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Community (mis)participation in Urban Green Space restoration: A case of the Wilds Nature Reserve, Johannesburg.



By

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A research report submitted to the School of Architecture and Planning, Faculty of Engineering, and the Built Environment, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of MUS (Urban Management).

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27 June 2024

DECLARATION

I Nozipho P. Marere _____ Student number: 2621055 am a student registered for the degree of MUS (Urban Management) in the academic year 2023.

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Signature: NP. Marere Date: _27/06/24 _

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ABSTRACT

There is a notable rise in privatized urbanism in South Africa, a trend which re/produces urban inequalities. This research sought to determine whether community involvement in urban green space restoration follows the same trend of private urbanism resulting in an apartheid legacy of separate development, exclusion and segregation. The research followed the qualitative case study approach. Data collection instruments used were semi-structured interviews, with a sample size of twenty-two individuals, selected through a combination of convenience and purposive sampling. Participant observations, which were done over a period of three months, also supplemented by photographs of biophysical elements of note highlighted by participants through transect walks. Findings from this research established that community participation at the Wilds is informal. Challenges in the way of a working and effective public-private partnership include power dynamics, lack of trust and bureaucracy. However, in the absence of a formal working relationship, a novel form of co-production occurs resulting in spaces of hybrid character. Hybrid spaces are therefore the medium of (re)production of power, privilege, exclusion and inequality. Main groups excluded from participation in restoration include Black people, women and children. Their exclusion is based on social class or income level, level of education and awareness and vulnerability of physical assault and abuse. A recommendation for future research is an exploration of local systems of innovation by young people in Urban Green Space development and management.

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LIST OF ACCRONYMS

CID	City Improvement Districts
CoJ	City of Johannesburg
FOP	Friends Of Parks
JCPZ	Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo
MOU	Memorandum Of Understanding
NPO	Non-Profit Organization
UGS	Urban Green Spaces
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UPE	Urban Political Ecology
USA	United States of America

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Unprecedented population growth in cities is synonymous with the loss of urban nature also referred to as Urban Green Spaces (UGS). This loss is mainly attributed to two things, firstly more land surface area being allocated to development and provision of housing and infrastructure. Secondly, the loss is due to deterioration and degradation which happens because of poor maintenance and management by local governments. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) 2019 report on the 2021-2030 decade of ecosystem restoration states that "there has never been a more urgent need to restore damaged ecosystems than now." Therefore, this research is aligned with this agenda by exploring community participation in UGS restoration and argues that participation in public open spaces blurs lines of distinction between public and private thereby exacerbating existing inequalities and social polarisation.

Previous research that has looked at community involvement in UGS include Murray (2010); Bosaka and Bénit-Gbaffou (2016); Hadebe (2016); Bénit-Gbaffou (2018); Mokgere (2018). However, while these prior studies have looked at and established the complicated nature of co-management and co-production of UGS, this research aims to fill in a gap in literature about the implications of community participation in UGS restoration. The significance of this is the production of research that will inform decision makers and planners in preventing the commodification of nature and the privatization of public open spaces. Moreover, in the South African context this research is valuable given the violent colonial and apartheid history which used UGS as a tool for segregation and exclusion of black and poor people. Using the case of the Wilds Nature Reserve in Johannesburg, the research explores the dynamics of UGS restoration by community actors to determine whether their involvement (re)produces the apartheid legacy of segregation and exclusion as well as the privatisation of a public open space.

UGS are regarded as the green lungs of the city. They are defined as vegetated areas which can take the form of trees, parks, botanical gardens cemeteries etc. regardless of whether they are formal, informal, public or private (Mensah, 2014; Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014; Cilliers

and Cilliers, 2015; Harasimowicz, 2018; Rao et al., 2022). They are valued in urban areas because of their many functions such as ecosystem services of being carbon dioxide sinks, filtering air, flood attenuation, cooling temperatures and preventing urban heat island (Ibid). To human beings UGS such as parks and gardens are recreational spaces where people can engage in different activities of entertainment, exercise and meditation thus promoting mental and physical well-being (Ibid).

Other terms used interchangeably with UGS are urban nature or Green Infrastructure (GI) (Wolch, Byrne and Newell, 2014; Cilliers and Cilliers, 2015; Harasimowicz, 2018; Cocks and Shackleton, 2020). The major distinguishing factors between UGS and GI are that the former can be public or private and main drivers for their design is to serve leisure spaces but with added advantages of ecosystem services. While the latter's main drive is to serve multiple ecosystem purposes in the area and can also refer to both rural and urban settings. The European Commission report (2014:7) defines GI as "strategically planned network of high quality natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features, which is designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services and protect biodiversity in both rural and urban settings".

UGS need constant upkeep, maintenance and security to attract users and deter crime and other forms of violence (Richardson and Shackleton, 2014; Shackleton and Njwaxu, 2021). Kocs (2013:34) suggests that there is "an urgent need now more than ever" to focus on UGS restoration efforts in places where there is evidence of their loss, neglect and deterioration. Problems that emanate from the neglect and low prioritisation of UGS include safety and security concerns for surrounding neighbourhoods, neighbourhood value and aesthetic, deviant behaviour such as drug abuse, violence, and vandalism of property such as in cemeteries and parks (Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo, 2019). Empirical evidence of these problems plaguing communities grappling with the neglect of UGS include the April 2023 vandalism of Braamfontein cemetery, Singh (2023), a dead body that was found at a park in Pretoria in the month of April 2016, Mahlase (2016) andthe 2015 Rhodes Park double murders (Whittles, 2015; *Episode 116 The Rhodes Park Murders*, 2023)- to mention but a few.

UGS in neglect and deterioration are one area that indicates challenges of urban decay in Johannesburg. Previous research suggests that the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) has in the past decades been under immense pressure to address such issues of urban degeneration or decay (Murray, 2010; Bosaka and Bénit-Gbaffou, 2016; Hadebe, 2016; Bénit-Gbaffou, 2018;

Mokgere, 2018). Moreover, as a response to UGS degeneration there has been an observed rise in what Benit-Gbaffou (2018) notes as middle-class taking over the management of parks. Similarly, Duca (2013) and Murray (2015) also observe the rise of private urbanism characterised by gated communities and the commercialisation of public commons as a trending response to challenges of urban decay. Albeit that being the case in Johannesburg, South Africa, notable remedial efforts or responses to degenerating UGS can be explained through the concept of ecological restoration, a concept which is often used to explain and describe restoration efforts in forestry conservation. This research thus employs this concept in the context of UGS referring to the Wilds and the initiatives that have been put in place to transform it into a usable and good quality public space.

Ecological restoration is defined in many ways (Higgs, 1997, 2003; Gobster, 2001; Davis and Slobodkin, 2004; Kocs, 2013). However, one definition that I find best suited for this research is that of Higgs (2003:110) who writes: "ecological restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged or destroyed". Ecological restoration is not only significant for the optimization of the benefits of UGS and biodiversity conservation but in also providing an opportunity for the expression of 'visions of nature' particularly by local people based on their social, economic, political, religious and cultural values (Gobster, 2001; Kocs, 2013). For example, in a context like South Africa with a spatial and racial history of segregation, discrimination and exclusion, restoration allows for the reconfiguration and re-imagination of public open spaces such as parks and botanical gardens. In addition, restoration can also provide opportunities for the strategic and conscious planning of the vegetation type that will be supported by the existing landscape and prevailing climatic conditions (Del Tredici, 2004). This view emanates from evidence that Mensah (2014) gives an account for. The author states that in Africa most urban challenges emanate from the nature of urban planning practices. These practices include the use of outdated and rigid master plans and the problem with this is that there is thus no room for adaptation to current occurrences that might require a new mode of operation and strategies.

1.2 Statement of the research problem

Many scholars have investigated emerging trends in private urbanism and the end of public space (Banerjee, 2001; Cornwall, 2008; Nissen, 2008; Murray, 2010; Talen, 2010; Duca, 2013; Bradlow, 2021). Observed incapacitation or inability of local governments to deliver city services of quality standards to the satisfaction of the public is one of the reasons leading to

class divisions and inequalities in the city. Middle-class to high income people with the financial standing of opting for quality services to their liking resort to privatised developments. These developments take the shape of gated communities, estates, and City Improvement Districts (CIDs) (Murray, 2010; Duca, 2013; Bosaka and Bénit-Gbaffou, 2016). *Inter alia* what private urbanism does is reproduce the apartheid system of separate development and exclusion of certain groups of lower class who cannot afford paying for supplementary services other than those provided by local government.

In the context of this research, scholars postulate 'the end of public space' through public participation by park user groups (Murray, 2010; Duca, 2013). Moreover, Madden (2010) supports this claim by stating that community participation in UGS which may allow for participants' freedom to design and redefine a space represents a new dawn of 'an end to public space'. In South Africa UGS have a colonial and apartheid history of being used as a tool for social control, segregation and exclusion of black and poor people (Venter et al., 2020). Empirical evidence indicates that as much as the apartheid administration ended in 1994 with democratic elections, its legacy still lives on (Bradlow, 2021). As such, because of the value of UGS which should be accessed and benefit all members of society regardless of identity i.e., social class, race, nationality, gender, religion etc. It is imperative that this research interrogates public participation in this context to contribute theoretically and inform practice in preventing loss of public space of such great value to humans and the physical environment.

Therefore, the main argument for this research is that public participation in public open spaces blurs lines of distinction between public and private, exacerbating existing inequalities and social polarisation. The line of enquiry for this research following this argument seeks to determine how and with what implications (if any) does community involvement in UGS restoration re/produce exclusion and segregation. I aim to investigate what forms of privatisation take place in the process of UGS restoration. This is because several scholars, Benit-Gbaffou et al., (2008); Cornwall (2008); Katsaura (2015) point out that public participation studies often fail to theorise it using a critical lens. Public participation is often portrayed in optimistic terms as very important for democracy. However, this uncritical portrayal of public participation does not bring into account what Katsaura (2015) terms the 'micro-politics' of power and power relations that exclude and segregate marginalised groups.

