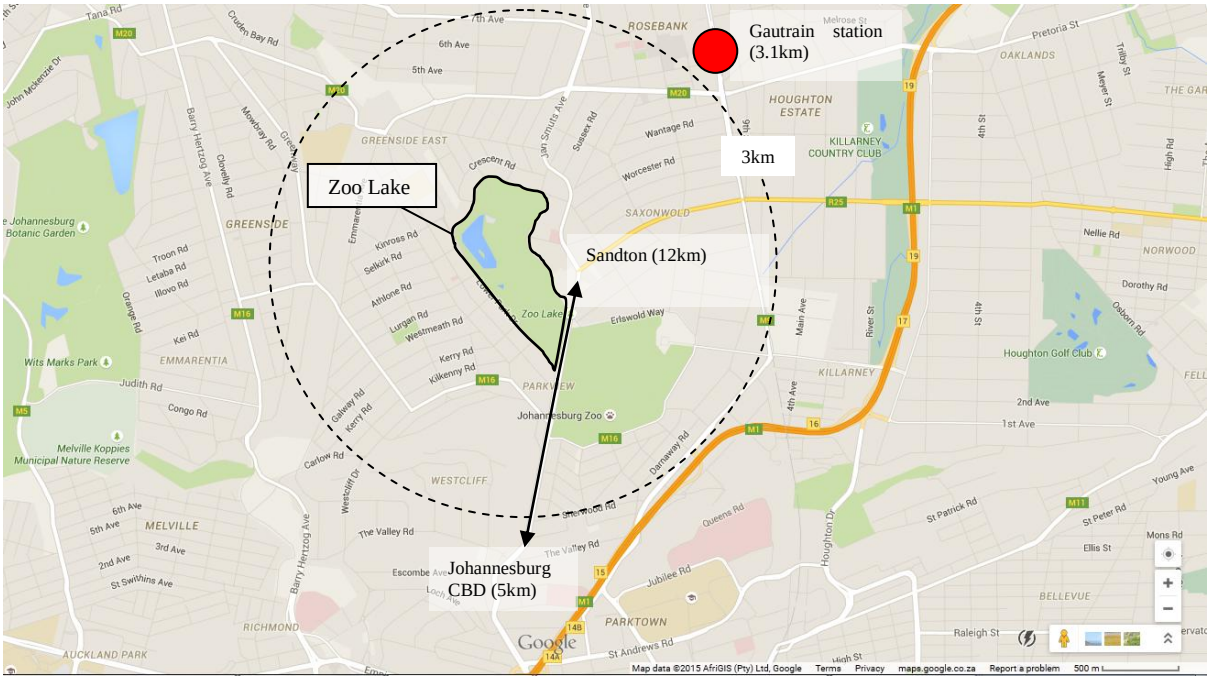



**Figure 2: location of Zoo Lake (after Google, 2015)**

The park is surrounded by the neighbourhoods of Parkview, Parkwood, Saxonwold and Greenside, where the stand sizes of properties range between 1050m$^2$ and 4400m$^2$. Other characteristics of the neighbourhoods that can provide insights into the kind of people who reside in the area are the widespread presence of swimming pools and a relatively high level of car ownership per household. Also noteworthy is the presence of a large number of trees (especially along the streets), which likely indicates that rates have been collected and invested in the area for a significant amount of time. The presence of well-kept public properties (which is what streets are) might also indicate, perhaps, that there is a general concern among those living in the area about the condition of public amenities, although the condition of the streets is by itself not enough to state this conclusively.

Zoo Lake is located along Jan Smuts Avenue and, together with the Johannesburg Zoo, it forms an open space system that straddles this road. Jan Smuts Avenue is a major transport route connecting Sandton, Rosebank and Randburg to the inner city. Although Jan Smuts Ave is a major taxi route, the neighbourhoods around Zoo Lake are characterised by the absence of taxi ranks, which might indicate low taxi patronage among the mostly car-dependent residents of the area, or at least limited attention to this type of users.

*1.4.2.2. Zoo Lake*

The park covers an area of 46.6 hectares and it is classified as a flagship park by City Parks. Flagship parks are maintained more than other types of parks, once every seven days, and they are marketed by City Parks as holding public events, and being available for renting for event organisers.

The park has a large pond that covers roughly 8% of the park and it has many trees, many of which are mature. The pond usually has waste material floating in it but the park grounds are generally always well kept. The park has the following facilities within it: the Moyo's restaurant, Utilities Building, toilets, a basketball court, a soccer pitch, a children's play area, the Bowling Club, the Boat Club and the Zoo Lake Sports Club.

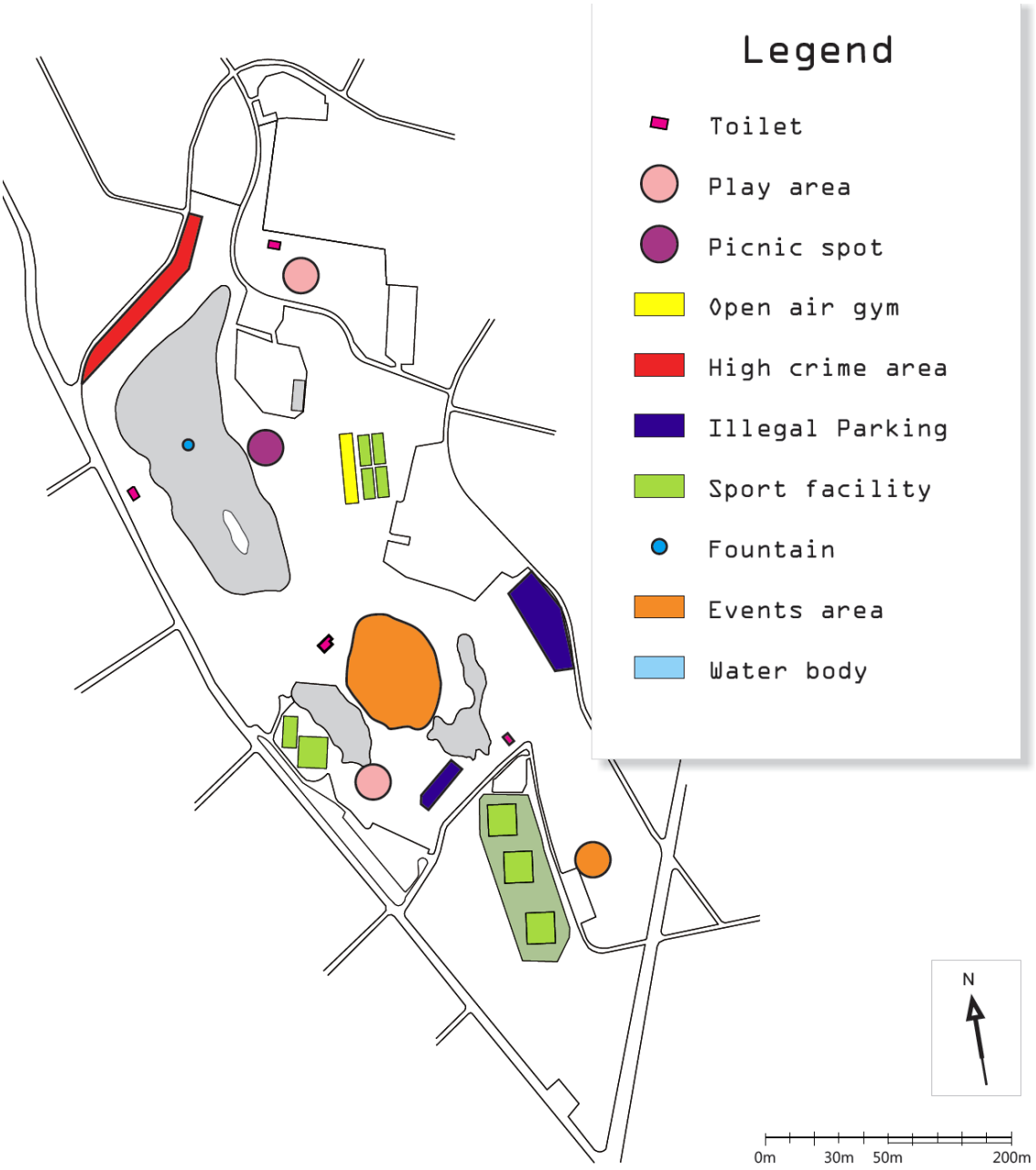



**Figure 3: Facilities and activities in Zoo Lake (image by Author)**

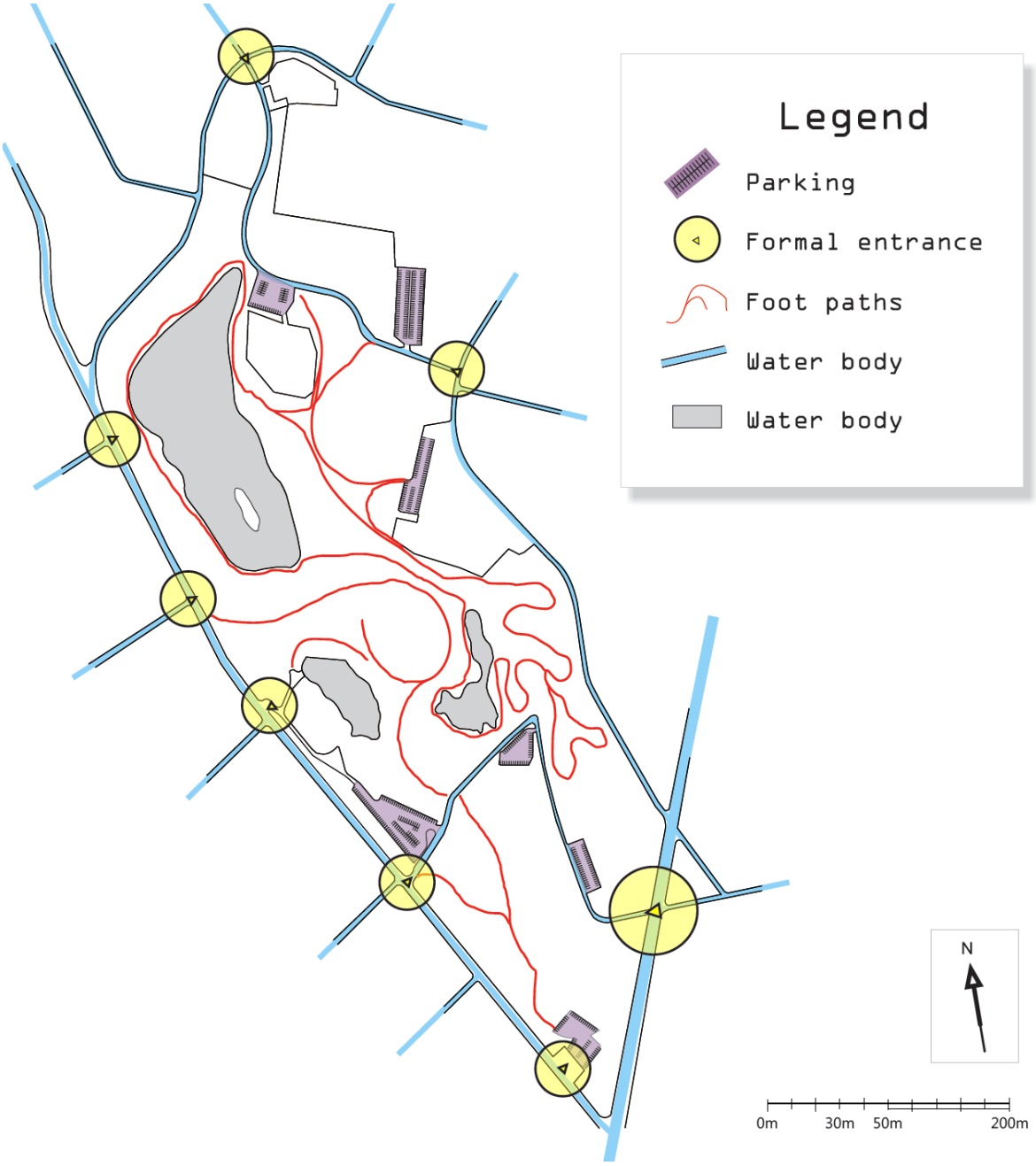



**Figure 4: Entrances and movement in Zoo Lake (image by Author)**




**Figure 5: Buildings within Zoo Lake (image by Author)**



**Figure 6 (a) play area; (b) a view of the park from the bridge; (c) people sitting in the park for a braai**

### 1.4.3. Thokoza Park

Thokoza Park is located about 21km from the Johannesburg inner city. Soweto, the area within which the park is located, is generally characterised as being spatially dislocated from economic development, which is concentrated in the north of Johannesburg. Thokoza Park is 37km from Sandton (the second largest and fastest growing node). Significantly however, Thokoza Park is only 7km away from the Chris Hani node, which is Soweto's biggest node, and only 13km away from South Gate, which is still the biggest node in the south of Johannesburg.




**Figure 7: Location of Thokoza Park (after Google, 2015)**

The park is surrounded by townships, Moroka, Pimville, Dlamini and Jabavu, where the stand sizes of properties range between 500m$^2$ and 1000m$^2$ (the biggest stands being smaller than the smallest stand found in the suburbs around Zoo Lake). The area is characterised by the prevalent presence of back yard rooms, squashed into already small stands. There is a relatively low level of car ownership per household, although high levels of traffic congestion along Klipspruit Valley Rd and along the Golden Highway and the M1 highway indicate a pronounced increase in car ownership in Soweto in general. There is an abundant presence of taxis and other forms of public transport. Beyond the presence of public transport routes, the area is characterised by the presence of public transport infrastructure such as taxi ranks, BRT stations and railway stations.

The area around Thokoza Park is characterised by a severe lack of trees. The size of the properties seems to make it very difficult for residents to build a reasonably sized house and also keep a garden. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of trees in the area are to be found in publicly owned properties such as streets, schools and parks. Thokoza Park, which covers an area of 4.5 hectares, has the highest concentration of trees in the area and (to the extent that trees represent a large and sustained investment in public space) the park may be said to be the largest and best-kept public space across Moroka, Pimville and Jabavu – if not all of Soweto. It is not the only open space however, as Soweto is characterised by large undeveloped spaces and since the park forms part of a large collection of open spaces along the Klipspruit River. However, parks like Thokoza Park and (as well as other parks in Soweto, like Dorothy Nyembe) are unique in the amount of investment that has gone into making them parks rather than just open space. This distinction is also reflected in the use of Thokoza Park by residents.

