

ABSTRACT

Green open spaces are continually under pressure globally (and in cities of the global South in particular) to serve as containers of the ecosystem, nature, tranquillity and human recreation, due to constant demand for occupational space and rapid urban change. In 2012, the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) through the Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ) initiated the Greening Soweto project. One of the primary objectives of the projects was to focus on the green open spaces in Soweto for urban regeneration.

One of the key focuses of the project was to regenerate the Klip River/Klipspruit green open space through the development of 'a continuous system of functional green open spaces such as parks along the Klip River.' (JCPZ, 2012: 3). In engaging with the green open spaces in Soweto, JCPZ officials are coming up against an array of existing user groups, which are appropriating the green spaces in different ways influenced by different economic, cultural, social norms.

This study explores the contemporary uses of green public open space and takes Klipspruit green public as a case study to explore spaces in Soweto. It asks the question, how can the 'informal' appropriation of Township green spaces for livestock grazing, recycling and religious/ceremonial uses to help us understand green spaces in township spaces such as Soweto and rethink the approach to their design.

The study proposes a design strategy that goes beyond ecological sustainability to cultural sustainability in an aim to develop urban design strategies that address everyday practices in township green public space for housing and retail use, and instigate the growth of self-sufficient communities whilst reclaiming green open space to dissolve apartheid buffer zones that divide the black communities in Soweto.



Fig.1: Klipspruit open spaces actors (Author:2018)