1.3 Rationale

In the view of observed loss of public space because of privatised urbanism, it is only important that more research is undertaken to understand the form with which it takes place and factors influencing its rise. This allows for shaping discourse with which public participation in UGS restoration is understood and theorised. Unlike neighbourhood small to medium parks, the Wilds is a nature reserve well within the city and proximity to a few surrounding suburbs. The suburbs include Houghton, Killarney, Parktown, Berea and Hillbrow which means that it draws in a huge crowd of people for various uses of the park. As a result, such UGS as the Wilds present a model of community involvement which should not lead to privatisation of public goods as a lot of people stand to benefit from its use. Furthermore, the global agenda for resilient and sustainable cities advocates for the preservation and conservation of green spaces for biodiversity purposes which makes the Wilds case of restoration an important and interesting model for reclaiming degenerating UGS in Johannesburg. However, that cannot be successful if the processes are laden with salient political implications and tensions. Moreover Pestoff (2009) posits that public participation allows for an opportunity to find creative new ways of doing things that do not solely rely on state resources and funds to improve human societies and promote well-being.

1.4 Main research question

- How and with what implications does community involvement in UGS restoration re/produce exclusion and segregation?

1.4.1 Sub-questions

1. How do different stakeholders perceive and experience UGS restoration at the Wilds?
2. To what extent has co-production been successful in the restoration of the Wilds?
3. What factors contribute to community participation in UGS restoration?

1.5 Contextual consideration

The chosen study site for this research is the Wilds Nature Reserve located in the affluent suburbs of Houghton and Killarney Johannesburg, South Africa (see fig 2 below). Johannesburg is a metropolitan city found in the wider Gauteng province amongst the 9 that South Africa has as indicated on the map below in fig 1. The specific focus on Johannesburg is because of its status as one of the world's largest man-made forests (Schäffler, and Swilling, 2013; Bobbins et al, 2019; Venter et al., 2020). An interesting fact, for the health of the city

and its residents, Fitchett, and Raik, (2021) state that 16% of Johannesburg's terrestrial land are UGS with over 10 million trees and 600 parks. However, despite Johannesburg statistics for UGS, a disturbing detail is how they are unevenly distributed across the city, with more affluent neighbourhoods being defined by how green they are while poor ones like in the townships have less to none (Bobbins et al., 2019).

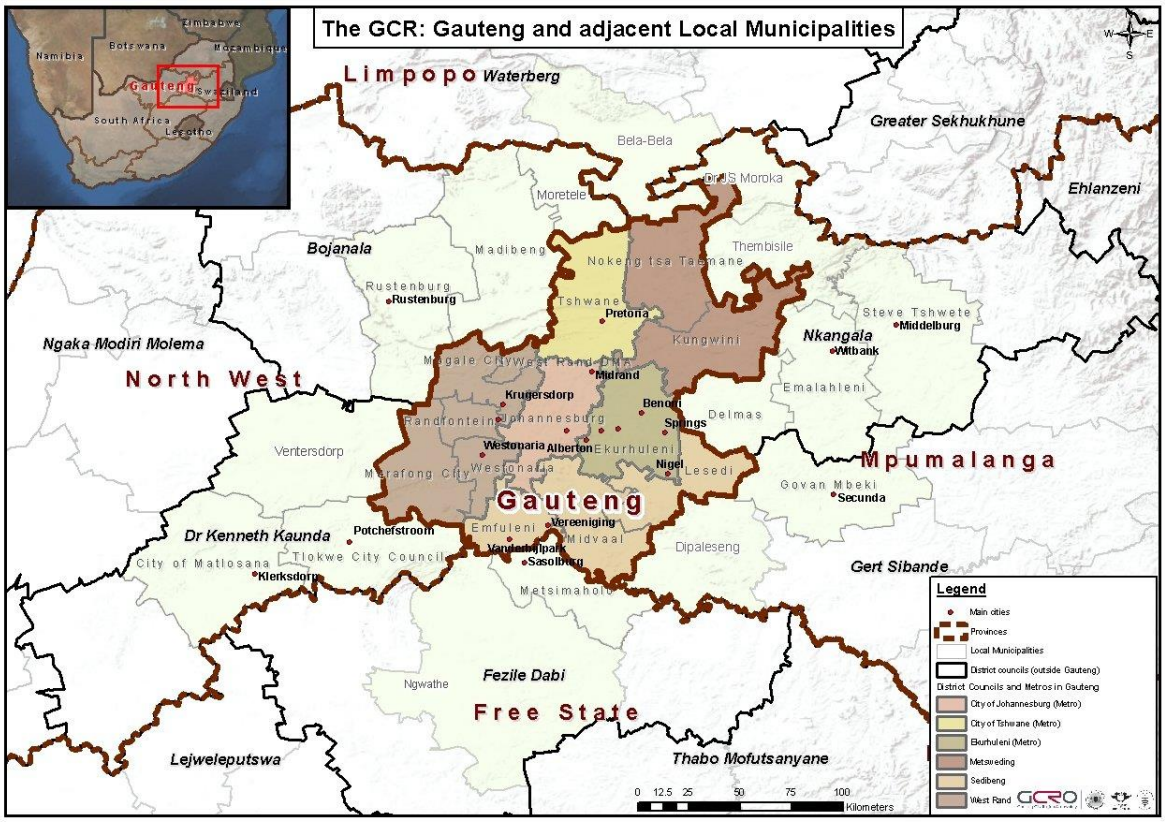

Figure 1: Map showing the Gauteng City Region. Source: (GCRO, 2010).

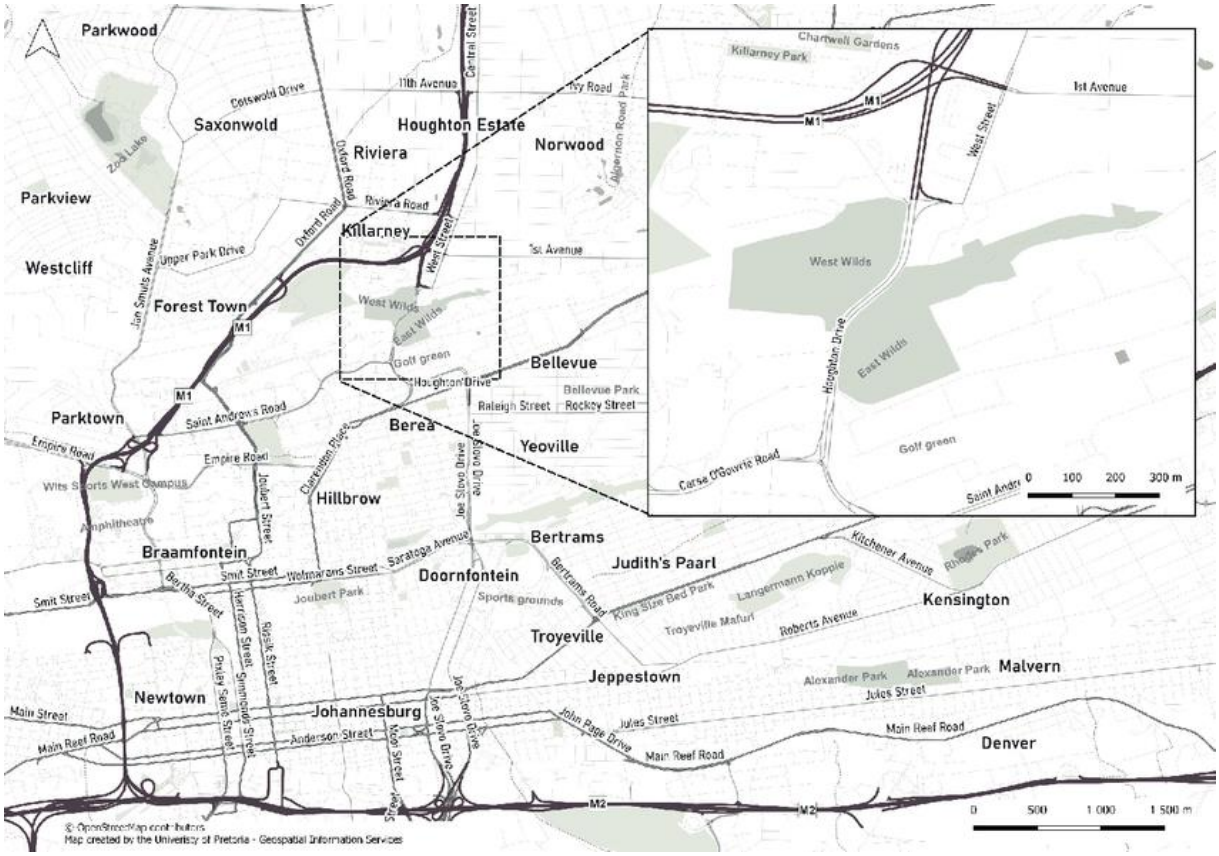

Figure 2: Map showing location of the Wilds in Johannesburg. Source: (Gregory, 2023).

The Wilds Nature Reserve is a 16 hectares green space in Houghton, Johannesburg South Africa. The piece of land was donated to the CoJ in 1924 by the Houghton Estate Co and declared a National Monument in 1981 (Mabena, 2019). Although in this research I continuously loosely use the term 'park' to refer to the Wilds, it is formally not classified as one. The Wilds is a nature reserve and in addition regarded as a heritage site and national monument (Mabena, 2019; Delaney, 2020; Brown, 2022; Joseph, 2022; Gregory, 2023). As a public open green space, the Wilds is guided by the provisions made in the Johannesburg Public Open Spaces By-laws of 2004. The provisions place the Wilds and many other green spaces, 2000 in total under the management and care of the municipal entity Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ) established in the year 2000 (de Vries and Kotze, 2016).

Initial thoughts and assumptions going into this research were that the case study in question was a model of community led UGS restoration. These assumptions were made from my personal pre-study observations from a social media park user group Friends of the Wilds that I am a member of. In addition, the assumptions were made from some of the material I had read online (Blogs and Newspaper articles) written about the Wilds Nature Reserve (hereafter the Wilds) (Mabena, 2019; Delaney, 2020; Brown, 2022; Joseph, 2022; Gregory, 2023). My

conclusions from these observations were that interested individuals, some residents of nearby suburbs such as Parktown, Killarney and Houghton had mobilised to revive and restore the Wilds to its 'former glory'. Hence some of the major objectives of this research were to determine the nature of co-production (if any), relationships between community participants and JCPZ, community participants' experiences of the restoration process, individual and collective motivations for participation. Over the course of the research my assumptions and preconceived ideas changed based on empirical evidence gathered through methods and techniques to be outlined later in the report.