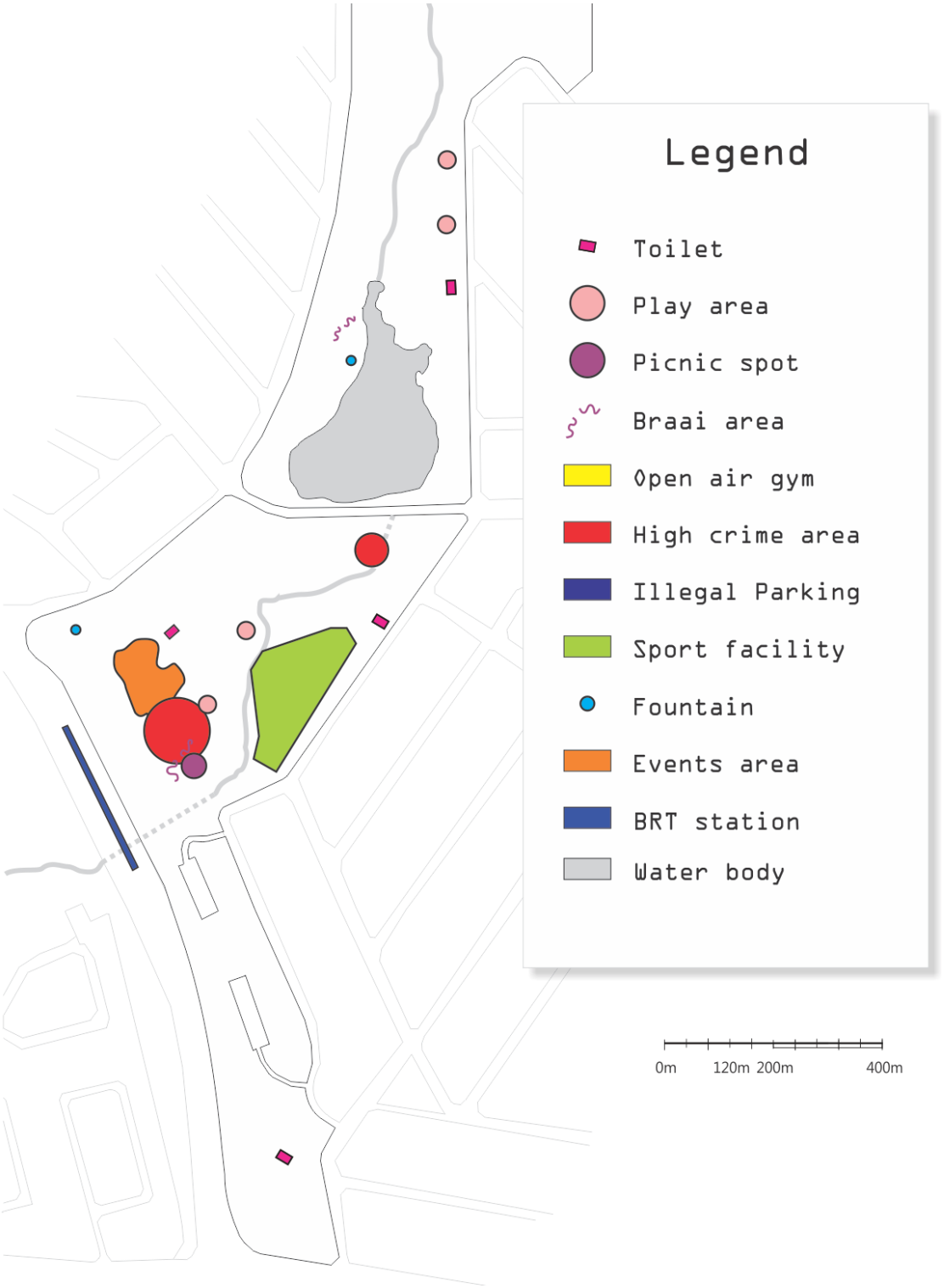



**Figure 8: Facilities and activities in Thokoza Park (image by Author)**

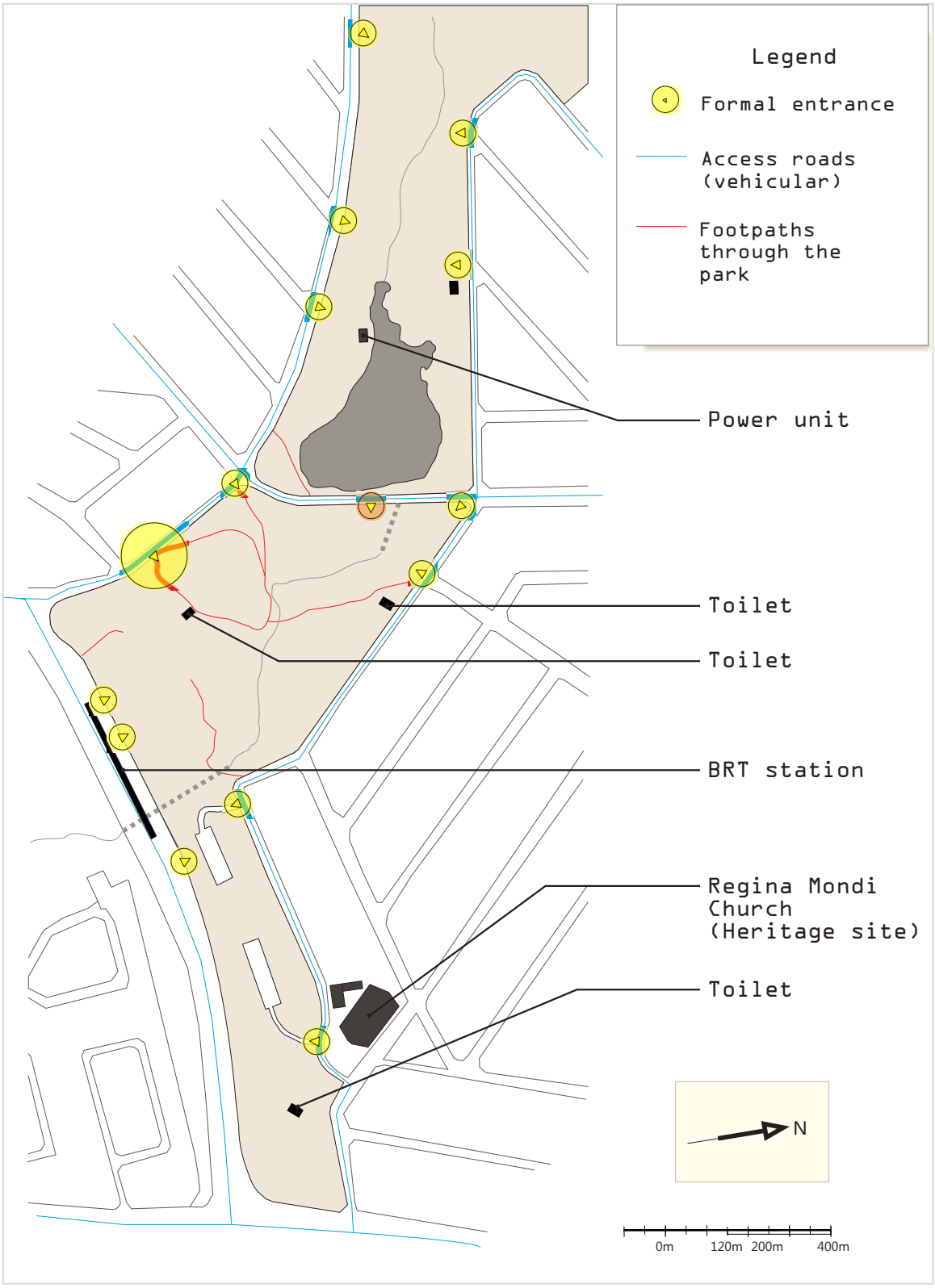



Figure 9: Entrances and movement in Thokoza Park (image by Author)



**Figure 10: Images by Author**

## 1.5. Research question

This report has the following as its research question:

**How do 'Friends of the Park' committees (FOPs) organise themselves in order to participate in park management?**

**A. What is the history of the FOP?**
**B. What are the main issues pertaining to the park, as identified by the FOP; and how has the FOP responded to them?**
**C. How do FOPs interact with other stake holders, particularly with the state?**

## 1.6. Research Methodology

### 1.6.1. Nature of research

Badenhorst (2008) describes two traditions in academic research, the modernist paradigm and the post-modernist paradigm. The former is older, dating as far back as the 1500s. It is characterised by a belief that the researcher must be objective, separating herself from her subject of study. Modernism is also characterised by scientific rationality, which asserts that the truth is out there (outside of the researcher) and that through a process of collecting data, measuring it, making comparisons and reasoning (what is known as scientific method), the researcher can come to better understand this truth. Furthermore the modernist paradigm sees knowledge as being additive, where new research serves to critique existing knowledge and to add to it. Lastly, for the modernist paradigm, rationality is a linear process. That is to say that modernism asserts that there is only one truth and there is only one system of logic for examining and validating the truth (ibid).

On the other hand, post-modernism, which came much later and is a critique of modernism asserts that, rather than being an independent truth that exists out there, reality is constructed as a social phenomenon. Since reality is a subjective product of social interaction the post-modernists refute the notion that researchers must be objective and separate from the subject. They point out that only by being subjective and open to the social processes can a researcher uncover the meanings of the phenomena that she is studying. For the post-modernists it is this meaning which forms the crux of reality and thus research is essentially concerned with uncovering meaning, hence the importance of subjectivity in the research process (ibid).

This research report straddles these two research paradigms, although it does tend to lean more towards the modernist paradigm in certain key instances. The first way in which this research report draws from modernism is in the manner in which the notion of knowledge has been understood. The research is characterised by the simultaneous presence of two forms of knowledge. There is *empirical knowledge* that exists out there in the world. Examples of this kind of knowledge are the physical attributes of the parks, the people in the parks, and the kinds of activities that are taking place in the parks. The researcher explores this form of knowledge by observing it, cataloguing it and quantifying it. For instance, maps have been used to quantify the physical attributes of space and model A has been used to catalogue and compare the kinds of activities found in the parks.

However, there is also a second kind of knowledge, that which is found in the literature. Jones' model (model B) is an example of this form of knowledge and so is the argument presented in chapter 2 regarding the three dimensions of public space. In keeping with the modernist view that knowledge is additive, the research report sees its role as being to contribute to this body of knowledge. There are two instances that serve as an example of this. Firstly, the observations of this research regarding the kinds of activities that take place inside the parks have been catalogued as model A, which thus attempts to add a new contribution to knowledge. Secondly, the research report also presents a

critique of model B based on its application in a different context, which serves to add to the existing body of knowledge by refining it.

The research report does however also have elements of postmodernism in that it recognises the actors within each case study as having an important impact on the experiences of each case study. What is real in each case study (especially as each actor recounts their version of the history of the park and the FOP) depends on the perceptions of those involved. In this sense the research has an understanding of the knowledge as being subjective. However this acceptance of subjectivity is only partial. One major reason for this is that the researcher continues to take an objective stance, remaining separate from the subjective realities of the case studies. In other words she understands that the knowledge that she is extracting from the case studies is being produced through subjective processes but she avoids inserting herself into the process to also participate in the production of this knowledge. Instead the researcher uses analytical tools (the models and comparisons between the cases studies) in order to measure and catalogue the properties of each case study. The research report thus sees its aim as being to catalogue and test the reality of each case study and to make conclusions about it that will contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

For the most part, the research take son a qualitative methodology (aside from certain exercises that emphasise quantifying and comparing). The research relies on respondents descriptions of events and changes and on their interpretations of the meanings of these and the possible reasons behind their occurrences.

## 1.7. Ethical considerations

The research has been undertaken about residents' experience of park management. Residents are often involved in challenging, complex and fragile interactions with the City. The research has been conducted as part of a research project commissioned by the City of Johannesburg Parks and Zoo and therefore has been necessary to pay attention to be constructively critical whilst not harming the stakeholders involved. For this reason, the research has committed to protecting the identity of the participants by keeping them anonymous, if requested.

The research has analyse residents' experience and potential criticisms towards the state in constructive ways, seeking to hold a balanced view, making realistic recommendations based on case studies. Furthermore, the research has strived to maintain accuracy, objectivity, integrity and being appropriately informed.

Finally, whilst the research report is a public document that will commit 'not to harm' the communities involved, a separate and specific report aimed at CJPZ will be developed, communicated and presented to CJPZ.

## 1.8. Chapter outline

### 1.8.1. Chapter 2 – Literature review

The literature review is divided into three sections. It presents a theoretical framework that sums up the key arguments made in the literature on park management, public space, local democracy and participatory politics. The framework forms an analytical lens that will be used later (in chapter 4) to interpret the findings of the research. It is composed of two models, each of which expresses a set of hypotheses based on the literature. Model A suggests the kinds of activities that may be found in a park and it groups these activities into four categories. Model B, on the other hand presents a proposed ideal structure for an FOP and suggests ten principles towards the ideal management of FOPs.

### 1.8.2. Chapter 3 – 'Friends of the Park' committees as facilitators of interaction

This chapter gives a physical description of the two parks and discusses the kinds of activities within each. It profiles the characters. The chapter profiles the people involved with the FOPs (not just the members), looking at their individual characteristics and how these affect their activities with regard to the FOP. The chapter also asks "who is not involved", looking at (a) the extent to which certain people who are likely to be directly impacted by the FOP's activities are not sufficiently involved, perhaps through exclusion; as well as (b) how certain people who have a significant impact on the FOP's activities are, for various reasons, not sufficiently involved.

### 1.8.3. Chapter 4 – Conclusions and recommendations

This report recognises the state as playing a key role as a moderator of meaning in public space. This is because of the state's monopoly on authority: because the state has authority to determine the form and content of public spaces; and because the state can regulate and even prohibit activities from public space. This research suggests that the role of the state must be to use its monopoly on authority in a manner that: (1) recognises communities' attachments to spaces; and (2) understands the nature of FOPs and the process of their development. The aim of the state should be: to enhance people's commitment to the management of public spaces in their neighbourhoods; and to empower them to manage these spaces by making FOPs effective and well-resourced vehicles for facilitating citizen engagement. To this end, the research has identified four key principles: *leadership*, *responsiveness*, *incentives* and *proactivity*.