The term 'local communities' in this research is used as per the definition provided for by the CoJ Public Open Space By-Laws of 2004. They define local communities to mean any of the following criteria:

> "(a) residents of the area in which a public open space is situated; (b) the ratepayers of the area in which a public open space is situated; and (c) any civic organisation and non-governmental or private sector organisation or body which are involved in local affairs in the area in which a public open space is situated" (CoJ, 2004:4).

In addition, the adopted definition is provided for by part (c) because of the provision of JCPZ Memorandum of Association (MOU) which requires park user groups seeking working partnerships with them to be registered Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs). For this report, it is important to highlight early on that in the case of the Wilds it was established that there is currently no standing committee representing Friends of the Wilds, and the group is still in the process of becoming an NPO. As such the use of 'community participants' in this report refers to individual members who were identified from a Facebook group 'Friends of the Wilds' as active participants showing signs of involvement in the restoration process in their individual capacities. How I came to notice these members participation in the group was through my membership dating prior to the inception of this research. Through 'invented or invited' spaces local communities interested in the regeneration and restoration of UGS mobilise to form park user groups often referred to as 'Friends of (name of park)' (Cornwall, 2008). The Friends groups thus operate as NPOs for legitimacy reasons to facilitate co-management of UGS with responsible public institutions such as JCPZ.

1.6 Chapter overview

In this introductory chapter I have presented the main argument for this research which is that community participation in public open spaces blurs lines of distinction between public and private, exacerbating existing inequalities and social polarisation. Despite Johannesburg and the greater Gauteng region being considered as one of the world's largest man-made forests, UGS are disproportionately distributed. It is therefore important that where available, public open green spaces should be maintained as such to avoid the risk of privatization and commodification which may further exclude those marginalized from their access. The chosen study site, the Wilds nature reserve is a unique case study for its different attributes and different identities as a heritage site and national monument. The significance of this is in how it informs different actors meaning making of the space which plays an integral role in influencing the restoration process and its outcomes.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter outlines reviewed literature relevant in shaping the course of this research. As the conceptual framework below in fig 3 would show, this study is informed by an understanding that the natural environment does not occur in a vacuum. Nature has existed to serve humans and humans in turn have and should mutually reciprocate by respecting, preserving and taking care of nature for the benefit of living and non-living occupants of earth. However, human-nature relationships have not been mutually benefitting with anthropogenic activities that have been detrimental to the environment and biodiversity. Governance of natural resources has also been a bone of contention for a long time given its role and contribution to socio-environmental justice. In this chapter I therefore provide a detailed account of how all these issues connect, their implications for humanity and the environment and relevance for this research study. Concepts reviewed include the conceptualization of UGS, Urban Ecological Restoration (UPE), community participation, political ecology, segregation and exclusion as well as privatisation of public open spaces.

2.1 Situating UGS

The climate crisis experienced through increased temperatures, reduced annual precipitation leading to severe droughts in Sub-Saharan region and flooding occurrences as well as the turn of the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in renewed interest and focus on UGS. UGS are now increasingly recognized for their value in climate adaptation and mitigation strategies by aiding urban resilience. Moreover, during the pandemic with lockdown restrictions, people had renewed appreciation for outdoors, clean air, exercise and social interaction which was denied for a while with measures to control the spread of the virus. However, the concept of UGS has a long history dating back as far back as the 6th century (Van Leeuwen, Nijkamp, and de Noronha Vaz, 2010). From the 18th to the 20th century the concept gained more traction by theories such as the 'Garden City Model' introduced by British Town Planner Ebenezer Howard (Manyani, 2019).

Much of the history of UGS has been implicated in segregation and exclusion of other groups of people along racial, gender and class lines (Bobbins et al., 2019; Byrne, 2012; Morris, 2004;

Taylor, 1999; Venter et al., 2020). In the United States for example, Banerjee (2001) explains that park designs of the 19th century were largely enjoyed by upper class populations. This is because they were largely positioned at the cities' peripheries making accessibility by low-income populations difficult. Such discriminatory and exclusionary designs are continuously being rejected as more and more people recognize the value of green spaces and advocate for their rights to the city. Talen (2010) suggestions for more accessibility of UGS is that it is better to have them fragmented and spatially spread-out as opposed to having few big ones scarcely populated in the city.

2.1.1 Segregation, exclusion, and privatisation

A study by Bobbins et al., (2019) on the distribution of green infrastructure in Johannesburg, Gauteng province of South Africa found that it is disproportionately distributed between the northern and southern suburbs. Northern suburbs of Johannesburg are largely high-income low density whereas southern suburbs form most parts of the townships where low-income people reside. This spatial dynamic is synonymous with a lot of post-colonial countries, one other example being Zimbabwe. In Bulawayo for example, the Eastern parts of the city are the low-density affluent suburbs while the West has the less affluent townships. In South Africa, the system of segregation was imposed by the apartheid administration in 1948 to separate black people from white people (Venter et al., 2020; Ngcukaitobi, 2021). The Afrikaner word apartheid in English translates to 'separation'.

The apartheid law which came into effect in South Africa in 1948 focused on separate development for black and white people (Venter et al., 2020). The apartheid law as well as the Group Areas Act of 1950 were set to privilege white people in all aspects of development while black people were dispossessed of land, oppressed, and excluded from participating in public spaces. How UGS are significant for this research is because of how they were weaponized and used as a tool for separation, exclusion, and segregation (Venter et al., 2020). The reason why Gregory (2023); Bobbins et al., (2019); Benit-Gbaffou (2018) and many other studies have confirmed the disproportionate distribution of UGS, with northern suburbs such as Houghton, Sandton, Parktown being greener while townships such as Diepsloot, Alexandra have close to none is based on the historical context of apartheid.

My interest in UGS began in 2018 when I was working for Bulawayo City Council under the Environmental Health Department. The work I was doing exposed me to almost every part of

the city, so I started noticing and asking myself why Eastern suburbs had street trees while Western ones didn't. In addition, having a rural background means that I have always had the privilege of being exposed to the natural environment and enjoyed the benefits of what it has to offer. However, in an urban setting coming from the township it had never occurred to me that nature or UGS are a 'privilege' afforded and denied some. This revelation is something that occurred to Fredrick Law Olmstead also called 'Lord of the Parks'. Fredrick Law Olmstead is said to have visited England and was admiring the English gardens with their designs and manicured lawns. However, what he could not comprehend was how something as simple and naturally occurring as vegetation could be a privilege only enjoyed by a few elite individuals (Martin, 2011).

History of UGS suggests otherwise, that it is not a simple concept; urban vegetation is not a 'free for all' commodity but rather a highly politicised and complex phenomenon used as a weapon and tool for social control, exclusion, and segregation (Taylor, 1999; Byrne, Wolch and Zhang, 2009; Byrne, 2012). To substantiate this claim, Venter et al., (2020) argue that the system of apartheid did not end with the colonial regime but instead its legacy continues to be (re)produced. The authors posit that apart from the environmental injustices in the access and distribution of UGS, they are getting privatised in a situation like the colonial period. The privatisation of UGS creates not only environmental but urban injustices as well because of the inequality gap that they create between rich and poor communities (Murray, 2010). What this means in the context of this research is that the UGS neglect and low prioritisation by responsible authorities leads to their deterioration and degradation. As such, communities refusing to witness the loss of UGS and problems that arise from neglect, sometimes mobilise, and offer their voluntary services and participation to the municipality. It is the complications of 'micro-politics' as Katsaura (2015) would put it, that come into play in community participation that then leads to the privatisation of UGS, or 'end of public space' as noted by (Madden, 2010).

2.2 Ecological restoration

This research study is embedded in the broader concept of ecological restoration or restoration ecology. Ecological restoration refers to efforts in the prevention, control, recovery or repair of degraded ecosystems and landscapes (Almassi, 2017; Elias et al., 2021). Aldo Leopold, an American conservationist, naturalist and ecologist was of the belief that ecological restoration is about healing and taking care of what is not well, has been destroyed, neglected and

damaged. Following this line of thought it can be deduced that ecological restoration is not an exclusively scientific practice as it also hinges on human morals and values. One of the values that Aldo Leopold details in his seminal work *A sand in County almanac,* a collection of essays written over time and published in 1949 is that of communion and community. Leopold proposed that humans' values of community should extend to include other species of whom he would refer to as "the land community". Aldo Leopold argued that if humans saw themselves as one with the land community which includes all other non-human species, then they have the capacity to spillover their love, care and respect to species beyond themselves. Therefore, UGS restoration, particularly by individuals who volunteer and mobilise each other into a community taking care of the environment is a classic example of what Aldo Leopold proposed as a remedy for bringing forsaken land to life. When human beings see themselves as one community with the land community, there's capacity for more restoration of nature, respect for everything else non-human and their roles on earth and harmony between humans' development and existence of nature.

Nature is the life giving and maintaining force for all living things on planet earth. The evolution and conceptualisation of humans' relationship with nature has largely been documented in various fields, forms and platforms (Okuyade, 2013). Much of the literature on the Human-nature relationships documents the shift from positive relationships to negative ones particularly from the industrial revolution era which is argued to have begun in Europe. (Biewen and Westervelt, 2021). From this point of focus there are conflicting views regarding UGS, the first one being that owing to the industrial revolution and urbanisation there has been great loss of urban nature and subsequent biodiversity (Kocs, 2013). The second view is that the realisation of the consequences of rapid industrialization and urbanisation on human wellbeing led urban planners to think of ways to counter these effects and one such way was the development of garden cities (Tizot, 2018). Despite such efforts, scholarship points to the fact that there has been rapid loss of UGS globally because of various factors such as rapid population growth in urban areas, rapid rate of urbanisation and low prioritisation by governments (Mensah, 2014).

The above-mentioned scenarios are the reason for scholarship and efforts of ecological restoration. These efforts seek to preserve and conserve urban nature for all its various benefits but also for the conservation of urban biodiversity, which is being lost at unimaginable rates, with some species being at risk of extinction (Klaus and Kiehl, 2021). Notable definitions of

ecological restoration relevant to this research's discussion include that of Higgs (1997) in Kocs (2013:27) who posited that definitions of ecological restoration should always respond to questions of the "social, cultural, economic, political, inequality and inclusion". Higgs (2003:109) defined ecological restoration as:

> The process of assisting the recovery and management of ecological integrity. Ecological integrity includes a critical range of variability in biodiversity, ecological processes and structures, regional and historical context, and sustainable cultural practices.

The above definition and analysis by Klaus and Kiehl (2021) emphasise the need for paying great attention to the preservation of the historical integrity of a green space. This suggestion however, pardons other unfavourable historical circumstances in places such as South Africa with an apartheid history of exclusion and segregation in UGS (Venter et al., 2020). Hence the reason why this research views ecological or UGS restoration as a valuable concept as it bears the potential of challenging such history by creating and redesigning inclusive spaces that are representative of everyone residing in South African urban areas. Higgs (2003:110) further defines ecological restoration in a way that specifically speaks to the research problem of this study. The definition states that "ecological restoration is the process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed." Consequently, Kocs (2013) notes that two major challenges informing ecological restoration are the coordination of various restoration ideas and interests of a space.

The second challenge is institutional knowledge of what the green space looked like before degradation such that it is restored in accordance with its initial intended use and function. As a result, what these challenges reflect is the fact that local communities who mobilise for restoration purposes will have to find ways to accommodate different interests and ideas in a way that will maintain the green space ecological, historical, cultural, social, economic, and political integrity. In summary, Kocs (2013) concurs with Davis and Slobodkin (2004) that restoration of UGS should be founded upon values rather than scientific thought on the process of restoration. What this means is that the nature of UGS should be determined by what they mean to local people rather than universalistic scientific terms (Marere, 2022). Given the above account of ecological restoration and the research problem, this research does not seek to interrogate and challenge the concept but rather to use it as a framework to draw attention to the state of UGS in South Africa. In addition, to show that not all hope is lost, local communities can and do have the agency to contribute to their restoration for the greater good of the public and the environment.

2.3 Public participation

Scholars note that since the turn of the 70s public participation has been high on the global agenda. This came from a realisation and rising demand by civil society organisations to partake in governance. With regards to service delivery in urban areas, there was also growing recognition that the traditional systems of governance and service delivery were not adequate (Joshi and Moore, 2004a; Cornwall, 2008; Murray, 2010; Abeysekera, 2015a). As a result, with civil society organisations calling for inclusive governance, more and more policies and legislation were drafted in alignment with the need and idea of promoting democratic governance. Several advantages of public participation thus include the following: a) reduced responsibility for local governments on service delivery. b) The public is not only treated as clients/end users/ customers but also as active agents of change and transformation. c) Increased accountability in both the public and private sector with every citizen being in a position of being held accountable for their in/actions. d) Promotes diversity and inclusion in the sense that all individuals have a potential of having their opinions and ideas heard, and represented in decision making, implementation of projects and programs.

Agenda 21, a global framework that came into action in 1992 paved the way for democratic governance in cities. It shifted the governance paradigm from a traditional system of governance where the government is the sole provider of public services to? Contemporary urban practices are now hinged on the idea that citizens have not only the right to participate in governance issues but also the agency to inform and shape the course of services rendered to them. In South Africa various national instruments commit to addressing the issue of public participation and emphasising its value and significance in building democratic, self-sufficient, and innovative societies. Some of these legal instruments that highlight and mandate all spheres of government to practice and enable public participation include the South African National Constitution of 1996, Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000; National Environmental Management Act 107 of 1998; White Paper on Local Government and Transformation (1998). Section two of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) acknowledges that environmental resources and infrastructure are commons. Hence, public participation facilitates the inclusion of public interest in their governance. Section two states that:

> "The environment is held in public trust for the people. The beneficial use of environmental resources must serve the public interest and the environment must be protected as the people's common heritage" (South African Government, 1999:12).

The World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (2017:12) outlines prerequisites for stakeholder collaboration and community engagement for UGS. It states that local governments have a mandate to engage with communities in planning for, designing and maintenance of UGS. In addition, it describes the significance of involving local communities. Most importantly the report emphasises that community engagement does not mean that every opinion or idea will be adhered to, however, there should be a collective consensus of the most viable plans. Similarly, Shuib et al. (2015) agree that community participation in decision making spaces is important to represent public interests.

Scholars find community participation a well-founded theoretical concept albeit conceptualised in different ways (Cornwall, 2008; Bénit-Gbaffou, 2018). Amidst the conceptual stretching of community/public participation Cornwall (2008) cautions that scholars and practitioners alike should not lose sight of the most integral part. That is, who gets to participate, why and to what end. This observation is very important for this research following the main question which seeks to determine how and with what implications does community involvement in UGS restoration (re)produce systems of exclusion.

In some parts of the world such as the United States of America (USA), Osman (2017) explains that public participation became prominent as the "Do It Yourself" mentality grew. Murray (2010) also shares the same sentiments by describing the rise of Park User groups aiming for public-private partnerships in maintaining parks such as Central Park. Participation was influenced by growing recognition of the limited capacity of local governments in delivering basic quality services such as clean safe parks (Madden, 2010; Murray, 2010). Public participation in UGS often takes the form of organised groups referred to by different terms depending on which UGS they work with. They are often termed Park User Groupsor Friends Groups which can be Friends of Parks (name of a particular park), Friends of Cemeteries (name of cemetery).

JCPZ also has several Friends groups that they work with such as Friends of the Zoo, Friends of the Wilds, Friends of Kloofendal to mention but a few. The mani function of the park user groups is to be the voice of the broader interested community of individuals. Park user groups are a research area seldom given scholarly attention and Murray (2010) is one of the few scholars to investigate park user groups as NPOs involved in the management of UGS. Using Central Park in the USA the author informs that one of the earliest trend setters for the proliferation of Friends groups is the Central Park Conservancy which was formed in 1980.

NPOs are often praised for their work in raising funds or donations that go towards the restoration and maintenance of UGS (Murray, 2010). However, some critics and empirical evidence points to the fact that concentrating power and authority to a group of individuals creates challenges of ownership and entitlement that arises from the amount of financial investment into a space through donations to the NPO. Furthermore, it creates social polarisation along class lines through new designs and activities introduced. In addition, more affluent and previously advantaged communities can 9retain quality amenities because they can afford to while those who do not and depend on government's provision are left to deal with the effects of poor service delivery (Bénit-Gbaffou, Didier and Morange, 2008; Murray, 2010; Bosaka and Bénit-Gbaffou, 2016).

2.4 Co-production

In this research I explore community participation in UGS restoration using the Wilds Nature Reserve, publicly owned, and managed by JCPZ. Therefore, in such a scenario the restoration process and its outcomes are co-produced and managed by both JCPZ the official authority and Friends of the Wilds community actors. Co-production has been extensively explored in theory and largely practiced in varied ways by different societies. From the 1970s as an outcome of deliberations from a workshop on *Political Theory and Policy Analysis* that was held at Indiana University in 1973 co-production gained traction and created opportunities for research and exploration (Abeysekera, 2015; Pestoff, 2009). One of the earlier theorists to make notable contributions in the development of the concept is Elinor Ostrom who defined it as "a process through which inputs used to provide a good or service are contributed by individuals who are not in the same organisation" (Ostrom, 1996:1073). Some scholars on co-production in the later years found this definition lacking in certain aspects. For example, Joshi and Moore (2004) critic this definition, arguing that it creates an impression that effective and efficient service delivery is only possible through public-private partnerships and collaboration. This postulation is significant for the fact that looking at co-production in that way creates challenges of lack of accountability and responsibility by local governments. Acceptance and resignation on the ability of local governments to deliver their end of the bargain creates a double burden on citizens who pay their dues for service delivery through rates and taxes.

Co-production in practice has created a lot of potential in improving the quality-of-service delivery and the quality of life for many urban dwellers. However, Bénit-Gbaffou et al., (2008) contend that if applied incorrectly, co-production has the potential for exacerbating the urban

divide and increasing inequality. The authors argue that community driven co-production creates a window of opportunity for local communities to formulate subtle ways of excluding those that they do not want. In their examples of community security forums, they talk about how various Central Improvement Districts (CIDs) in Cape Town and Johannesburg were designed to exclude hawkers, homeless people, and monitor movements of domestic workers in the 1990s. Similarly, Dorceta Taylor in her seminal article *Central Park as a model for social control: Urban parks, social class, and leisure behaviour in nineteenth-century America* (1999) gives an account of the exclusion and segregationist behaviours and attitudes towards people of colour and low-income class. The contentiousness of this issue is further explained by Bénit-Gbaffou et al. (2008:703) who observe that:

> "Communities certainly appraise differently what is socially acceptable and what is not in their direct environment and this idea is often used to legitimise their right to directly manage their environment".

The above statement thus indicates potential threats and implications of unchecked public participation. Conflicts of interests unfortunately are not limited to community participants only but also extend to between them and municipalities. Hence, such contestations are a manifestation of the dynamics of power, privilege and difference which need a critical lens to enwove and address properly for the attainment of set goals.

2.5 Political ecology

Like restoration ecology, political ecology has also evolved from only concerning itself with large scale environmental issues such as pollution, forest deforestation and degradation, etc. to include the urban landscape as well. Roberts (2020) describes political ecology as a field that is concerned with examining and analysing how intersections between economic structures and power relations drive environmental change. It interrogates the relations and interconnectedness of politics (government and governance), ecology and the environment. Moreover, political ecology seeks to make connections between environmental degradation, social inequality, poverty and hunger -concepts which are related to global justice. In essence, how human beings affect the environment and how in turn they are impacted by it.

The term political ecology was originally coined in 1935 by Frank Throne and it became more popular in the 1960s with scholars such as Michel Foucault using and linking it to questions of power (Osborne et al., 2021). In the 1980s political ecology rose to prominence as a crisis response to environmental degradation and deterioration which were a consequence of rapid

industrialization, population growth and global neoliberalism (Chiu, 2020). Political ecology thus examined the interrelations between such impacts and consequential effects of social inequality (Ibid). The focus on the dialectic relationship between nature and society in the urban realm came in the 1990s for which a term 'Urban Political Ecology' (UPE) was developed (Cornea, Véron and Zimmer, 2017; Chiu, 2020). UPE thus sought to understand, from an urban perspective, how human societies' relationship with nature shapes cities and inversely how cities shape and reshape humans' relationship with nature. Similarly, Cornea et al. (2017:1) define UPE as a concept that "examines the power relations that produce uneven urban spaces (infrastructures and natures) and unequal access to resources in cities".