# 2. Chapter 2:

# Literature review and formulation of conceptual framework

## 2.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the notion that public spaces possess three dimensions, which are the physical, the legal and the socio-cultural. Of these the socio-cultural is of particular significance as it is the main informant of the meaning that is inherent in a public space and the attachment that those who use the space develop for it. It is also, however more neglected than the other two dimensions when it comes to theories of public participation in planning. It is argued in this report, with reference to Don Mitchell's work with People's Park in San Diego, that instances where a particular public space is perceived to be in decline are a reflection of contradictions within that public space's socio-cultural dimension. It is argued in this chapter that such a space would be characterised by a crisis of meaning.

The first section of the literature discusses the main debates around concepts such as public space, the management of parks and the dynamics of community participation in urban governance. Notable themes discussed in this section include Mitchell's exploration of the meaning of public space and the exclusion of certain groups from these spaces. The hypotheses and expectations derived from this section of the literature is expressed as a model that forms part of the theoretical framework, Model A. In the model activities are categorised according to who initiates the activities. The first three activities in the model tend to be in line with the meaning of the space. The fourth kind of activity, referred to here as transcendent activities, tends to lie outside of this meaning and it is the most salient symptom of the crisis of meaning that underlies the decline of public spaces.

The second section of the literature review discusses the model presented by Jones (2010) in his discussion of the experiences of two English FOPs and their interactions with their respective local councils. Jones' model is referred to as Model B. Ideally, their involvement within an FOP should transform the way the communities see themselves, their role in the park management process and their relationship to other stakeholders. Communities should see the state as just one of many resources that they can use to solve park issues, a state that Jones recognises as "self-leadership" (Jones, 2010: 316). The role of the state officials thus is to facilitate the community's movement towards self-leadership.

The chapter concludes by commenting on the normative nature of the literature and the normative nature of the models proposed therein. Given this, the chapter concludes that the suitability of model B is contextual and subjective. It is subject to the values and objectives of the actors involved in each case study. In particular, it is noted that the desirability of model B is premised on the assumption that the state is committed to participatory engagements with communities and that parks are seen as more than physical products but as opportunities to embark on reciprocal commitments with communities. In other words, the primary goal from the onset is not to create a park but rather to create interactions between the state and the community. Such an outlook is by no means universal among governments.

## 2.2. The three dimensions of public space

Perhaps an appropriate point of departure in a discussion of public space is to define what the term public space means.

Madanipour (1996) argues that the primary question is the definition of space itself, pointing out that although the concept of space tends to be taken as given in everyday life and everyday conversations, for scholars the notion of space has often been dealt with from two divergent schools of thought: the phenomenological and the social. Certain scholars have placed emphasis on the physical attributes of space, seeing space as a finite entity that can be measured and seeing it as having real properties that can be experienced and tested. Other scholars emphasize the extent to which the properties of space are produced as a product of social interaction. Taking the middle ground on the matter, Madanipour argues that space does in fact have physical properties but he adds that the human experience of these properties of space can alter the space in fundamental ways, even if it does so only in the minds of the people experiencing the space. Madanipour argues that people's experience of space creates meaning and that this transforms the space into a place. It is possible to conclude thus that a place is a space with meaning (Madanipour, 1996; and Carmona et al, 2003).

Public places, such as parks, have a very particular meaning. They fall within the category of space known as the public realm. Three kinds of properties or qualities characterise the public realm. Carmona et al (2003) refer to these as the *dimensions* of the public realm. The three dimensions are: the *physical* qualities of space, the *legal* conditions attached to the space, and the *socio-cultural* context within which the space exists.

### 2.2.1. The physical dimension

The first dimension of the public realm is concerned with physical conditions or qualities that are found in most functional public spaces.

Firstly, the public realm is often characterised by the condition of *externality*, being outside. Hence Carmona et al (2003) define the public realm as everything outside of one's window. This condition of externality is in contrast to the private realm, which tends to be inside. Secondly and closely linked to externality, the public realm is also characterised by the condition of *being between*. It is often found between people's homes, between properties, between places. Since the public realm is usually exterior space, one does not usually walk into another place (someone else's home, for instance) in order to access the public realm. The physical property of existing between is linked to the sense of commonality (what Koch and Latham (2013) call collective inhabiting) that also characterises public space. Finally, the public realm is also characterised by the physical quality of *proximity*. There are many open spaces, many of which are publicly owned and publically accessible on the furthest outskirts of cities but they tend to be viewed as being too far outside to be public spaces.

### 2.2.2. The legal dimension

In addition to the physical attributes of space, the public realm is also characterised by certain legal conditions that facilitate its use as a public space. Typically the public realm is *publicly owned*. In a few other instances (as was the case in Ebenezer Howard's Garden City (Eden, 1947)) it may be held in trust by a board of trustees who's duty is to make the space available for public enjoyment. The second legal attribute of the public realm is that *access* to it is granted to members of the public.

### 2.2.3. The socio-cultural dimension

Theorists such as Castells (2003) and Amin (2006) have stressed the extent to which cities are context specific historical entities, arguing that their physical and legal characteristics are subject to each city's historical context. Amin asserts that a city is anything that a given society decides that it should be. What this means is that the physical characteristics of the public realm, such as the attribute of being external, are subject to the socio-cultural practices of the society within which the space exists. One immediate example of this reinterpretation of externality can be found when one considers the difference between a public space set in the industrial cities of 18$^{th}$ century Europe in comparison with a public space set in contemporary suburbia. One considers then what externality means in each case. For the 18$^{th}$ century city externality of public space is more immediate and more pronounced

because of the compact nature of the urban fabric around the space. In contemporary suburbia however, because each house is set within a private garden (the yard), the external quality of public space is less pronounced. The same logic may be applied to the legal properties of space. Concepts such as "the public" are subject to their socio-cultural context. The public in the ancient democracies of Greek cities (where women and slaves did not vote) would have been defined very differently from what is meant by the word public today.

For Mitchell (1995) public spaces (since they are primarily a matter of social perception) are generally characterised by a struggle between visions. In the first vision, public spaces in many capitalist cities have come to be seen as recreational places. At a superficial level this simply means aesthetically pleasing spaces to look onto, civic elements where tourists come to take pictures, or spaces where special events take place (possibly large spectacles such as concerts). On the other hand however this title of recreational space also denotes an understanding of separateness, where certain spaces are for private use (homes), others are for working and production (offices and factories) while others are for social recreation, being out in public and behaving in very specific ways that are different from when one is at home or at work. Mitchell (1995) argues that one of the major sources of turmoil around public spaces occurs when the behaviour of those using public space crosses the threshold between the three realms identified above. He points out that the issue in his study area (People's Park in San Francisco, CA.) was that homeless people also needed to use the park but since they did not have a private realm (a home) functions and behaviours that are socially understood as being private were usually conducted in public, which conflicted with other people's understanding of what a public space is supposed to be. Most people might not believe that sleeping, bathing and defecating are things that should be done in public and once these things occur in a public space they would probably be revolted and would no longer consider such a public space to be adequate insofar as their definition of a public space is concerned. Mitchell's (1995) theory can be extended further to apply more specifically to the context of southern cities, where another predominant issue in public spaces is the use of public space as a place of work, as a means to earn a livelihood. In the case of a park being used by informal traders, rather than bringing domestic behaviours and functions into public space, they bring their work into public space. Informal traders use public space as a productive space, which is offensive to those whose definition of public space is separate from commerce or industry.

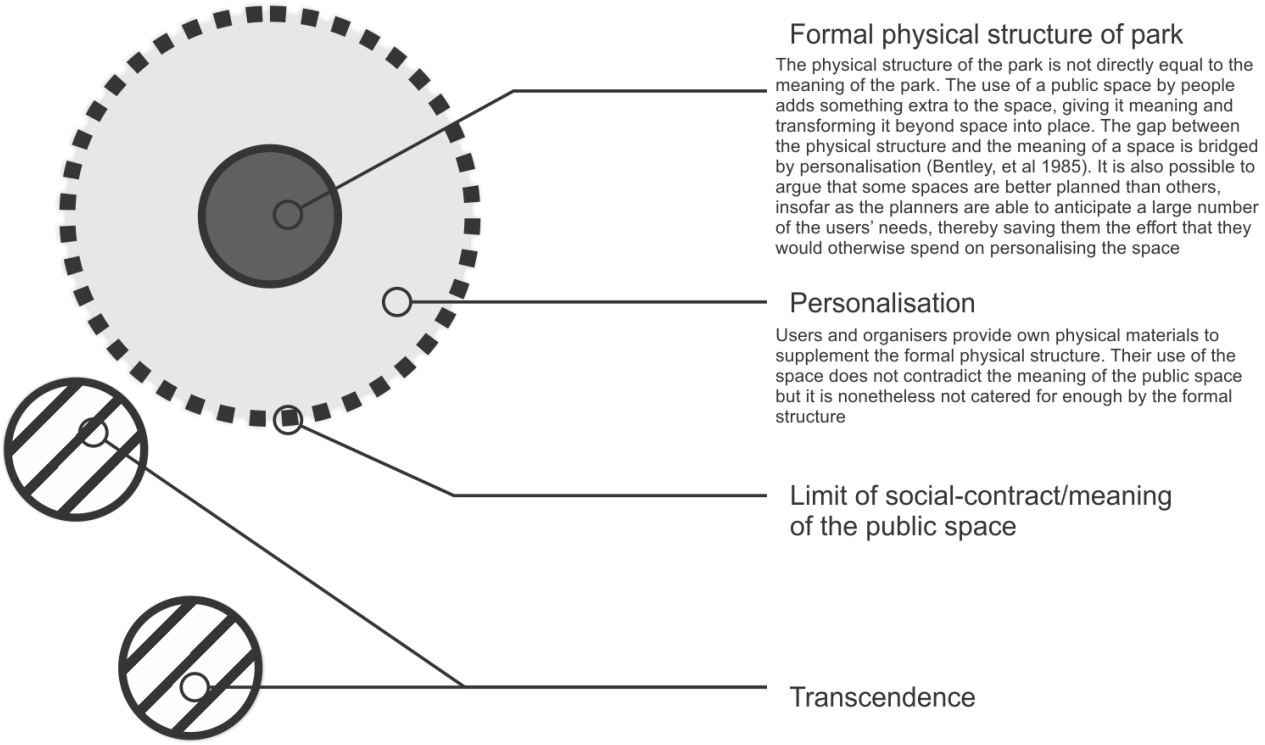



**Figure 11 Graphic summary of the interaction between the socio-cultural dimension and the physical dimension (between the meaning of public space and activities that occur within a public space)**

### 2.2.4. The implications of the socio-cultural dimension for the research

Mitchell (1995) argues that the definition of public spaces (their meanings, the social contract that governs behaviour within them) must be open to the needs of the lowest common denominator within society, meaning the most marginalised groups and individuals. However other scholars have also argued that being "public" means being more than the lowest common denominator (Koch and Latham, 2013). That being said however the research report is not interested in taking sides on this debate. Instead it seeks to highlight the valuable insight at the heart of Mitchell's diagnosis of the ills of public spaces. That is the fact that public spaces are characterized by a conflict between visions. It is argued in this report that this notion of public spaces as subjective phenomena is supported in the work of Madanipour (1996), Carmona (2003) and Castells (2003) who argue that, aside from being a product of physical interventions and legal conditions of ownership and use, public spaces are also products of socio-cultural processes.

This area of overlap between Don Mitchell's work with that of Madanipour, Carmona and Castells is referred to in this report as the socio-cultural dimension of public space. It is argued here that the physical and legal dimensions of public spaces differ across contexts, across cultures and across historical periods (Amin, 1998). What remains constant across contexts however is the fact that a public space is what the people of a particular society believe it to be. Thus when one critically considers what a public space is, it is first and foremost a socio-cultural phenomenon. By this rationale then, the malls and shopping centres of Johannesburg may very well be public spaces. Even though they are internal spaces and even though they are privately owned, they qualify as public spaces insofar as the society living in Johannesburg believes that they are public spaces and to the extent that this society ascribes certain behaviour to these spaces that reflects their belief that malls are public space. This report argues that, as is the case with Mitchell's (1995) study of the practices of homeless people in parks, when the way that other people conduct themselves in the mall conflicts with one's own expectation of what a public space should be then the mall would cease to be adequate as a public space. The report stresses to make the point here that this is not only true of poor people's

behaviour in public space (and this is perhaps why it is advisable not to focus too heavily on Mitchell's assertion regarding the rights of the homeless to public parks). To use the example of Johannesburg's malls once more, if the elite who own these malls begin to pursue extremely exclusive practices in their management of these properties then it will offend many people's expectations of what a public space ought to be and as a result, just like Mitchell's parks, these spaces would also fall into turmoil, wherein the behaviour of others (in this case the elite) is seen to be in contravention of the social contract that governs the use of public spaces. Evidence in support of this may be found in the work of Martin Murray (2004; 2013), who writes critically about the culture of malls being used as substitutes for public spaces in Johannesburg.

It could also be true that what changes in order to create the conflict of visions (or meanings) is not other people's behaviour but rather one's own vision, one's own expectations of what a public space should be. When one becomes exposed to new possibilities for the use and governance of public spaces (perhaps through professional training or through exposure to international systems of governance), this tends to inform one's expectations regarding the spaces that they experience within their own environment or (in the case of city officials and planning professionals) it can affect the way that they see the spaces that they are responsible for. It could be argued that this is the case for Murray's understanding of public space in Johannesburg for example: that he has become so aware of how other societies perceive public space that he has difficulty accepting the mall as a "normal" public space for the people of Johannesburg.

The reason why this research report has introduced the dimensions of public space as part of the theoretical framework is to demonstrate that when city governments, planners, urban designers, architects and even FOPs engage in the creation and management of public space they are necessarily involved with all three dimensions. It is often readily recognised that there is usually a physical intervention involved when it comes to public space and that there are always legal circumstances governing the creation, management and use of the space. Further to this however – and most importantly – those involved with public space are also involved with the socio-cultural forces by which such spaces are defined. They could be involved with influencing the process by which society develops a meaning for a particular space, by managing how people experience the space (Koch and Latham, 2013), or they could also, on the other hand, impose their own expectations of what the ideal public space ought to be. The meaning of space is shaped through conflict and every actor involved with public space is capable of either influencing this meaning or imposing their own meaning, depending on the power that they have (Castells, 2003).