Therefore, in this research I use it to refer to environmental politics in urban areas pertaining to UGS. I refer to a claim made by Roberts (2020:2) that political ecologists concern themselves with asking the following question: "whose use of, claims to and or perceptions of the environment prevail and why?". In the context of this research, this question relates to how UGS are shaped by economic, political, historical and social contexts in correlation with global phenomena such as climate change. These factors interlinked thus shape the discourse of how UGS are distributed in urban areas of South Africa as well as who gets to use them and to what end. Furthermore, using the theory of political ecology in this study I sought to interrogate such questions as the following, 1. Are there any linkages or correlations between environmental degradation and further exclusion of already marginalised groups? 2. What are the various ways and forms in which one actor seeks to exert control over the environment of other actors? 3. How do power relations manifest themselves in terms of the physical environment?

Cornea et al. (2017) note that UPE thus goes beyond the normative ideology of political ecology to include issues of urban governance. In that regard, UPE explores and interrogates governance and its alternative forms which include partnerships between the state and non-state actors. Of interest particularly for this study, is how interactions between and among various actors and their varied as well as conflicting interests shape the UGS discourse.

2.6 Conceptual framework

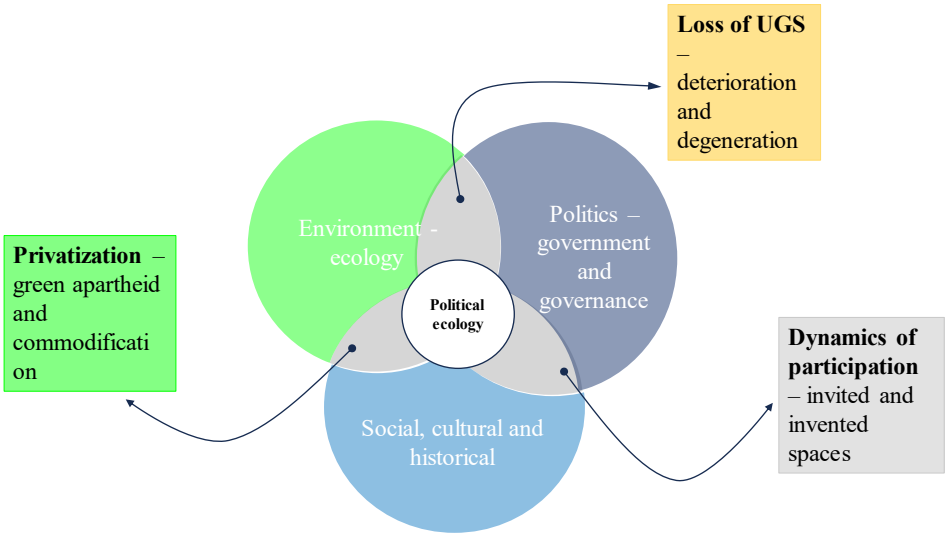

Figure 3: Diagram showing various concepts informing this research, their connections, and intersections.

The above diagram illustrates the interrelation and connectedness of the various concepts informing this research study. At the core of the research study is the concept of political ecology which is concerned with the relationships between the environment, socio-economic and political factors. It describes how these intrinsically linked factors intersect resulting in complex power dynamics that produce inequality in the access and distribution of environmental resources. The diagram also illustrates how the research enquiry begins with an environmental problem of UGS degeneration and loss attributed to various factors. The result is public participation through various channels which could be invented or invited spaces. The dynamic and complex nature of public participation might blur distinguishing lines of public or private spaces resulting in the exclusion of non-participating actors. Following this logic unchecked public participation has the potential to reproduce green apartheid, an apartheid legacy of exclusion, based on race and class.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this section I outline the research design and process followed for this research. I describe and discuss in detail sampling techniques used and formulated participant categories as well as their roles in responding to different questions for this research. Moreover, I engage in a discussion of employed methods and techniques for data collection also indicating the study limitations albeit they do not in any way invalidate the findings of this research but show that the study is not representative of all UGS in Johannesburg. In the following section I give an account of the ethical considerations that I took heed of as well as methods of choice for data analysis. Lastly, I reflect and discuss my positionality and its influence on how analyse and interpret the findings.

3.1 Research design

This study is guided by the interpretive research philosophy for a qualitative critical research methodology. The choice for this study design was aimed at understanding, from a subjective point of view, perceptions and experiences of different actors in UGS restoration of one of the biggest and controversial public open green space in Johannesburg under the management of JCPZ. In addition, the qualitative research design was chosen for its suitability in determining the main question of this research which asks whether community involvement in UGS restoration has any implications in the re/production of systems of exclusion and segregation. Moreover, the chosen research paradigm particularly the critical component allowed for the challenging and interrogation of socio-environmental injustices that largely go unquestioned in a lot of UGS scholarship. Socio-environmental inequalities in UGS distribution and access remain largely unprioritized just as much as UGS themselves when they compete with other social dynamics such as poverty alleviation, housing, and settlement (Schäffler, and Swilling, 2013). As a result, qualitative research together with interpretive and critical research methods for this study were aimed at getting a holistic understanding of social, culturaland historical context that shape and inform power and privilege dynamics in UGS. Furthermore, a simultaneous combination of semi-structured interviews with transact walks as well as participant observations, to be discussed in the following sections were chosen as suitable for this qualitative research.

3.2 Sampling

A non-probability sampling method was used to identify participants for this research using a combination of purposive and convenience techniques. Participants were grouped into four categories, and these were experts in the field of green spaces, urban resilience, and sustainability; JCPZ officials; park users who are also members of the social media Friends of the Wilds group and park users found at the Wilds (See Fig 5 below). Six participants were purposively chosen from a Facebook group that I am also a member of, 'Friends of the Wilds'. selection of these participants was based on my observations prior and after I began the research as active members, park users and participants at the Wilds. 12 participants were identified at the Wilds through convenience sampling because of the complicated nature of approaching people at a park while they are busy engaged in different activities. The choice of including this category was to have balanced views and perspectives about park use of the Wilds and the restoration process. This was important for establishing who participated in the restoration, who did not and why? to establish (if any) when and how exclusion of participation began.

Table 1: Research questions and methods of data collection

Research questions	**Data collection instruments**	**Participants' category**
How and with what implications does community involvement in UGS restoration re/produce systems of exclusion and segregation?	Semi-structured interviews, transect walks, participant observations and photographs.	
1. How do different stakeholders perceive and experience UGS restoration?	Semi-structured interviews and participant observations.	18 park users and two JCPZ officials.
2. To what extent has co-production been successful in the restoration of the Wilds?	Semi-structured interviews, transect walks and participant observations.	Two JCPZ officials and two experts.

3. What factors contribute to community participation in UGS restoration?	Semi-structured interviews	18 park users, two JCPZ officials and two experts.

Table 1 above is a summary of the research questions guiding this study as well as the data collection instruments used to respond to them following a qualitative case study approach. This approach was necessary in responding to the above questions and enabling an interpretive and critical analysis of findings.

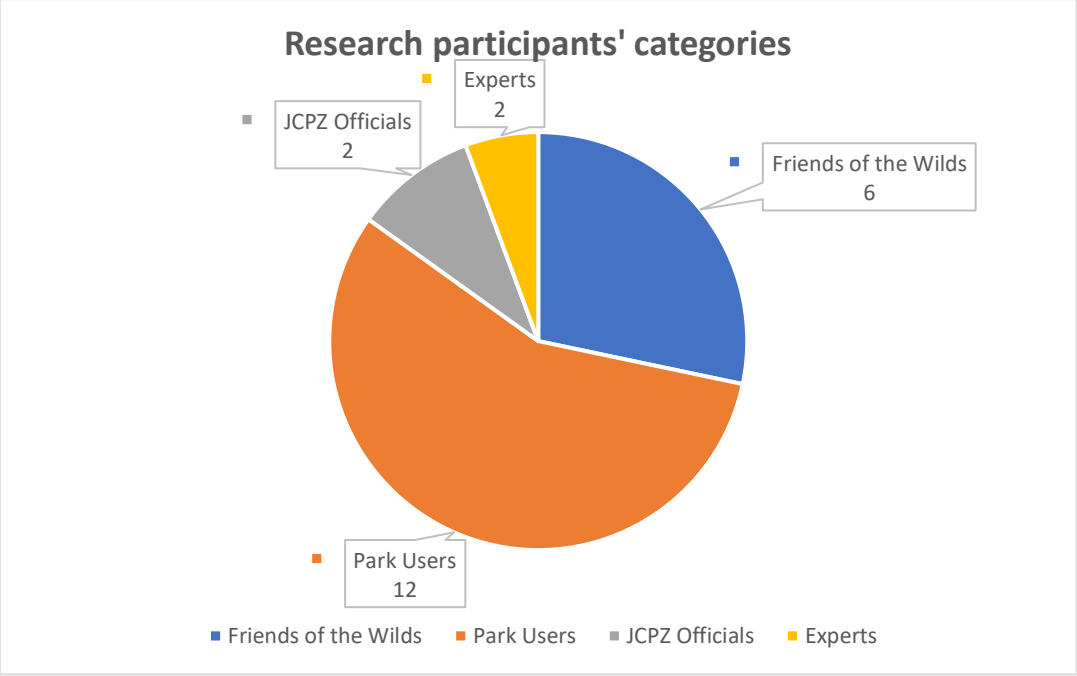

Figure 4: Total participants interviewed and their categories.

As shown in the above diagram, a total of 22 participants were interviewed, (13 female and nine male). All participants were adults above the age of 18 with the legal right and ability to consent in participating in the research. In addition, adults above the age of 18 were chosen for their lived experience as a park user, official working with parks or an expert in the field of UGS.

3.3 Data sources and collection methods

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as an appropriate data collection method for this research because of their flexibility and versatility. They allow for the collection of rich in-depth data that does not limit participants' responses (Roberts, 2013). To strengthen the data collection tool further, I incorporated transect walks. Transect walks are a hybrid data collection tool that combines the use of interviews and observations. They are a method that "connects what participants say with where they say it" (Jones et al., 2008:2). In addition, they are described as walking conversations because they are "an ideal technique for exploring issues around people's relationship with space" (Ibid).