## 2.3. Public space as a function of use (Model A)

The preceding section of this chapter has argued that public spaces such as parks consist of three dimensions: the physical, legal and the socio-cultural. When city governments, urban planners, urban designers or even FOPs become involved in the making and management of a public space they essentially undertake the task of creating, arranging and maintaining the three dimensions of public space.

However, as Jane Jacobs (1960) points out, the public realm is not merely a sum of these three dimensions, although it must be emphasised that they are in fact essential component parts. What gives the public realm its character is its use by people and (to be more specific) it is the agency that people can exercise in their use of the space. It is not enough for places to be planned for people but the people must ultimately choose to use the places (Carmona et al, 2003). For Jacobs what distinguishes places from other human creations such as art or industrial products is the fact that they are only made complete once they are occupied and used by people. Without people, the most crucial aspect of the public realm (the socio-cultural dimension and, in particular, the meaning inherent in space) remains absent and the space remains nothing more than a manicured wilderness (Jacobs, 1960).

However, the challenge for those involved in the making and management of public space is that, while they can plan places for people, the people themselves cannot be planned. While planners can make provisions for the activities that people might undertake in space, they cannot in fact plan these activities. It is the people who ultimately decide what activities occur when. This means, given the infinity of human needs and their creativity in devising activities to fulfil these needs and also given the limited capacity of planners to anticipate these needs, there is almost always a gap that exists between the kind of physical environment that the plan can deliver and the kinds of activities that people end up doing in a space (Lynch and Hack, 1985). It is possible to arrange the choices that people can make on how to use public space into four categories.

### 2.3.1. Category 1: Formally planned activities

The activities of those involved with the making and management of public spaces are often concerned with this first category of uses. This category is also the traditional focus of the literature on urban design, landscape architecture and site planning (Carmona et al, 2003; Bentley et al, 1985; Lynch and Hack, 1985). Here the planner pre-empts the kinds of activities that might take place in a given space and makes provision for them in the physical environment.

Activities in the first category (the activities for which the space is planned), often serve as a springboard for all other uses of that space. Uses that involve activities in the other categories often build on what is set in place by the planner. Crucially, it is with regard to the first category of activities that the most important questions about the public space are asked, answered and translated into the physical environment. That is to say, it is the planners (whether they are professionals working in service of the state or if they are regular members of an FOP) who ask "what is a public space", "what are acceptable ways to use a public space", what is the socio-cultural context of this particular public space". Sometimes the process of asking and addressing these questions may be less articulate and it may even be done unwittingly but it is invariably part of every process of creating public space (Lynch and Hack, 1985) and it is translated into the physical environment.

What this means is that planners operate under a particular socio-cultural paradigm that governs their understanding of the activities that happen within public space. This paradigm prioritises activities in category 1. If an activity fits neatly within this paradigm it can be classified as a category 1 activity, a *Formally-planned* activity. In which case everything that the user needs in order to partake in that activity has already been provided for by the plan. However it is also possible that certain activities may not adequately provided for, even though they are also aligned with the planner's socio-cultural paradigm. In this case the user may provide his own materials or an organiser might provide materials for a group of users in order to supplement the materials of the park and thus allow the users to partake in the activity. Such cases are classified as categories 2 and 3 (*User-planned* and *Organiser-planned*). However it is also possible for a user to contradict the planner's socio-cultural paradigm. Such activities, those that transcend the conception of space inherent in the plan, are classified as *Transcendent* activities and they constitute the fourth category.

### 2.3.2. Category 2: User-planned activities

The second category of activities consists of collective activities (such as weddings or picnics) that people organise themselves. These activities can vary in size and in the amount of planning that goes into them but they are similar in two regards: they are organised by the people who will carry them out; and they are almost always planned exclusively for those who are invited to attend them and they are not open to the public.

Although a user provides some of the material necessary to use the public space, it is difficult to conceive a situation where the user in question would provide all of the material necessary, since the impetus for the activity is often inherent in the park itself. For instance, a user might have to provide a significant amount of material if they want to undertake a complex activity such as a photo shoot in a

park but this activity would only be feasible if the park already exists in a condition that satisfies some basic level of utility.

### 2.3.3. Category 3: Organiser-planned activities

The third category of uses is comprised of those uses that are planned by an organiser, to be attended by other people, usually at a fee. These are typically large highly publicised events, such as concerts, parades or protests. The motive behind their organisation may vary (it is not always about immediate profit) but the uses in the third category are often similar in that they are created by a person or a discernible group, the organiser, and they are aimed at a certain portion of the public. These events are often characterised by a contradiction due to the fact that they are large and publicised and they aim to attract many members of the public and yet at the same time they are often also selective in granting attendance and they aspire for a certain degree of homogeneity in their definition of the public.

### 2.3.4. Category 4: Transcendent activities

The theoretical basis of this category is the notion that public space is socially generated, that it is about meaning. Of particular importance here is Mitchell's (1995) assertion that there are certain rules of accepted behaviour that govern the creation and maintenance of the meaning of public space; and that when these rules are contravened a public space can fall into turmoil as a result of contestation over its meaning. Activities that fall under the fourth category are thus those activities that fall outside the rules of accepted behaviour. They are activities that challenge the accepted meaning of the public space.

There is a wide scope for variation between activities in this category. They can range from issues of users violating bylaws to deviant behaviour and even criminality; the key determinant being that the activity contravenes a rule about the use of the public space (whether that rule is expressed in bylaws or legislation or if it is simply a social expectation on how one ought to behave). Furthermore, although Model A classifies transcendent activities as a category, it is possible to see how in everyday practice transcendent activities are likely to be found on the fringes of user-planned and organiser-planned activities. For example, when a person uses the park for a picnic (a user-planned activity), drinking alcohol might qualify as a transcendent activity insofar as it violates the bylaws. In another example, when a homeless person sleeps in the park, it is possible to argue that this transcendent activity is also a user-planned activity. In yet another example, it is possible to anticipate how an organiser-planned activity (such as a concert or a protest) can sometimes involve elements of deviant behaviour and criminality.

It should be noted thus that, while it is tempting to focus on exceptionally transcendent activities such as the practices of homeless people and of those who use public space as a means to earn a living, the notion of transcendence is best used as a means of understanding the extent to which the meaning of a particular public space is being contested.

## 2.4. Participation and community involvement in public space management (Model B)

Historically, the formal planning system has been expert-centred. Over several decades, starting in the 1960s, there has been a shift towards participatory approaches (Sandercock, 1997). Participation may be defined as the degree to which people are able to influence public policy towards what they want with regard to their immediate environment or with regard to how public resources should be distributed. There are two broad categories into which participatory approaches may be classified: participation may occur through "invited" or "invented" spaces (Miraftab, 2004). Affected parties may be *invited* into a process that they otherwise would have been excluded from. For instance the COJ's current efforts to better engage communities about how to manage public parks may be

considered such an invitation into the City's planning processes (ibid). On the other hand, affected parties also have the ability to develop their own ability to engage with, interrupt or subvert planning processes that they are otherwise excluded from. It is possible also for such affected parties to even initiate their own process to supplement or replace formal processes. In other words communities can *invent* means of engaging with or participating within processes (ibid), as exemplified by instances where residents take governments to court as a way of challenging and shaping the state's policies.

Although invented spaces offer less direct forms of participation than invited spaces, they are seen as being an effective and natural means for people to organise themselves to formulate and communicate their interests within very complex contexts (Forester et al, 2013). Forester et al's (2013) account of Ric Richardson's facilitation of a participatory planning process in Albuquerque, New Mexico, suggests a sequential or evolutionary link between the direct participation of invented and invited spaces and representational forms of participation. In the case study the community's initial involvement with the planning process was through invented spaces, self-organised associations within which people had come together to discuss common interests. As self-organised associations community members had devised ways to engage with planning authorities on the basis of their interests. However, once they had received the attention of the authorities and were included in the planning process the participatory structure offered by the associations began to take on a representative form, in response to the need to better manage their engagements with city council structures. Ten representatives and ten observers were nominated to engage with the planning authorities on a regular basis as opposed to everyone having a direct (and equal) say (Forester et al, 2013). In Rick Richardson's case study the end goal in terms of participation seems to have been a shift from invented spaces towards an invited space. The community changes its organically developed structure to better fit into the spaces that already exist within the City's planning structure.

Jones (2010) suggests that this trajectory is not necessarily universal and that it is possible for communities to effectively engage with the City using their organic structure. Jones suggests a two-pronged process where both the City and the community play important roles in developing the community's ability to organise itself in response to their own needs rather than having to be shaped by the City according to a standard organogram.

Jones (2010) bases his model on the experiences of two English community organisations, known as Friends of the Park(s) (FOPs), and their interactions with their respective local councils. Jones' model is referred to as Model B. Ideally, their involvement within an FOP should transform the way the communities see themselves, their role in the park management process and their relationship to other stakeholders. Communities should see the state as just one of many resources that they can use to solve park issues, a state that Jones recognises as "self-leadership" (Jones, 2010: 316). The role of the state officials thus is to facilitate the community's movement towards self-leadership. There are five management roles that state officials play in this process: Managing initiation; managing official reliant behaviour; managing official-directed and intra-FOP hostility; managing self-reliant behaviour; and managing potential threats to the process. Jones' model is summed up in the table below

| **Aspect of Managing FOP** | **Community characteristics** | **State characteristics** |
|---|---|---|
| **Key challenges** | - **Motivation**: strong motivation and passion for the park<br>- **Personal characteristics of key people involved**: determination, persistence, self-starter, solution oriented, self-sufficiency, wants to make a difference | - **Hard work & high level of commitment**: FOP management often requires officials to work after hours as well<br>- **Loss of power**: giving power away by listening to community<br>- **Possession of expertise**: "We are the experts. Community |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | - **Time**: have time to do the job (often without pay)<br>- **Skills**: social skills, networking skills, office skills or management skills<br>- **Perception of equal level of commitment from state officials** | should listen to us"<br>- **Lack of training**: officials not trained to be public speakers and consultants<br>- **Temperamental unsuitability**: not knowing beforehand what the job really entails |
| **FOP development process** | | | |
| **Stage 1:** | **Strategic initiation (problem identification stage)** | | - **Internal champion emerges**: charismatic leadership. Detecting unexploited opportunities in present situation, communicating the vision, building trust with the community, demonstrating the means to achieve the vision<br>- **Formulating and selling the strategy**: communicating the vision to the bureaucracy and ultimately to the broader council<br>- **Community pressure groups:** can be initiated by the official or can be a result of issues in the park. The frustration of the community not being listened to by the state<br>- **Accommodating**: officials must go into the FOP with the intention of doing something about the problem |
| **Stage 2:** | **Backward behaviour (problem solving stage)** | **Community behaviour**<br>- Community does not believe council will have the resources to solve the issues<br>- Community expects council to provide all the money and resources<br>- Community believes that they must keep the council on its toes when it comes to park management<br>- Community starts to demand things from the state | **Effective responses by state officials:**<br>- Encourage self-leadership activities<br>- Help FOPs access alternative sources of funding<br>- Assist communities with learning the skills to complete documents<br>- Share information about what other FOP<br>- Manage hostility |
| | **Potential threats to** | - Community may come with attitude that someone is to blame for the state of the park | - State officials can take the back seat and try not to take sides in the dispute |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **process** | - Community members may be negative: finger pointing, complaining and undermining each other inside FOP<br>- Community members might use the FOP meeting to moan rather than problem solving | - State officials can try to combat the situation by encouraging active problem solving. Focus on task oriented activities |
| **Stage 3:** | **Forward behaviour (Solution stage)** | **Communities see the state as just one of many resources that they can use to solve park issues**<br>- They can have a fund under the park but the state will oversee how the money is spent<br>- They can have networks with other entities, police, churches, sports club etc<br>- Get the wider community to be the eyes and ears of the park | **The role of the state officials is to facilitate the movement towards self-leadership**<br>- Increased education of the FOP groups<br>- Pointing the FOP group in the right direction from previous experience<br>- Introduce them to other FOP groups to brainstorm ideas<br>- Inform them on how to fundraise<br>- Mentoring individuals |
| | **Potential threats to process** | - When the FOP groups become more sophisticated they have more meetings than before and the official cannot come to all of the<br>- When the friends groups become attached to the park because of the self-reliance that they start restricting access of certain users | - The issue of availably of officials may be addressed by training junior officials, taking them to meetings, in order that if an official cannot make it to a meeting they can be temporarily replaced by the junior official.<br>- It may be necessary for the community to be advised on the basic laws of public space. |
| **Conclusion** | | **5 forms of management that officials must perform**:<br>- Managing initiation<br>- Managing official reliant behaviour<br>- Managing official-directed and intra-FOP hostility<br>- Managing self-reliant behaviour<br>- Managing potential threats | |

**Table 1: Model B - a summary of Jones' (2010) model of the development process of FOPs**

### 2.4.1. Critical reflections on participatory theories: participation in a neoliberal context

Today there is a more general acceptance of the value of participatory approaches, at least by city officials, although the suitability of such approaches in each case and the form that participation ought to take in each case remains open for debate. Notwithstanding the increased acceptance of

participatory approaches, there is a trend however in the literature to continue to argue for participation along the same line of argument as that made by authors such as Davidoff (1965) at the beginning of the participatory turn in planning theory. This traditional conception of the participatory politics of planning tends to position communities outside the planning system, arguing that communities are excluded and that the planning system, because of its exclusionary processes, actually hampers local democracy (Sandercock, 1997). Earlier advocates for participatory approaches, such as Davidoff (1965), as well as their intellectual descendents thus argued that the planning system should open up and, in essence, that it should create invited spaces within its planning structures where it invites members of the community to become part of the planning process[1] (Sandercock, 1997). In addition to this notion of opening up, a second attribute of the traditional argument for participation is that it sees the state as being well-resourced. That is to say, aside from being excluded from decision-making processes, when communities are not allowed the opportunity to participate, it is said that they also lose out on the opportunity to actually effect changes within their neighbourhoods. However, the reality in many cities today is that city governments struggle to put their own plans into effect as they are under-resourced. Thirdly, the traditional argument for participation seem to understand invented spaces as an exception to the norm when it comes to urban development and urban planning processes. These kinds of community mobilisations are said to have a subversive nature; they are what happens when people have been excluded from the formal planning processes. Yet the trend in Southern cities is often that informality is the norm (Roy, 2005) and people often have to rely on their ability to come together and resolve problems on their own (Simone, 2004). In these cases the state often does not have the capacity to drive the planning process and so most facets of urban life are planned outside of the state. Finally, the traditional view of participation does not seem to take into account the fact that city governments are conscious of their condition of limited capacity, of the shift in political sentiment towards participation, and of the fact that communities are already making efforts to address shortfalls in planning. It could thus be argued that the traditional participatory paradigm is not vigilant enough of the threat that, given that the state is unable to effectively fulfil its responsibilities, it may wish to dump these responsibilities on communities. In other words, because the traditional participatory paradigm emerged in the context of the well-fare state (Sandercock, 1997), where the state handed out resources (including the ability to plan), the threat to communities was understood as that of exclusion from state resources. However, today in the context of neoliberalism, where the state hands out responsibilities, the danger is that communities may be burdened with responsibilities that they do not have the capacity to fulfil: the threat of abandonment or even exploitation by the state (Miraftab, 2004).

## 2.5. Conclusion

The traditional way of thinking about participation tends to think of participation in terms of formal structures and it tends to imply the desirability of shifting from invented spaces towards invited spaces, arguing that formal processes should open up to the efforts of communities. In terms of parks of FOPs, the objective under such a paradigm of participation is for communities to become involved in the making of decisions regarding the creation and upkeep of park facilities, the physical dimension. At another level this paradigm also advocates for communities to become involved with the legal dimensions of public space: the creation of rules about how to use this space (rules such as bylaws) as well as the creation of other rules that govern involvement in the creation and upkeep of public spaces. A foremost example of this second type of rules is the human resource structure within the City of Johannesburg and within City Parks that is dedicated to the task of managing parks. This structure may be said to be a set of rules about who does what. The same is also true of things such as maintenance schedules. The traditional argument for participation recommends the extension of these rules: where members of the public are invited to join the planning structure and they are given titles as well as training. One can argue that training is essentially more rules about what ought to happen in public space and that titles are rules about how people should behave within organisational structures

[1] For Paul Davidoff, the solution was advocacy planning, where agents of the planning system would venture out into communities and acting as a link between the planning structures and the communities

and within processes (Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 2002). While this report does not refute the suitability of such an approach for addressing the practicalities of planning (having the technical skills to make physical changes to space and having strong rules that govern the implementation of decisions), it is noted here that viewing participation in this way neglects the socio-cultural dimension of public space and the continuous form of participation (through personalisation) that users of space engage in through their everyday interactions with spaces, which is what creates the meanings of these spaces.

# 3. Chapter 3:

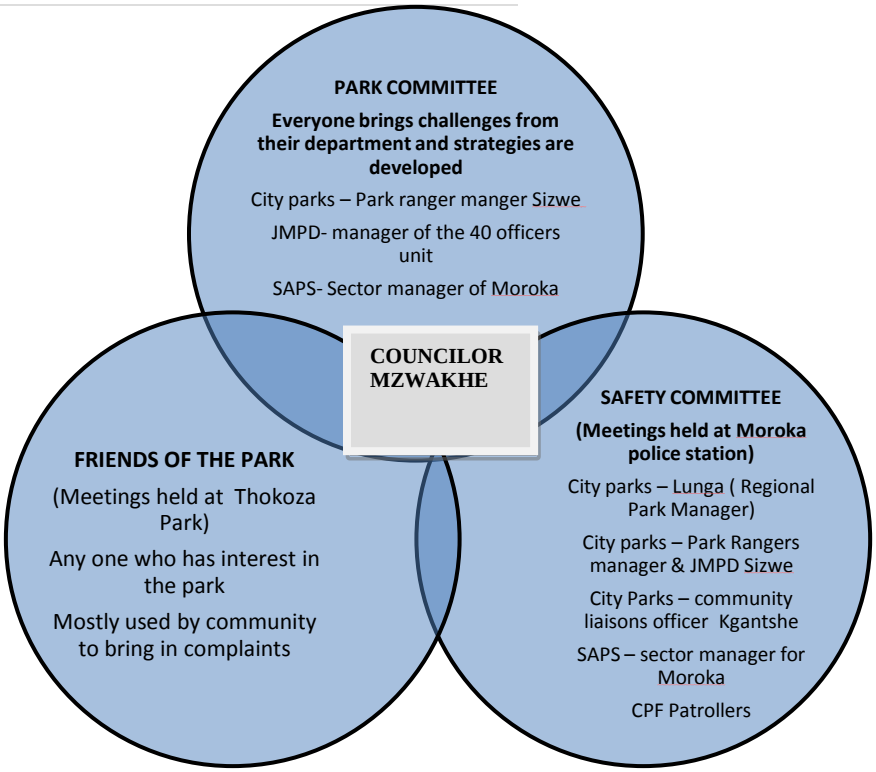
# Discussion of research findings

## 3.1. Introduction – Profile of Thokoza park and Zoo Lake and of the main actors in each case

The research looks at the interactions facilitated by FOPs in terms of five possible interactions. In the first category are interactions between members of the FOP. Here the committee is a way for people with common concerns to share ideas. These could be said to be internal interactions. In the other four categories the interactions are between the FOP and external parties: the state, the wider community around the park, the private sector and the physical park itself. The research looks at each FOP's experience with interacting with each of these external stakeholders.

It is possible for the FOP to also play a role as a facilitator of interaction between the external stakeholders, whereby the FOP becomes a common element that brings some or all of the stakeholders together and allows them to better engage with one another.

### 3.1.1. Thokoza Park




*3.1.1.1. Friends of the park 2001*

In 2001 Thokoza Park was being revamped and this committee was established so that it becomes part of the launch. City parks wanted to get the community involved so that the product is accepted and looked after by the community. Mzwakhe was part of this committee. Most of the people who were involved did not stay actively involved beyond the launch of the park. Mzwakhe and a few others

remained involved after the launch, “We are involved but we had no direction” Mzwakhe explained. In 2005 Mzwakhe became a ward committee member and he was assigned among other parks Thokoza Park to be his area. The Chairperson who was chair at the time between 2001 and 2006 had a hidden agenda; he wanted to make money out of the park. They registered a company, when they see white people they would want money from them, they were opportunist. There previous group and their chairperson had a disagreement with City Parks. Thet then stopped being actively involved with the park . The name FOP remained but this platform became a platform to voice community complaints. Mzwakhe was already working with City Parks and he then they were working along with the Community Liasons Officer Vava on how to structure the new committee which was called The Park Committee.

*3.1.1.2. Park Committee 2008*

In working together with City Parks and after Mzwakhe had gone through several training programmes with City Parks they then in 2008 launched the Park Committee which was chaired by the councillor Mr Richard Phamodi and deputy chaired by Mzwakhe. Mzwakhe express” we now had order and we worked on the structure that the committee must have certain members from different departments”. Members include:

- Councillor chair, Richard Phamodi
- Ward committee member (Mzwakhe)
- City Parks – Vava the Community Liaisons Officer
- Park Ranger’s Manager - Sizwe (who also represents the JMPD 40 man squad division assigned to help with park by-law enforcement.
- SAPS- Sector manager of the area( Moroka Police station)

The meeting are held once a month in the councillor’s office and there they discuss city parks maintenance schedule, challenges they face. Everyone brings challenges and then they collectively decide on solutions and way forward on those issues. In 2014 growing concerns over safety in the park increased to alarming heights. Mzwakhe explains, “It was not just one issue, it was murder, rape, hijacking, all the incidences happening following each other. There was an outcry from the community that enough is enough. Something has to be done”. That was when the Park Committee decided that a safety committee was necessary to deal with these issues directly.

*3.1.1.3. Safety Committee*

This committee was established in 2014 as a direct response to the growing safety issues in the park. The meetings are held at Moroka Police station, Chaired by the councillor or Mzwakhe.

People attending will include:

- Councillor chair
- myself as ward committee member
- city parks
- SAPS
- More of the community
- Patrollers
- Everyone is invited

Park committee meetings first and then safety meeting, the councillor will get complaints and then escalate the, report our issues to the MMC. This committee came up with a strategy to deal with safety issues in parks and the councillor has been able to share this strategy in his platforms do that it

is what is used in any of the city's parks when there are similar park safety issues. Councillor Richard proudly explains in the below quote

> "*The model that was applied here in terms of dealing with crime is now being used all over the city to deal with crime in parks .We use Thokoza Park as a case study through my influence".*

### 3.1.2. Zoo Lake

*3.1.2.1. Founding (1996)*

The city councillors during 1996 and before did not work with the community they had only the interest of the city and not of the community. They did not work for the benefit of the community they were only looking at benefiting the city. In 1996 the new councils, the metropolitan councils said they wanted to have more community participation and do what the community want not what they are dished up. The council wanted to have a look at the major regional parks , had been identified as Zoo Lake, Rhodes Park, open spaces and they fell under the metro council not the southern, northern, western and eastern metropolitan. It was restrictive on how many could take on.

*3.1.2.2. Zoo Lake Users Committee Formulation (Lucy Taylor and Mike Mariotti)*

The area around Zoo Lake was predominantly DA and the ward councillor was Mike Mariati. He took the lead for the area. The city sent notifications out to have park committees in the chosen parks, ward based communication style between the local residents and different council departments. They had a response from Mike, and we had the committee set up. People invited to the committee included local community, parks, the zoo, security, roads, services, electricity, Joburg environment, so forth this was for managing the park thus the park committee. The committee was for the interaction between what the community wanted, where they saw there was faults in the management of the park or how they can improve the park, from esthetical, historical and usage of the park. The park at that time was used for events, concerts. They wanted to be involved because of the complaints that were coming through from the residents after the events. The city was involved and had people from within the state become members of the committee "I was involved as deputy chair of the committee (under city parks) the councillor was the chairperson, Lucy Taylor was also there" Allan Buff.

It is very important to have the ward councillor of the area involved and interested in these kinds of initiatives by the state. Only the councillor at Zoo Lake out of all the parks chosen was interested in this venture. If the ward councillor is not involved then there is a problem because the state don't know who to call to the meeting, the councillor finds you having a meeting without him then whatever you are discussing will not be accepted. The state invited everyone to the meetings so that if the councillor was not interested the community can decide to maybe change their councillor if they wanted the committee in their park

ZLUC (Zoo Lake Users Committee) was established in 1996, this community was vibrant and had a voice it continued to function very well but in 1999-2000 the municipalities were not functioning properly and there was no service delivery, things had to change. IGoli Process began and 2000-2001 City Parks was formed. Fortunately the ZLUC was still operational and very active and we worked well with them. City Parks then appointed a Community Liaison Officer, Oscar Olifant, and one of his responsibilities was to attend meetings with the ZLUC and report back to the city with things that were required. The park was hosting lots of events and Lucy Tylor came up with the idea of raising funds

One of the committees projects was to do fundraising, because if the council didn't have the money to do these things they are putting forward, what would be the reaction to the community coming in to

say we will donate to this particular event. Lucy was dealing with projects around raising funds to do the things they wanted in the park. City parks was monitoring these activities and the park had to register under section 21 companies act, non-profitable organisation, for fundraising. The risk and Audit department, they had to notify us of all the funds coming in, where the money has gone to

"I left the committee in 2001 because the area was DA and the office was ANC and my boss at the time felt odd sending me to a DA camp" Allan Buff

After Lucy left the committee did not function well, they misused the phone bill and that's when I noticed that Lucy had left. They have been quiet since, and I just met Fran 4months ago. They came to see me they came to talk to me, I can't attend meetings but they can come and see me about the park

*3.1.2.3. Challenges*

"If you attend a meeting and the ward councillor starts demanding things in front of the community it made things difficult and the officials will keep quiet and not say anything. They will say they can only report back to the city, the councillors then were notified that it's not their responsibility to do that, they can't go demanding things"

The councillors can only put up a report to say can we have, we have identified this and so forth. The operations departments are run by the City of JHB budget so if you demanding something you could be given but you are also taking away from other disadvantaged areas. The councillors were informed that this is not a forum for demands; they had to make sure their constitution doesn't encroach on other operations .The committee had to identify what resources you need and to have sub committees within the committee, e,g have people that focus on Heritage and they can invite people from the heritage department for help.

*3.1.2.4. Recent Committee Formation (under Fran Haslam and Tim Truluck)*

By the time she left, Lucy Taylor is said to have set a good precedent for the committee.She was succeeded by Mark Mariatti. Then Greham Write took over for about 3-4 years but both he and his predecessor are said to have been far less effective. When Greham Write left for to take up residency in the Western Cape, he attempted to continue chairing the committee, even though he now resided in Cape Town, in another province. Fran Haslam, the current chair, recalls that she became increasingly worried about what she saw as decay in the park and she decided to join the residents association. Then Tim Trulack the ward councillor of the area had put out a newsletter inviting volunteers to join the association and to assist in the ZLUC, which is a subcommittee within the association. Greham Write had no deputy to succeed him and there was no one interested in doing taking up the position, seemingly because the state of the FOP had become very discouraging. Fran Haslam then nominated herself for chairperson and took up the position with no opposition. There has been a lot of activity in recent months although the ZLUC remains a non-registered committee, with no official standing within the City of Johannesburg's urban management structures. The committee falls under the category of 'residential issues' along with residents associations.