Therefore, in the context of this research, transect walks helped me gather more insight through observations of what community participants had achieved with the Wilds restoration. That is, selections of past projects that they had contributed towards, what made them happy or unhappy about some of the finished projects, further areas for future projects and ultimately how they identify and interact with, and value the Wilds (Jones et al., 2008). The data collection process was scattered over a period of two months from September to October 2023 with one last interview conducted in early November 2023 (See table 2 below). Observations were made about restoration activities occurring at the park, finished projects, who gets to participate and use the park and how.

For ethical considerations of confidentiality and anonymity I opted for the use of Pseudonyms for this research. The use of pseudonyms in qualitative research is a common practice, they are made up names for purposes of concealing the real identities of participants (Heaton, 2022). Given the nature of this research based on a highly contentious case study of the Wilds Nature Reserve as will be explained in the later sections below, it was important that participation in this study would not compromise any individuals in any way had they chose to disclose certain information that might implicate them negatively. Consequently, for the final write up I opted for the use of pseudonyms for all participants upholding my initial word that they were guaranteed of anonymity. In addition, the use of pseudonyms for all participants was opted for uniformity's sake and relatability in terms of the names used to liken to male, female, black and white participants. Table 2 below shows a summary of all participants using pseudonyms and to which category they fell under.

Table 2: Interviewed participants over the course of three months

September 2023	Participants (Pseudonyms)	October 2023	Participants (Pseudonyms)	November 2023	Participants (Pseudonyms)
Week 1	Thomas Smith (Friends)	Week 1	1. Brenda Philips (Friends) 2. Lizzie Hamilton (Friends) 3. Khumo Ntshangase (Park)	Week 1	
Week 2	1.Melissa Campbell (expert) 2.Sibusiso Khumalo (Friends) 3. Authur Mathers (Friends)	Week 2	1. Temba Dlamini (Park) 2. Nonzwakazi Mthiyane (Park) 3. Nathan Holland (Park) 4. Sibongiseni Mlambo (Park) 5. Tshepo Hlanti (Park) 6. Palesa Sello (Park) 7. Haley Norton (Park) 8. Matshidiso Molape (Park)	Week 2	Grace Miller (Friends)
Week 3	1. Diana Andrews (Park) 2. Jonathan Abraham (Park) 3. Lebohang Mashoba (Park)	Week 3	Anita Nhlapo (JCPZ)	Week 3	
Week 4	Noleen Dladla (expert)	Week 4	Nomzamo Ngubeni (JCPZ)	Week 4	

3.3.2 Participant observations

Participant observations are a tool that allows a researcher to observe the 'unsaid', meaning that what would be left unsaid, intentionally, or otherwise during interviews could be uncovered by the researcher's own observations. However, I do acknowledge that in my observations my own positionality influenced what attracted my attention and perceptions of what was important and significant for the research. Moya (2011:79) states that:

> "… our identities predispose us to see or not see; listen to or not listen to; read or not read; cite or not cite; concern ourselves or not concern ourselves with specific other peoples, issues, and societal dynamics".

To add, my observations and transect walks were augmented by photographs of issues that participants would raise about the park with regards to the process of restoration. For example, when the Wilds was donated to the City back in 1924, one of the conditions was that it should

be maintained in its natural state with only indigenous vegetation (Sioga, 2020). Hence, some of my observations focused on how the restoration process stuck to or deviated from that. I made a note of making sure that my participant observations, and photographs did not intrude nor infringe on people's rights and privacy. Photographs taken, many of which are in the sections below, only show physical objects or elements and not have any human subjects.

3.4 Data analysis and interpretation

For data analysis I used a combination of thematic analysis as well as interpretive and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Firstly, I listened and transcribed audio recordings of the 22 conducted interviews. I also revisited my field notes to make connections and gaps compared to interview data from transcripts. I then developed codes from links, reiterative statements, and gaps of what was left unsaid or what I failed to ask. From the codes I then derived themes based on the research questions. This is because thematic analysis is a fundamental data analysis tool that helps the researcher systematically organise and arrange data. According to Braun and Clarke, (2012:57) "it is a method for systematically identifying, organising, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a dataset".

Thematic analysis can be inductive or deductive, critical attributes that make it flexible for the researcher to describe and interpret given data (Kiger and Varpio, 2020). Using inductive and deductive themes this meant that some of the identified themes were not directly linked or spoke to set out questions but provided valuable insights I might have overlooked during research formulation. Deductive themes on the other hand followed the set-out research framework and set out questions responding directly to them. As a result, while searching for themes and their social meanings I was also able to bring out participants voices, experiences, and opinions of the subject in question.

To add, Braun and Clarke (2012) argue that data should not be treated as just mere words and figures, but rather a representation of people's lived experiences, values, perceptions, and identities. Therefore, an understanding of the data as not merely words and statistics brings to the fore the validity of interpretive CDA for this research. While interpretive research is concerned with subjective experiences of participants, CDA is concerned with uncovering power dynamics that shape a discourse (Pozzebon, 2004; Van Dijk, 2015). In this research this was important for understanding the dominant discourses and narratives about the Wilds in general, the restoration process and further management. Moreover, following Cervera et al., (2006) discussion on CDA where they offer an explanation of how words convey people's

identities, values and beliefs, for this research, CDA was thus used in relation to issues of power relations, inequality and exclusion that this study sought to uncover.

3.5 Positionality and reflexivity

> *"The smooth, stoneless drive ran between squat, robust conifers on one side and a blaze of canna lilies burning scarlet and amber on the other. Plants like that had belonged to the cities. They had belonged to the pages of my language reader, to the yards of Ben and Betty's uncle in town. Now, having seen it for myself because of my Babamukuru's kindness, I too could think of planting things for merrier reasons than the chore of keeping breath in the body."* (Dangarembga, 2020: 64).



Figure 5: a (left) bright orange clivias in bloom and b (right) isolated lily sprouting bright pink flowers. Source: (Author, 2023).

The above introductory quote is an excerpt adapted from Tsitsi Dangarembga's classic novel *Nervous Conditions.* The relevance of the quote for this research is how in a few sentences, it captures my positionality in conducting this research and guides my reflections on the research process. In summary the excerpt is based on a teenage girl's thoughts about the things she was witnessing in transit from a rural area. As such the excerpt presents plurality in constructions of meanings and visions of nature. There is a disconnect in my positionality as a black woman with environmental academic experience, township upbringing and rural background. My upbringing in the township meant that growing up, I never had any exposure and interaction with UGS. My previous ideas of what they are, were renewed in this research process by some

of the encounters and confrontations I had. My preconceived ideas were that UGS are for aesthetics in the city and a privilege enjoyed by affluent people.

The encounters I had during this research concerning this disconnect and conflict of identities included repeated explanations of what UGS are and debates about their value to black people like myself as well as confrontational questions of my presence in certain activities. One peculiar incident, I had an Uber driver laugh at me the entire journey to the Wilds because he couldn't fathom why I was going to a park let alone on a very cold early morning. The following are some of his comments that stuck with me as he laughed his lungs out:

> *"Epakini? [laughs] Uya epakini? Why usiy'epakini? Usebenza khona mhlawumbe? ngoba ayinamuntu leyo paki' oya kuyo, ngikutshela ngoba ngiyayazi angithi ngiyidlula every day. Lepaki, ayinamuntu. Uzohlangana lobani kubanda kanje? [laughs] ay ngiyakutshela mina shuth' uzob' uwedwa naloyo muntu oyohlangana naye [continues to laugh hard]."*

In English translation the man was asking me a couple of questions about why I was going to the park especially on such a cold morning. Telling me that the park I was going to was usually empty, which was going to be worse on that day because it was cold. Hence, this meant that I was going to be alone with the person I was meeting. His remarks raised alarm bells in my mind as I was supposed to meet with a male participant on a weekday where the park is usually empty and quiet. In another encounter where I had joined the Wilds restoration and revival tour, I had two women come up to me and one asked me "Which paper are you from? What paper do you write for? Are you a journalist?".

What the above account does is illuminate the kind of space, academically and socio-culturally the field of UGS is in. Some of the complexities of participation in UGS, particularly for black people in cities, arise from a lack of exposure and relationship with urban nature, thus, resulting in a failure to understand their value, significance and need for participation. In the following sections I explain further in detail the influence and impact of this 'double vision' of nature on contestations over the meaning of the Wilds, where different actors know and identify with it as either of the three: nature reserve, park or heritage site. With these three different names influencing a set of actions that breed conflict and competing interests over the space. In summary, the above excerpt also highlights the importance of recognizing and acknowledging the heterogeneous nature of humans' conceptualization and relationship with nature (Nixon, 2011; Marere, 2022) as this will aid in effective co-management of public open spaces with democratic and inclusive participation.

3.6 Ethical considerations

I paid due diligence and attention to respecting and conserving participants' rights to privacy specifically with taking photographs and consent to partake in the study. I sought informed consent from participants, asking them first, if they were comfortable with participating in the study, being audio recorded as well as being quoted. Consent was sought through a consent form. In addition, an interview information sheet which gave an account of what the study was about and conditions for participation such as participants' right and freedom to withdraw from the study any time if they felt uncomfortable was also given to participants. Interview participants were also assured that any confidential information shared would be treated as such. If they did not want their identities revealed during the report pseudonyms would be used as indicated in the above table 3.1. The Wilds Nature Reserve is a highly contested space, I aimed to protect participants' rights to anonymity in the write-up so that I do not jeopardise their rights and freedom to access, participate and use the park.

3.7 Limitations

The study's qualitative methodology approach meant that the study was subjective and had biases based on my different positionalities which also influenced how I understood, interpreted and analysed certain situations and the resultant study findings. The study cannot be generalized to a broader population of Johannesburg, South Africa or park users in general because of the relatively small sample size of twenty-two (22) participants interviewed. Although the research has limited generalizability it does not invalidate the study's findings. However, it can be used as a lens with which to understand the dynamics and politics of UGS and their provision. Furthermore, the study was time constrained based on the structure of the degree which had to be completed in a period of one year. As a result, limited time was given to other research paradigms such as mixed methods which could have yielded a diverse representation of the population of park users providing a larger data pool source for analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss and provide an analysis for findings from this research. Using thematic analysis, I outline identified themes drawn from interview transcripts. The main themes derived are presented in a way that responds to the main research questions for this study. I begin the chapter with a discussion about the history and evolution of the Wilds obtained through participation in a guided tour. Further, I respond to the question on restoration perspectives by different participant categories. This is followed by description and analysis of the nature of community participation at the Wilds and its resultant outcomes.