**Figure 12: Activities within Thokoza Park (image by Author)**

| Thokoza Park | |
|---|---|
| **Profile of key role-player** | **Name:** Mzwakhe Nhlapho<br>▪ Facilitator<br>▪ Activist Environmental and agriculture<br>▪ Ward committee member(parks and agriculture)<br>▪ Involved in other parks as long as they are in my ward ,<br>▪ Ward committee member stipend, allowance. Ukhamba I get a salary. |
| **Stakeholders** | ▪ SAPS, METRO REGION D, Councillor, City Parks, CPF, Park rangers, Gantsi and Sizwe(representing rangers and JMPD), |
| **Issues** | ▪ **Izikhothane (crowds of young kids who attend parties in the park and do not follow by-laws)2013**<br>▪ It is an on-going issue, Happens during school holidays most prevalent in Dec, children come from all over JHB. They close the street, they park on peoples drive ways, and they drink, fight and have sex. They come in the afternoon and the criminal uses see the visitors as their victims, they see target. The criminal uses come for girls and some for robbing people. The community was outraged; they called me to call a meeting with the community. Moroka Dam<br>▪ **Damage of playing equipment**<br>▪ The Children don't know how to use the equipment, they vandalise instead of use it, they brake the chains on the swings so we changed it from chain to rubber. |
| **Strategies** | ▪ Campaign<br>▪ We had an educational campaign, we don't want people drinking at Thokoza Park, 4$^{Th}$ December we had a community prayer, then on the 5$^{th}$ Dec that's when we were stationed here in the park, SAPS and the we had 5 meetings and some people did not participate. Some of the residents living immediately adjacent to the park drink so at first they did not want to be involved because it meant they also couldn't drink in the park. But after a few days of the campaign running they came around and started supporting the campaign because they noticed the difference. The park was safer. We want to organise this again before December.<br>▪ Save my park, We go to the schools assembly and teach the children how to use the park equipment, how to be safe in the park, storm water drain pipe, the children go in there. |

| | **MzwakheNlaphoThokoza Park committee facilitator/ Chairperson** |
|---|---|
| **Profile** | ▪ Black, Male 30-40 age, ANC<br>▪ Does not live close to the park<br>▪ Been involved in the park since 2001 (14 years; since its launch)<br>▪ Ward committee member<br>▪ Parks and agriculture<br>▪ Award winner<br>1. City Parks (won an award for community based projects dealing with the environment)<br>2. City of Johannesburg (won 2 awards)<br>3. MTK award(3 awards) (nominated as a champion) |
| **Duties** | 1) Monitors City Parks maintenance schedule<br>2) Days for letter picking, contractors on weekend<br>3) Not in the park daily<br>4) Organise meetings |

| | |
|---|---|
| | 5) Deal with park complaints<br>6) Organise events and awareness campaigns (sometimes with City Parks, sometimes alone) |
| **How they became involved with the park** | 7) Was an environmental activist for a very long time<br>8) To become a ward committee member you are elected politically like councillors<br>9) I was nominated from the structures of environment to be a candidate for parks and agriculture<br>10) Before I was a ward committee long time ago and I was responsible for the environment at large, then it was divided.<br>11) I went to school to further my education then politically they asked me to come back to be a ward committee member<br>12) 2011-2016 as ward committee member<br>13) Part of an organisation called Ukhamba , we do environmental and agriculture programmes. We do educations to schools, we do many projects<br>14) Involved in a cooperative that does landscape and agriculture |
| **Funding** | 15) Ward committee member get a stipend from the city of Johannesburg ( its part of my duties to play a big role in the park)<br>16) Ukhamba I get a salary there<br>17) Corporative is new not making money yet<br>18) In terms of events City Parks will fund the events, if its awareness then we work closely with educational division at City Parks.<br>19) If It's a big event they will ask me to get a team of people from the community to assist (some events they will get paid some they will not) |

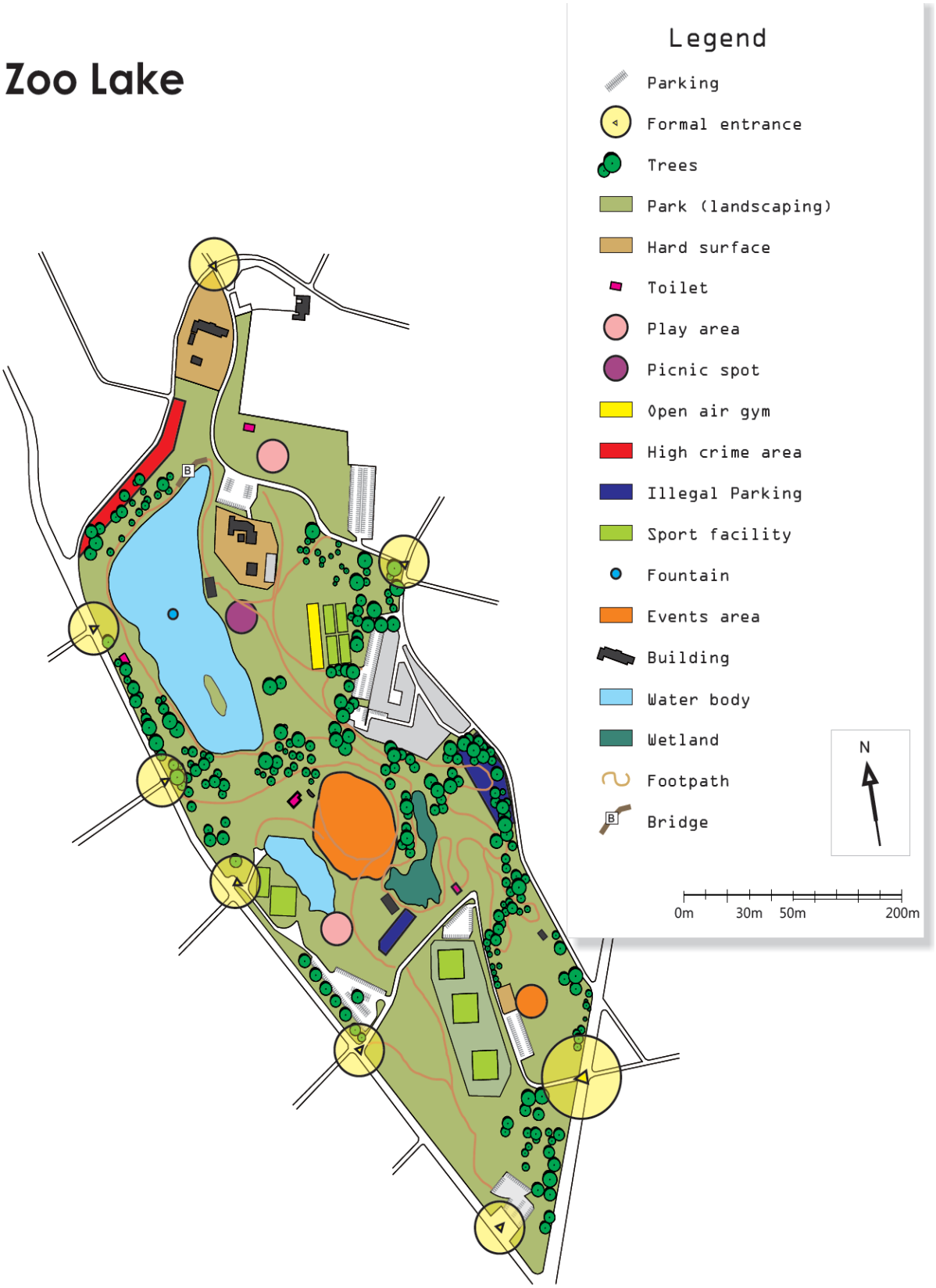



**Figure 13: Activities within Zoo Lake (image by Author)**

| Zoo Lake | |
|---|---|
| **Profile of key role-player** | **Name: Fran Haslam**<br>▪ Chair Person of Zoo Lake users Committee<br>▪ Was a member of CPF Chair at Parkview<br>▪ Moved in the area 2 years ago |
| **Issues** | ▪ There is no money to fix anything.<br>▪ The is only money for trimming and cutting grass<br>▪ This morning there is filth from the<br>▪ There are not enough proper bins, not enough bins<br>▪ The vagrants open the bins and the rubbish is laying around the bins.<br>▪ There is no one monitoring the recyclers, big bins that are locatable.<br>▪ The kids also come with kids to play, they leave the place dirty. The philosophy is we giving someone a job, but there is no one doing the job because there is no money to pay those.<br>▪ Master plan that was done without the consultation of the community.<br>▪ They are not doing anything when we try and engage with them. |
| **Strategies** | ▪ We have sat with Alton Ranglor. We have put together plans. We were given a master plan for the park. Organogram of how we see ourselves and environmental issues. Please check it and get back to us, no on has come, CID about the master plan, there is no money for plan. They paid money to a consulted<br>▪ Put it in the Zibby Can, My committee we must have a campaign, how to keep the park clean. Do this in the schools that bring their kids around<br>▪ We have been everywhere to get assistance, JMPD, Academy, the police, JPC, Mayor and wherever we go, the Park wardens. We cant help you.<br>▪ JRA, written to them but no response<br>▪ Piet van feren<br>▪ Alton, but nothing gets done<br><br>▪ Put together the signage, we need new signs. You will probably get 5 signs if you are lucky.<br><br>▪ We are getting new pavement. But now the maintenance department has been told that no more money must be spent on zoo lake<br><br>▪ Painted the benches<br><br>▪ We offered to pay for things and they say no we will get it done.<br>▪ We can make changes but we have to consult them first (CP) |

| | **Fran Haslam ZLUC chairperson** |
|---|---|
| **Profile** | White, female, 59, DA<br>Retired professional in finance<br>Lives opposite to the park<br>Been involved since 2013 (2 years; since departure of previous chairperson of ZLUC)<br>Is a member of the Saxonwald and Parkwood Residential Association<br>CPF chair at Parkview |
| **Duties** | Walks the park on a daily basis with the grounds men to see what needs to be done |

| | |
|---|---|
| | It's a monitoring programme, we can't influence a lot of things in the park because we don't have authority<br>Passionate community members who want to help make a difference<br>Work with city parks to make sure the park isn't going into decay<br>That there is proper maintenance and management of the park<br>Make sure that the by-laws are being maintained<br>People don't come and trash the park<br>Motto: **keep our park clean, green and safe.** |
| **How they became involved with the park** | I took over in 2015 as the chairperson of ZLUC<br>I was concerned and worried about what was happening to zoo lake<br>I grew up here and I used to come to the park when I was younger<br>I decided, because I am a community minded person, that I should join the SAPRA and offer my assistance. I wrote to Tim the ward councillor of the area, in response to a newsletter he had written requesting volunteers. When he did not respond I went to the SAPRA meeting and nominated myself as chairperson at the meeting.<br>Graham Write was the previous chair and he had no deputy and when he left there was no-one to take over from him. There was no interest from the community. |
| **Funding** | Fran is volunteering her services without getting paid for her time.<br>She hasn't been part of any big events yet in the park |

## 3.2. Research findings

### 3.2.1. Understanding the emergence and development of FOPs

The research takes a historical perspective, looking at the FOPs activities over a longer period. This allows the research to expand the sample of activities to be studied, since these would be fewer in the present. Secondly, a historical perspective allows the research to see things more clearly. Things in the present tend to move quickly and frequently. Often, it is difficult to detect people's agenda in the present. However, when looking at history, it is easier to make connections between objectives and the strategies employed to achieve them and it is easier to assess whether these strategies have been effective.

The first question ("what is the history") is a general question designed to get the respondent ot discuss elements of the FOP's history in a subjective narrative, highlighting those things that are important in their own opinion. The follow-up questions engage with the respondent's response by directing them towards the two research interests identified earlier.

*3.2.1.1. To what extent are the characteristics of the FOP a response to issues within the park?*

ZLUC was initiated by the city in 1996 as a programme that was looking at how the state can work together with communities to give them what they really need. The invitation to join this programme was extended to the Ward councillor at the time Mark Mariati. He responded together with the community around the park. In 2001 when the City Parks division was established they found that the ZLUC was still active and they got together with them to further assist. The formal recognition of the ZLUC was in 2001. One of the reasons for the community to be involved was issues in the park and the committee at the time wanted to work together with city parks to manage the area. The main issue was during and after events the residents had complaints of people parking outside their houses and after the dirt that was left there by the function. Residents' interest in the ZLUC has been revived in recent year because of concerns regarding the lack of maintenance (on the part of the City) and the

contravention of park bylaws by the users of the park. (See Allen Buff interview on the detailed history of the state's involvement in the establishment of ZLUC)

The Thokoza Park FOP was established as part of the development and launch of Thokoza Park in 2001. The other two committees in Thokoza Park were formed later, the Park Committee in 2008 and the Safety committee in 2014. Each was formed as a response to specific issues that were prevalent in the park at that time.

*3.2.1.2. FOP involvement with the management or physical upkeep of parks*

The physical maintenance of the park is mostly provided for by city parks, by means of a park manager, chief grounds man and his team. In Thokoza Park there are fourteen people in the team and at Zoo Lake there are four grounds people. They come in to cut the grass and trim the trees and pick up the trash, trim flower beds. "You have to make a special request for painting and electrical fixings and so forth", says Fran. In ZLUC Fran Haslam walks the park every morning with the lead grounds man and highlights the issues of maintenance in the park that the team must attend to , she is not allowed to bring her own team to fix or work in the park, only people from city parks are allowed to do things in the park. If she wants to fix something or organise a clean-up in the park she has to get authorisation from city parks for that activity beforehand. Fran Haslam calls the different departments within City Parks and COJ for special requests that the normal grounds people are not skilled to do. She and her team do not do any physical work on the park. The COJ's policy in the case of both parks is that maintenance is done by employees of the City and that community members must receive authorisation from the city before making any physical changes to the parks and facilities within the park.

Thokoza Park Mzwakhe the facilitator of the 3 FOP committees also monitors the park is maintained, that City Parks is following their schedule of maintaining the park and he also reports further issues that need immediate attention. The park manager Mamlemo Rakosa does site visits to monitor what the staff is doing and what still needs to be done. ON her site visit she walks the park with the head grounds man and highlights what must be done in what area. Mzwakhe only monitors that City parks adheres to it maintenance schedule. He organises the community and surrounding schools for events like water week and Abhor Day for functions that will include the community and schools coming together to clean the park and the stream. They do not do this on a day to day basis only on special occasions.

In both Parks the physical aspect of the park is under City Parks management and the FOP groups are not allowed to make physical changes to the park or fix/maintain anything without City Parks consent. The initial ZLUC was more involved in park maintenance because they had been able to establish a fundraising element to their committee. However, whatever changes they made in the park still had to be approved by City Parks.