4.1 The Wilds Revival and Restoration Tour: Context and history of the Wilds

The History of the Wilds is documented in various sites of blogs, newspaper articles as well as onsite (Mabena, 2019; Delaney, 2020; Brown, 2022; Joseph, 2022; Gregory, 2023). In October 2023 as part of my participant observations I took part in the Wilds Revival and Restoration Tour organised by the Joburg Heritage Foundation. The Tour was from 8am to 10am with two guides who gave a detailed account of the history of the Wilds from the time it was donated to CoJ in 1924 and subsequent efforts of restoration by passionate and concerned citizens. The Wilds is a 16 hectares piece of land divided into two parts (the East and West), separated by a freeway on Houghton drive. Both sides were explored with intermediate stops for explanations of certain features and processes that had been followed to have them there. The Tour was priced at R250 for non-members of the foundation with an additional R50 for online purchases. Together with my transport costs I spent a total of R500 for the Tour. I had a hard time convincing myself to participate because of the money I had to part with 'to walk around the Wilds' when I had already done so many times. What this account highlights, is the nature of exclusion from participation based on social class, privilege, and level of income. As it would turn out, the Tour comprised of middle-aged and older white people except for myself and another lady who left after the first half of the Tour. The absence and lack of participation of black people in such a context would be explained by the high levels of inequality in South Africa with more than half of the population, majority of which are black people, living in poverty (Francis and Webster, 2019).

Upon arrival, while waiting for the Tour to start, I decided to buy tea to pass time and try to fit in as I was already feeling uncomfortable seeing I was the only black person present. While preparing my tea the seller asked me why I was at the park, a question that confirmed my sense of discomfort for feeling out of place. All the while, the seller prepared my tea paying no attention to me as he focused on getting the attention of white people who were coming into the Wilds. Later, as I struck a conversation with him, I asked why he had not paid me any attention, and instead focused on greeting and welcoming white people to the park while still serving me. His response was that I was not his market and proceeded to say his market was white people who understood the concept of coffee. This made sense, given I had found the tea which cost (R25) and cookies (R10 each) expensive and further highlighting the nature and type of activities, practices and features that get instituted in favour of people from a higher income class.

Reflecting on my main question of the implications of community involvement in re/producing exclusion and segregation. It became clear that in responding to this question, attention had to be paid to such seemingly minute but subtle details of non-inclusive participation. As a result, I provide an explain and discussion of the dynamics and complexities of participation in UGS restoration in subsequent sections.

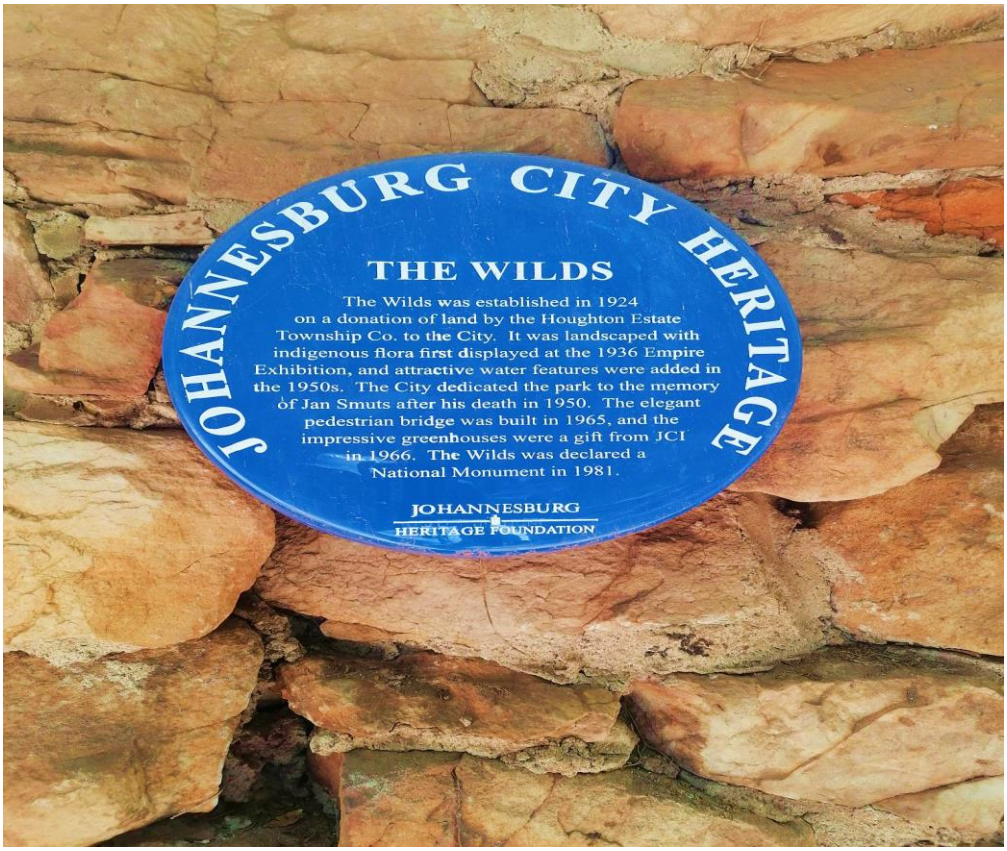

Figure 6: Johannesburg Heritage Foundation blue placard at the Wilds.

Landmark historical events of the Wilds such as those indicated in the Johannesburg Foundation blue plaque picture on fig 6 were highlighted during the Tour. The Wilds was supposed to be developed into botanical gardens. During this time, the early 1900s town planning and green space designs were developed with inspiration from English garden models (Titz and Chiotha, 2019). The Empire exhibition of 1936 provided a lot of the plant species that were donated to the Wilds.[1] However, because of the climate differences between the Western Cape and Johannesburg where most of the plants had been from, their survival has taken different forms. Most of the plants, particularly in the east side failed to adapt and have gone extinct. In the west side, because of a largely human controlled ecosystem with interventions such as weeding, irrigation and slope control, some of the vegetation has since adapted. One of the Tour guides explained that although some of the 1936 vegetation adapted to the Johannesburg climate, humans' habit of imposing and trying to control nature usually has more consequences than gains. Upon having a conversation with the guide later, she made a comment that, "nature is not for the idle". She explained that what she meant by this was that

[1] The Empire Exhibition was a landmark gathering in South Africa that brought together people from all over the country and the Empire. It was also intended as a celebration of the City of Johannesburg's jubilee, 50years after the discovery of gold.

once one starts interfering and manipulating nature in whatever form, it requires that they continue. The implication is that the natural environment has its own way of reproducing, regeneration, resilience, and evolution. Once humans disturb natural ecosystems and impose interventions, it exerts a lot of pressure through time, labour, and resources to maintain the status quo.



Figure 7: Photographs showing landscape differences between the east (left) and west (right) Wilds. Source: (Author, 2023).

Hence, with the case of the Wilds, the west section which resembles a combination of a tropical forest and garden, has a front lawn that people love for picnicking and relaxing is however more demanding in terms of maintenance. Also, because of repeated manipulation it is not so much a self-surviving and reproducing ecosystem such that should a natural disaster or accident such as fire occur, its self-recovery is highly unlikely. Whereas the east section has been pretty much left to thrive on its own with limited manipulation, which has meant that it is still on its regeneration process back to what the climate and environment of the area permits, which is savannah grasslands. Other notable challenges from humans' imposition on nature in the case of the Wilds are that, as a natural grassland, it has the capacity to absorb water and allow it to

infiltrate through the soil, preventing soil and water erosion. However, on the western side, that capacity is reduced, which requires improvised ways of doing so, with one such being a practice of laying logs across slopes as shown in the photograph below.



Figure 8: Photograph showing logs laid across a slope to prevent soil erosion. Source: (Author, 2023).



Figure 9: Undergrowth by *dieties* and on the top left *erica* plant growing into a tree, a sign of adaptation. Source: (Author, 2023).

Another challenge for disturbed land is fighting weeds. The guide explaining this commented: "We're disturbing the earth all the time, the more we disturb the earth the more you invite weeds in." In addition, proliferation of weeds is caused by the spatial position of the Wilds in the middle of a city. This makes the risk of cross pollination and attacks by invasive exotic or alien species from surrounding gardens high. One plant that has been used to prevent the propagation of weeds is the *dietes*, an indigenous perennial, evergreen plant used in most botanical gardens.

As much as the Tour was educative and instrumental in spreading environmental awareness to the public, it appeared to have two agendas. These were one: a call for continued support in heritage preservation and two: a name and shame for JCPZ neglect of the Wilds for years until private citizens stepped up. Participants were made aware that had it not been for the brave efforts of individuals who pioneered the restoration process the Wilds would not be what it is now. What narratives like these do is perpetuate a one-sided single story. A story where JCPZ is the enemy of progress and innovation thus limiting any efforts from the public to seek effective modes of partnerships that will ensure continued development of UGS. Furthermore, the dominant narrative of heritage preservation poses several questions. Firstly, why heritage and not environmental preservation? Secondly, whose heritage is being preserved, how and to

what end? In exploring these questions, it is certain that given the history of not only the Wilds but UGS in South Africa, the heritage associated with them is that which excluded black people from any forms of participation, access, and use.

4.2 "It's citizens reclaiming their turf": The Wilds restoration

4.2.1 Gen Z vs Friends

As discussed in the methodology section, participants in this research were classified into four main categories and these were experts, JCPZ officials, members of the Facebook group (Friends of the Wilds) and random park users on site at the Wilds. From collected data, new participant categories were further created for in-depth analysis and discussion of the findings. These were as follows: first, '18-35' group which henceforth I refer to as Generation Z. Generation Z often called Gen Z is a generational category of people believed to be born in the range of 1997-2010 (Dimock, 2019). In distinguishing between what are referred to as Millennials and Gen Z, Dimock states that these generation timelines are not science based but rather arbitrary ranges. I therefore use this colloquial term to describe and discuss views expressed by these young people in the 18-35 age range. Second, 'Friends' who consisted mostly of (35-60) and the (60+). Participants in the Friends category were people who for one reason or another were part of the Friends of the Wilds Facebook group. Those interviewed for this research fell in the age range of 35+ and were well informed about the Wilds from its history as well as dynamics of management. In addition, they also happened to, for one reason or another, be part of a Facebook group, Friends of the Wilds.