There is only one case where a private individual made an investment into the park and permanently altered a significant part of its physical structure. The sports club was redeveloped by a person outside of City parks and ZLUC, though working closely with ZLUC. This was during the time when Lucy Taylor was the chair. He invested lots of money into the upgrade of the sports club and arranged the fence around the area and the security guard stationed there. The ZLUC acted as the link between the individual and City Parks, they informed him of then correct procedure to follow to allow him to invest his money in the sports club

**An extract from the interview with the headmaster of Jan Ceillers**

- Graham Wallace (private individual, who ran a gym or sports facility of some sort)
- He is a fitness junkie, approached us and said he needed a place to run a few sports events
- He asked us if it's possible for him to use the bottom part where the sports centre is
- We were happy to, I discussed it with the board
- Before we agreed to sub-lease to him he already began to make the area nice
- He phoned SAPS and they got rid of all the vagrants
- I think he had a few contacts at JPC as well, he met Lilly Brown
- We worked again through Lily for the sub-lease, after it was finalised he began with the changes
- He had a partner also a Graham, they put in flood lights and make the club house nice, then they had a little restaurant, then they also put fencing all around.
- Before the upgrades, the area was terrible. We helped with providing equipment to get the area done because it was for the upliftment of the community

One likely reason why this approach has not been replicated may be the fact that it was not documented. The people at Zoo Lake who were working with Graham are the only ones who are aware of this and they have now left the area same as Graham himself

### 3.2.2. How FOPs interact with stakeholders

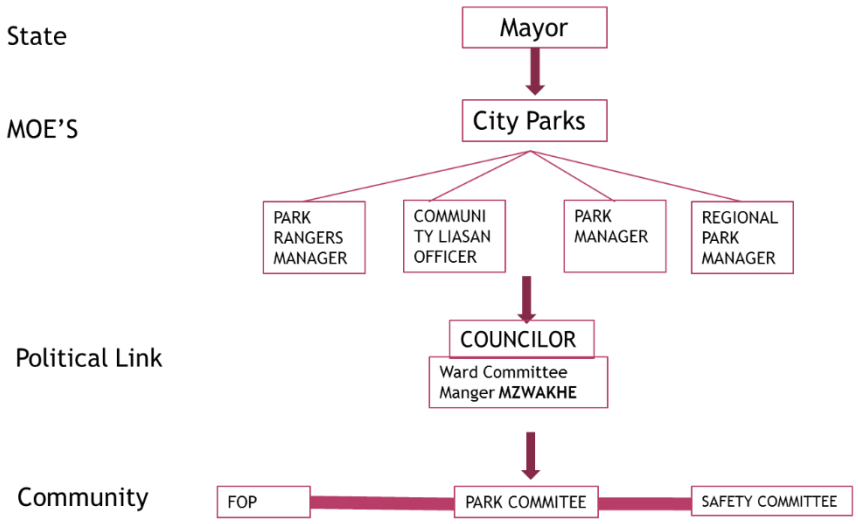



**Figure 14: Organisational structure of Thokoza Park's FOP in relation to the COJ's governance structures**

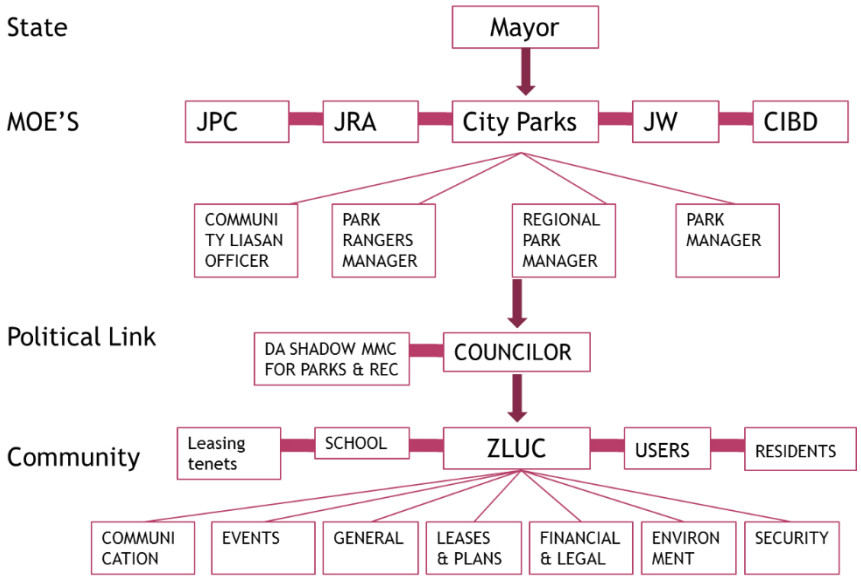



**Figure 15: Organisational structure of Zoo Lake's FOP in relation to the COJ's governance structures**

*3.2.2.1. Interactions with the state*

In Thokoza Park the interaction with the JMPD, Park Rangers, CPF and SAPA was in the form of coming to a joint meeting to discuss safety issues in the park and strategize collectively on the best solution to the issues of crime. The meetings are requested by the councillor and the Liaisons officer to have jointly with the community and some with just the members of the committee. They were also all there in the park when they rolled out their strategy to make the park safe. They also held meetings with the community to inform them of the strategy that they were about to rollout in the park.

ZLUC at the moment the present committee is still trying to get stakeholders to be part of their committee, they want them to come and attend their meetings, help them with the correct procedures to follow and guide them in the solutions they are coming up with to tackle their issues in the park. When they had a pressing issue in the park of Squatter camp they did not sit and discuss they looked for a quicker solution and went directly to the mayor because of the slow response of City Parks to the issue. The ZLUC put out an article on the Rosebank and Killarney Gazette titled "Squatter Camp at zoo Lake", drawing attention to their concerns. Fran also sent emails to all the people she had as contacts within the state. This is how she eventually got an interview with the mayor.

Fran's approach to the problem, when compared with the approach often taken by Mzwakhe when translating when he interacts with the state, suggests that the Zoo Lake FOP struggles to communicate with the state because they do not have a Community Liaison Officer from City Parks at their meetings who can guide them ZLUC (under Lucy Taylor) they had a meeting with City Parks and they had assistance from a community liaisons officer who helped them with the boundaries of what they can and cannot do in the park. In Thokoza Park Mzwakhe received training and had access to a community liaison officer, Vava, who helped him understand the structure of City Parks, how it works, what the role of the FOP will is and what they can and cannot do in the park. Allan Buff explains that the CLO in Zoo Lake (under Lucy it was Oscar Oliphant) is an important agent because they are the ones that deal with mostly the social issues by getting different departments to come to the meetings and see how they can help the committee and the park. The liaisons officer also has the advantage of working in other parks and has access to other liaisons officers that work in other parks thus they can share strategies that have worked in other areas. But he also makes it clear that the present ZLUC is lacking a Liaisons officer. They are struggling to get the departments to help them as they are initiating the relationship without the liaisons officer. They are also fuzzy on how City Parks works and Allen makes it clear that this would be the role of the Liaisons officer.

*3.2.2.2. Interactions with the community and interactions between members of the FOP*

People that get involved in Thokoza Park they do not like the formal process because they will have to sign legal documents. Mzwakhe facilitates the involvement of the community through verbal agreements. He says that when City Parks has events at Thokoza some events are paid and some are not but City Parks will ask him to get a team together and he will go to the community and find people who want to be involved. Thokoza Park's Park Manager, Mamolema Rakosa, says that when they are going to have events the FOP help them to take out flyers. They will go door to door informing people about the event. They also help with distribution of refreshments as well as with coordination parking of transport, buses that have been organised to bring the public to Thokoza for the event. The FOP does not have fixed membership and it does not have portfolios. Involvement in the FOP is on an ad hoc basis. People are involved are only involved until the issue that is directly affecting them is dealt with.

In Zoo Lake, there is a constant team of individuals who are working on the parks issues as they evolve, they are formal members of the ZLUC but there is no formal agreement with the state. There is no formal document but ZLUC has people under its portfolio that have agreed verbally to be part of the committee. They are responsible for a specific task and, during meetings, they must report back on the task they are responsible for.

Members of the ZLUC have skills to offer to the committee. They, unlike those at Thokoza Park, take on responsibility for longer than a function and they are not there as staff. The volunteers in Thokoza Park seem like they are just extra help for functions, with the exception of Mzwakhe. The ZLUC members donate skills like making the website, expertise on the environment and technical solutions to the issues of the park. ZLUC all the members are volunteering members of the community and them also volunteering their skills, which is one of the things on Jones model that the community needs to have. In Thokoza Park the people involved beyond Mzwakhe are only involved just as long as a function will be on or as long as the issue which affects them is dealt with. This might be because of the economic status of the people at Thokoza Park, maybe they do not feel that they have skills to offer the committee. They might also not have the time because they are trying to make an income. At Zoo Lake the people involved are professionals and they don't need to get an income from their involvement in the park. They also have recourses (such as the kind necessary to make a website in their spare time, working from home). People at Thokoza Park do not have resources like these and skills like these to offer, especially not for free.

*3.2.2.3. Drivers of community involvement in FOPs*

In Thokoza Park, the people do not have time to invest beyond to complain and a few meetings. They are either not interested or they are not available. They seem to want to be involved if there is something for them to gain, if they get an income. Some do not have any skills to offer the committee and that is why they are not involved.

ZLUC has people in the committee that have a passion for the park and they offer skills under the portfolio of the park that the committee can use. They volunteer their time and expertise to the park. The other residents are usually not interested because they have big gardens and they do not need to use the park. Others gave up on the park after Lucy left as Chair because there was no strong leadership. Now Fran is trying to get the word out to the public to get more of them involved because they had given up on the park. The councillor mentioned that some residents only want to be involved through complaints when they call them to be part of the solution they refuse.

ZLUC seems to be facing a situation where they need to revive interest in the park whereas the Thokoza Park FOP has never enjoyed significant interest from the community. However, it seems clear that each committee's need for public interest is being driven by different factors from the other. For the ZLUC, community involvement is integral to the functioning of the committee. In Thokoza Park, the involvement of the community seems to have strong links with state objectives (such as increasing accountability) and with the political objectives of the key actors and stakeholders involved with the FOP. This is difference between the committees is discussed in the table below:

| Zoo Lake | TKZ |
|---|---|
| - When there's no interest there's no portfolio members (thus no committee)<br>- Committee members have skills and resources to offer (for free)<br>- Community represents an existing "member bank" (e.g. people like Fran, who have grown up around the park have an attachment to it; others who have served in the previous ZLUC have valuable experience that can help the FOP) | - Since FOP structure is mostly state-run (when there is already a state mechanism for park management), this suggests that the role of the FOP is not to manage the park. Rather it is a way to account to the community (in terms of service delivery). The FOP is a way to manage the community's expectations and demands<br>- aside from financial motive (since those involved with the park often receive remuneration for it), the key people in Thokoza park often seem to also have a political motive because they are so closely associated with the state. Community involvement might translate to political support in certain instances and involvement in state structures (such as park committees) may be a way to get exposure to the state (most of Mzwakhe's awards are from organs of state) |

*3.2.2.4. Decision making within FOPs*

Generally the Chairperson is the one driving the entire process; they are involved in every aspect of the maintenance of the park. However, a key distinction between the parks is that the ZLUC relies significantly on portfolio committee members to achieve its objectives whilst the Thokoza Park FOP utilises stakeholders, organs of state with an interest in the park. Stakeholders contribute specific abilities or jurisdictional powers. For instance JMPD offers services of bylaw enforcement to the park.

In making decisions, the chairperson of the ZLUC and the people under her portfolios will focus on specific issues that they have expertise and will collectively discuss suitability of solutions being suggested. In Thokoza Park Mzwakhe does all of the facilitating together with the councillor and they get stakeholders together to discuss solutions. The general community in both cases is involved only when invited to special events. On a day to day basis they are only involved through bringing in issues in the park through emails, phone calls and direct communication with the FOP chair. Thokoza Park will get issues resolved because the stakeholders (SAPS, JMPD, Park Rangers). The stakeholders are present at the meeting and they can agree to do things at that meeting and soon after act on those agreements. The ZLUC lacks this platform because they only get to these stakeholders through the phone or separate individual meetings. It is harder to get to a holistic solution and action forward. They have been involved with ZLUC before but not with Fan so Fran almost had to start over in terms of making relationships with these different stakeholders.

*3.2.2.5. The role of technical expertise in shaping the kinds of contributions that members can make within the FOP*

In Zoo Lake the people that are a link are Fran and the councillor. Fran is the link between the community and the city. She has organisational skills and has skills of working in a resident association committee. She has the passion for the park and invests all her time in finding ways to help the park work better. The councillor Tim is the link between the community and the state. He takes the ZLUC issues to the state and the states issues to the ZLUC. He also advises the community on the things that are possible and not possible for the state to do.

In Zoo Lake the members of the committee are bringing skills, the environmental portfolio has experience with the environment thus their suggestions for solutions when it comes to maintaining the environment are informed by their knowledge and experience. Under communications there is a gentleman who volunteered his time and skills to create the new website that is currently online for ZLUC he was able to do this website for free for ZLUC. Under the safety portfolio there is a guy who is a business owner but has a passion for safety and even though his skills are not directly in safety he has taken the responsibility to want to be involved, he is using his other skills to assist with safety.

Thokoza park, Mzwakhe coming from a political background and through his networks and connections brings in a lot of experience of working with the public and his connections politically help him to understand how communities work and how best to mobilise them. I imagine his also using communication and leadership skills as well to be able to do his job in the facilitation of the committees. He is the link between the community and the state. He has training under the state that enables him to be a facilitator as he knows how City Parks works. The councillor Mr Ronald plays the same role as Tim T Zoo Lake. He is the link between the state and the community. He organises the community when there is going to be a meeting. He takes the park issued through the platforms that he as councillor is exposed to.

# 4. Chapter 4:

# Conclusions and recommendations

Public spaces are characterised by a conflict of visions; their meanings are contested. Much of the turmoil that is experienced when public spaces are said to go into decline is rooted in the conflict between how the space is seen by different sectors of society. FOPs represent a particular response to that conflict. They also however represent a particular assertion of one group's values, their side in the conflict. The same could be said of the state. It can play an intervening role but it is also complicit in the conflict because it also has an ideal vision of public space and – critically – an ideal vision of its role and the role of communities in the management of these spaces. Although all urban space is a product of social conflict (in other words its meaning is contested), there is a tendency over time to move towards a stability of meaning. For the lack of a better term, this stability of meaning will be referred to as consensus. However, this consensus does not suggest a shift towards justice or an equitable end (Castells, 2003). Without making any value judgements on the end result, by studying FOPs' efforts to engage with the management of parks, this research has essentially sought to understand how actors work towards this kind of consensus.

One finding is that consensus is not comprehensive, for two reasons. Firstly, there are always those who remain in disagreement even when the norm in a public space has clearly shifted towards a particular side. Thus there are always *transcendent activities*. Secondly, there are elements of the space that remain untouched, unresolved by the consensus and possibly not even raised for discussion. The first reason for this could be because an awareness of the ideal has not yet developed; that is to say no one has a vision of what should happen with regard to those particular issues yet (this is the case in Thokoza Park. It is also possible, secondly, that there is consensus between the parties involved but then material circumstances or the presence of other priorities (outside of the issue of the park) limit the parties' ability to pursue the ideal even though they have consensus over it (this seems to be the case in Zoo Lake. In Zoo Lake conflict seems to be as a result of an old vision of the park, which exists as a result of the park being so old and having many residents around it who have a particular attachment to it as a result of their prolonged experience of the space. Today this old vision is contradicted by the new context within which the park presently exists (a context of social inequality) and it is further threatened by the frequent presence of new people who do not have the same attachment to the park. In Thokoza Park conflict is evidenced by instances of lawlessness where (during events) the space becomes a vacuum where there are no values to govern behaviour. The space is also prone to the kinds of treatment received by many other vacant spaces in Soweto (and indeed South Africa). Incidents of crime in vacant spaces as well as the occurrence of those instances where rubbish and even a dead body are discarded in an open field or in some watery ditch are a reflection of the brutality that characterises South African society and they are not unique to Thokoza Park. It is inaccurate therefore to understand them as being directly linked to the management of the park. However, the fact that this space becomes *more* lawless than adjacent spaces and the fact that it receives the same treatment as vacant spaces (even though it is claimed to be a park) seem to suggest that its meaning as a "park" and the social contract that governs how people conduct themselves within such a space is still underdeveloped (at least relative to the streets in the area, which do not receive the same treatment and which are older than the park).

In terms of consensus, Thokoza Park is characterised by the dominant presence of the state which attempts to maintain a vision of the space. It is clear however that this vision lacks the colour and vibrancy found in the vision developed by the ZLUC for Zoo Lake. The state seems concerned with maintaining order, enforcing bylaws and preventing crime. The community around Thokoza Park, for their part, also lack vision insofar as they are more aware of what they don't want rather than what they do want – hence the emphasis on preventing things rather than initiating them. It is worth noting

here that the research has not fully considered the actions of those outsiders who come to Thokoza Park to partake in transcendent activities. In retrospect, these people (who have been portrayed as outsiders by the state and the community) seem to have a less passive vision of the park, one that periodically overpowers the formal vision. It is in these instances where the formal vision is temporarily subverted where the real problem of unresolved meaning becomes apparent.

Zoo Lake on the other hand has a situation where the consensus is broader. Although there are still very serious contradictions because of the aforementioned social inequality, the ZLUC and the state seem to agree about the way forward, about the kind of public space that Zoo Lake ought to be. However, they seem to disagree on how to pursue the ideals of their consensus. On the surface it seems as though the City's mechanisms are failing the ZLUC. It looks as though both parties are fully willing to engage but that they are unable to find one another for some reason (the likely reason being that the ZLUC does not have access to a Community Liaisons Officer). However, there is evidence to suggest that this contradiction is symptomatic of an unresolved dispute between the visions held by the City and the community. In particular it seems that, while they agree on ideals such as that the park should look good and that it should have well-kept facilities, they do not necessarily agree on the quality entailed by words such as "good" and "well-kept". In the case of Zoo Lake then it seems that consensus exists but that the resources to pursue the ideals of that consensus are either too limited or they are tightly contested by the City's other priorities.

## 4.1. The shifting role of the state

Today the concern of the state in Johannesburg seems to be to learn how it can use its monopoly on authority in a manner that recognises communities' attachments to spaces; and understands the nature of FOPs and the process of their development in order to harness the energies of such community mobilisations. The aim of the state then seems to be: to enhance people's commitment to the management of public spaces in their neighbourhoods; and to empower them to manage these spaces by making FOPs effective and well-resourced vehicles for facilitating citizen engagement.

To this end, the research has identified four key principles that the state can employ in order to integrate FOP efforts into its public space management structures:

- *Leadership* – the recognition and support of key actors who drive the development and operation of FOPs
- *Responsiveness* – The use of agents within the state such as the CLO and councillors to manage the state's responsiveness to FOP needs.
- *Incentives* – Recognising the role played by different kinds of incentives in motivating the involvement of community members and key actors at different points in the development of FOPs
- *Proactivity* – Recognising the key role played by the state in moderating the creation of meaning in public space and thus shaping agendas of FOPs

It is noted in this research that the above set of principles (which have been referred to as Model B) risk romanticising participation. This paradigm of participation tends to neglect the fact that invented spaces today exist in the context of deliberate efforts by planners to mobilise communities for the purpose of absorbing them into the formal planning structure. In this context, where the state's capacity is shrinking and where it plays an increasingly small role in the physical dimension of public spaces, there tends to be a growing emphasis on the legal dimension, where the rules of who does what in the creation and upkeep of public space are expanded to include community members and FOPs. The state's increasing absence in the provision of the physical contents of public spaces also means that spaces are increasingly being created through personalisation, where people bring their own materials to furnish public spaces. Lastly, the socio-cultural dimension of public spaces is also negatively affected by social change, which shifts the boundaries of this dimension, making the

meanings of public spaces blurred and more contested, which increases the emergence of transcendent activities within these spaces and results in a perception that the spaces are in decline.

Although the neoliberal state has withdrawn from playing a large role in the physical dimension of public spaces it retains a monopoly on authority. Therefore it could be argued that today the state hands out authority and responsibility rather than financial resources and the services of planning experts. The state still plays a role as a source of management expertise but today the emphasis is on transferring some of this management expertise as well as some of the responsibilities of managing public space to members of the community and to FOPs. It is tempting to also see FOPs in the same light, to say that they are involved in the management of public space and that what they need from the state is financial resources, skills and authority. To a certain extent this is true. These are things that FOPs do. However this is a narrow view of what the management of public spaces entails. It limits the kinds of recommendations that can be made in response to park issues to those that focus on financial resources, technical skills and legal powers and the state's role in facilitating access to these. Lynch (1984) and Amin (2006) argue that the notion of good public space precedes modern laws and modern technical skills and that: good public spaces have managed to exist even in societies that were materially less resourced than modern communities. So then the poor condition of modern public spaces cannot simply be explained away by referring to money, skills and laws.

In addition to their role in shaping the physical character of public spaces and enforcing the bylaws that govern their use, those involved with the management of public spaces must also assume the role of modulating the process of creating meaning within these spaces. FOPs, because of their ability to facilitate interactions (between members of a given community, between the community and the state, and between the community and the physical park itself) have the potential to be incubators for such processes of creating meaning. They could be used as vehicles for initiating such processes within communities, beyond management structures and by-law enforcement.

## 4.2. The extent to which FOPs act as facilitators of interaction

### 4.2.1. Internal interactions (between members)

At the most primal level, FOPs facilitate engagement between those people who are involved within them. They can allow people to pool their resources together in order to respond to a problem more effectively than would otherwise be possible if any one of them attempted to address the problem on their own. Parks, because of their nature as public goods, are often characterised by problems that are difficult to limit to one particular locality (Jacobs, 1960). The traditional approach to the problem of public goods has often been to see these goods as the responsibility of the state (Klosterman, 1985), an approach that assumes unlimited capacity on the part of the state. This approach also tends to pacify communities, making them recipients of urban development rather than drivers of such change (Roy, 2005). In a context such as Johannesburg, where the state has to prioritise its resources more strictly, often away from traditional park concerns such as the quality of the physical environment, FOPs can (among other things) allow a platform for those who feel deeply about these traditional concerns and who need them as part of their neighbourhood parks to create their own strategies to protect and enhance this aspect of the park. This kind of interaction between members of the FOP is far more pronounced in Zoo Lake than it is in Thokoza Park (see the discussion below on how FOPs interact with the state).

### 4.2.2. Interactions with the physical environment (with the park)

FOPs allow their members (and to some extent they also allow their communities) to engage with the park, their physical environment, on a higher level. In Zoo Lake this was demonstrated most clearly by one of committee member in particular, an architect who serves on the environment portfolio. His insights allowed the committee to arrive at creative, practical and cost effective

approaches to problems, which decreased the committee's reliance on the state. In this particular example the FOP managed to cultivate a level of self-reliance in terms of addressing certain environmental issues that was such that all they needed from the state was authorisation to act rather than resources of any kind. This shift in the role of the state away from being a supplier of resources towards being a supplier of authorisation and empowerment is one of the recommendations made by this report on the basis of the research findings.

The case of Thokoza Park shows that the park, as a physical environment, is almost always a feature in a community, even if it is only a minor concern for residents. That is to say that people tend to have some attachment to the space (or that it does impact on them in a particular way). It is noted with interest in this research that in Thokoza Park the residents' attachment currently reflects negative experiences while the attachment of residents to Zoo Lake borders on nostalgia.

It might be possible to explain this difference as a result of the difference in the ages of the two parks. In particular, it is the impact of time on the meanings associated with these spaces. For Zoo Lake the meaning of the space has developed over a much longer period of time and there is more consensus about what Zoo Lake is as a public space. In fact, the element of nostalgia (residents' longing for a time that was) arises from the fact that this meaning (what might be called the traditional meaning of Zoo Lake) is being challenged today, as new elements are being introduced to the park. These are elements that could not exist in this space prior to 1994 even if they might have existed in other parts of the city. Zoo Lake is coping with a new contestation over its identity as a public space in the context of the social inequality that characterises contemporary Johannesburg.

In contrast, Thokoza Park is still in its infancy as a public space, having only been launched 14 years ago. Its identity is still dominated by the overwhelming presence of the state, state-related institutions and actors who are connected to the state. There are also far more transcendent activities in Thokoza Park, to the extent that even organizer-planned activities (such as parties) quickly devolve to include transcendent behaviour. This seems to be linked to the infancy of the public space and, specifically, to the lack of common values about what a "good" public space is and how one ought to behave when in such a space.

### 4.2.3. Interactions with the state

FOPs can act as one of the means of connecting their respective communities to the structures of the state. As has been mentioned, public spaces are characterised by having the state as their primary custodian. With regards to parks in Johannesburg communities and members of the private sector are prohibited from making any changes to the physical condition of the space and they are also not allowed to add or remove objects from the space. Furthermore, as a matter of law, only the state may regulate the activities occurring within a park, either through the municipality's metro police (which have enforce bylaws) or through the SAPS (which has jurisdiction over criminal offences). This means that the state has an almost absolute monopoly of authority over determining the physical form and content of public spaces and regulating the activities that occur within them (here, the research stresses "authority", the ability to allow or prohibit but not necessarily the power to create).

This means that communities have to escalate their problems with regard to the physical condition and regulation of space to the state. FOPs, in both case studies, play a role in facilitating their respective communities' access to the state, although the FOP in Thokoza Park demonstrates a greater ability to facilitate such interactions. The research identifies three factors that account for this difference between the two FOPs. Firstly, the FOP in Thokoza Park benefits from having a strong state presence involved with the park as a result of the Safety Committee and the Park Committee being compose almost exclusively by employees of organs of state. The FOP also benefits from having a chairperson who has strong political connections as an activist and who received formal training from the state. As a result of his training he knows how to access the state and how to optimise his access to state resources. Lastly, the FOP was advantaged by the continued presence of the CLO, an agent of the state who (as was also found to be the case with the councillors in both

parks) improves the responsiveness of the state by providing the community someone with whom they can engage in order to convey their needs to the state.

## 4.3. Critical reflections on the research process and recommendations for future research

### 4.3.1. Selection of respondents

The research tends to over-represent respondents from the state in its sample. This detracts from the objective of studying the internal processes of the FOP. Perhaps it's because members of the state are easier to identify because they are often connected to a park by a formalised contractual relationship and they are connected to one another by a legible organisational structure (titles and job descriptions) even though in practice that structure and these connections often turn out to be weak. The roles of members of the community are more difficult to discern because of the informal nature of many aspects of their involvement, especially in the initial stages when formal structures are still underdeveloped.

There is also a desire to be polite on the part of respondents, to avoid saying too much about any one person, especially not to a stranger conducting research that could potentially be very public. Understanding the dynamics between community members thus requires deep immersion into the community and it requires listening in a manner that not only picks up what is being said but also notes what is not being said about certain people. Immersion is also important as it allows the research to observe behaviours, actions, events and strategies rather than relying on what respondents are able to say in response to a specific question.

Furthermore the selection of respondents across the two case studies is not consistent. Limited availability for meetings on the part of potential respondents made it difficult to interview each respondent's counterpart in the other case study. As a result, it is difficult to make effective comparisons between the two parks in certain regards. For instance, the research interviewed the councillor at Zoo Lake but then in Thokoza Park it interviewed a member of the legislature who is responsible for oversight of council activities.

### 4.3.2. Comments on the theoretical framework

The research does not begin from a strong theoretical springboard. This is to a large extent due to the fact that there is not enough theory on the involvement of communities in the management of public spaces such as parks. As a result, a significant amount of fieldwork time was spent on feeling around in the dark, so to speak, attempting in the absence of an existing theory or model to arrange the dynamics of each park into a structure that can allow analysis (of how the different stakeholders and activities interacted) and also allow comparison between the case studies. This takes away a significant amount of time from the "immersion" process as the researcher must still find the ideal place to locate herself within the shifting structure of the subject matter. This is not to say that the research problem is insoluble, only that (given the constraints on the availability of theory) it might be better addressed through a research vehicle that either allows more time for the development of a theoretical framework or where the researcher is already very familiar with the structures within the case studies or with the key concepts in the literature.

It is the contention of this report that one of the most important differences between the two parks is their age and that this fact accounts for the differences in the ways that the parks are being used (or perhaps in the way that the use of the parks is perceived by the FOP involved with the park). This report argues that community interest in FOPs and, consequently, their involvement in park management is informed to a large extent by the community's attachment to the park. People such as those in the ZLUC's portfolios are passionate and very keen to contribute their energy, time and other

resources simply because they feel a deep connection to the park. For some, such as Fran Haslam, the connection is because of the experience of growing up around the park and interacting with it over a very long period of time. Although this phenomenon was discovered and recognised as being very impactful during the production of this research report, its investigation laid outside of the scope of the research questions. More research needs to be done to better understand the historical development of Zoo Lake; how this correlates with the development of a meaning of Zoo Lake; and how certain triggers (physical interventions, for instance) moderate the development of this meaning and mediate between competing meanings.

This report recommends that researching the historical development of the meaning of Zoo Lake as a public space and, in particular, researching the role of the state in the creation and moderation of this meaning can yield valuable insights on how to approach the present challenges of the contestation of meaning in both Zoo Lake and Thokoza Park today.

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