One striking contrast between Gen Z and Friends was the knowledge of or lack thereof about restoration and management dynamics at the Wilds. Firstly, all Gen Z spoken to, albeit frequent or seldom users, admitted to having no prior knowledge that the Wilds had undergone restoration over the years since 2015. Secondly, they were unaware of social media groups of either the Wilds or other parks around Johannesburg. Thirdly, they were of the idea and impression that UGS in Johannesburg were solely managed by JCPZ. Various conclusions can be drawn from or attributed to these findings, and they are as follows. All participants in the Gen Z category were fairly new and irregular users of UGS around Johannesburg. Timelines for participants in the Gen Z group did not exceed more than five years of knowledge about and use of the Wilds. This then means that there is a possibility of lack of vested interest in something one has no direct benefits from, attachment, sense of belonging nor sentimental value attached to it (Maseko, 2022).

Another possible deduction comes from the fact that all Gen Zs interviewed were not permanent residents or residents at all to any of the surrounding neighbourhoods of Killarney, Houghton, Parktown, Hillbrow and Berea. Therefore, as non-residents of nearby communities, Gen Zs acquired their information about the Wilds from word of mouth or Google Map for "fun and safe spaces to hangout". Such sources or sites would therefore not have elaborate information about the history and evolution of the space, possible need for participation in maintaining and reviving the space, etc. Moreover, the need for participation in UGS restoration would make more sense for community members who live and own property or houses in the area. Property owners would vehemently want to protect and maintain neighbourhood aesthetic and value by engaging in practices that ensure the park is kept in the best possible condition. This would be in the interest of also enjoying it as a utility, preventing unwanted attention for occupation by homeless people and a rise in crime.

However, despite Gen Zs' limited knowledge on UGS dynamics and the restoration that had taken place at the Wilds, there was consensus among the Gen Z group that if opportunities of participation in UGS were available to them they would participate. Their reasons for this were that they saw it as a way of giving back to the community, they would apply their varied knowledge and skills to the restoration process. Moreover, regardless of their understanding of the Wilds being under JCPZ management, they rejected the dominant thinking of the Friends participants, which is that JCPZ is solely responsible for the neglect and deterioration of the Wilds. All Gen Zs believed that both the public as "end users", as one participant Khumo Ntshangase put it, and the JCPZ which has a mandate, were responsible for ensuring that the park was kept in optimal usable conditions. Again, this apolitical standpoint of Gen Zs could be explained by the above-mentioned characteristics of limited knowledge or exposure to UGS, non-residency to surrounding neighbourhoods resulting in possible detachment from the space.

Referring to this group as Gen Z was also influenced by some of their attributed characteristics observed by Dimock (2019). The characteristics point to them exhibiting a more positive, liberal, and flexible outlook on life's issues such as politics, culture, and the economy. Dimock (2019) states that Gen Zs are a generation that displays traits of willingness to change and adapt their understanding on even more complex and controversial issues of gender and race. These traits, however, contrast with some views about young people that were held by some participants in the Friends category. These participants expressed having noticed limited use of the park by young people to which they attributed as lack of love and passion for nature. To

the Friends participants this was worrying as they reflected on questions of what that meant for the future of UGS.

Three out of six participants from the Friends category also expressed concerns with common stereotypes of young people in public spaces. While Friends were concerned with the limited presence of young people and expressed the desire to have them access the space more, they were also sceptical about it. The scepticism arose from observed stereotypes of young people exhibiting deviant behaviours in public spaces. The concerns were around issues of young people reappropriating the Wilds, not following set rules, and disturbing the status quo of cleanliness, safety, and peacefulness. However, regardless of concerns about possible havoc, playing loud music, littering, and painting graffiti on walls and rocks by young people, some participants in the Friends category held a more positive outlook about the possibility of increased access and use of the Wilds by young people. As an example, one participant expressed belief that Gen Zs also referred to as "screenagers" because of their dynamic use of the internet and social media could play an integral role in marketing the Wilds and encouraging more young people to participate. To conclude, this comparison of Gen Zs and the Friends is another highlight of the non-inclusive form of participation in the Wilds restoration. As a result, their exclusion leads to a lack of representation of their needs, ideas and interests which has ripple effects for future custodianship of the Wilds.

4.2.2 Stewards vs Users

Findings from this research are synonymous with discussions laid out by Murray (2010) about Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs). Murray contends that public participation by NPOs does two things. Firstly, it reduces local governments' responsibility of taking care of public spaces. Secondly, because NPOs represent much of public interests and needs for a space they thus help create positive outcomes for that space. In this research, focusing on the Wilds Nature Reserve which has been under restoration by community participants 'Friends of the Wilds' which is now an NPO, I posit that they have attained the same outcome for the space. However, I argue that in the process there is the creation of the 'other' by those participating in the restoration. The other (users), in contrast to stewards (the participants) are created because of their non-participation in UGS restoration. Non-participation is attributed to various reasons such as lack of or limited knowledge and awareness on UGS management and civic participation. Mpofu and Steyn (2021: 1) note that:

> "These dispensable others and objects of power are found everywhere as black people, women, the poor and homeless, refugees and foreigners, gay, lesbian, queer and trans people, the old and vulnerable, people living with disabilities and other others."

Hence, the trouble with this is in how social constructions of othering non-hegemonic groups marginalizes and excludes them producing inequalities and different forms of subtle to invisible violence.

Another important detail associated with the dichotomy of stewards and users is policing and surveillance. Similarly, Middelmann (2021) and Taylor (1999) point out that there is formal and informal policing and surveillance at public spaces. In this context, informal policing, and surveillance of "social behaviour" as Taylor (1999) calls it, is twofold. The first one is directed at JCPZ as an organisation and the other at 'other' park users. Some park users who see themselves as the stewards or custodians of the Wilds find it their responsibility to monitor and control behaviour and code of conduct of other users. However, on the side of JCPZ a question emerges of whether such should be regarded as policing and surveillance or accountability. It can be argued that the current state of the Wilds being a well maintained UGS is because of the presence of community actors and their constant efforts in holding JCPZ to account for service delivery.

A 2019 report by JCPZ *Transforming Public Parks into Safe and Inclusive Community Spaces: Lessons on collaboration and participation from the City of Joburg* acknowledges that there is more to parks than the normative identification as public open green spaces. The report investigates this idea from a design perspective and the motive of designing spaces that communicate the difference and diversity of Johannesburg individuals and communities. By difference and diversity, this speaks to issues of physical attributes of people's identities and socio-cultural ones that result in people feeling a sense of belonging, being welcome and represented by a space. Similar to this line of thought Duca (2013) frames her argument as a shift from the normative view of segregation as only pertaining to spatiality. Hence, in this research I also go beyond this normative conceptualization and conceptualise segregation as also relating socio-cultural dynamics of belonging and representation.

Public open space bylaws reiterate the importance of developing public open spaces in the interest of the collective public and not just certain interests' groups. This principle was backed up by Nomzamo Ngubeni (pseudonym), a City official who expressed that engagement with park user groups was not inclusive. Nomzamo felt that park user groups normally represent a

minority of the whole park user population hence their engagement with City Parks was not representative at all. In addition, Nomzamo mentioned that in her view inclusive planning, design and implementation meant engagement with various stakeholders across the board. Interestingly, the JCPZ 2019 report found that inclusivity in UGS restoration must take into consideration the heterogeneity of park users. UGS literature that neutralises and romanticises the use and purpose of UGS creates a certain profile of desirable and acceptable park users and code of conduct (Taylor, 1999; Murray, 2010). Murray (2010) also remarks on this referring to the privatisation of public spaces and adds that some of its criticisms include how resultant designs, re/shaping of the space tends to be inclined towards representations of the middle and upper classes. Moreover, Benit-Gbaffou et al., (2008:703) state that:

> "Communities certainly appraise differently what is socially acceptable and what is not, in their direct environment and this idea is often used to legitimise their right to directly manage their environment."

As a result of this profile design, certain groups of people are closed out from accessing and using these public open spaces. Hence, JCPZ 2019 report presents an argument that some of these groups (homeless and waste recyclers) who are usually stereotyped as the undesirables in spaces such as parks are double victims. This is because they suffer rejection and further marginalisation because of structural poverty and inequality. In Johannesburg UGS homeless people and waste recyclers have often been instrumental to JCPZ in fighting crime, acting as "the eyes and ears of parks and public spaces" (Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo, 2019).

Noleen Dladla, one of the experts interviewed, observed the following: "Many at times these issues arise because there's still no clear guidelines of who the is community and who has the right to represent the community". This statement is significant for rejecting the illusion created using words such as community and public in 'participation' implying there's inclusivity, representation, and democracy. This rings true in the case of the Wilds as it was established from one of the MOU meetings I attended, that unlike other Friends who had standing committees and formal working structures and relationships with JCPZ. Friends of the Wilds had neither and to pave a way forward they were tasked to finalise their process of becoming an NPO and establishing a committee.

JCPZ efforts in developing and nurturing public-private partnerships are evident albeit still not well developed. However, as pointed out by Nomzamo Ngubeni, JCPZ has yet to invest in the development of skilled personnel in stakeholder engagement as well as prioritizing monitoring and evaluation. This is because after partnerships are formed and community actors propose

and implement projects, it is important to monitor and ensure that the publicness of a space is still maintained. In addition, ensure that no one is discriminated, excluded o deterred from participation in any way. As a result, those who volunteer their services in UGS restoration should not entitle themselves with a sense of ownership of a public open space and superiority over other users who do not.

4.3 Community (mis)participation

An important question pertaining to public participation is who participates, how and why. A sub-question guiding this research enquiry is: what factors contribute to community participation in UGS restoration? In the context of this research posing this question is important also following some of the research questions guiding this enquiry. The main question sought to investigate how and with what implications community involvement in UGS restoration re/produces systems of exclusion and segregation. While one sub-question sought to determine the factors contributing to community participation in UGS restoration. Evident from findings of participation in the Wilds restoration is that as much as it is not invited participation (to be discussed below), it is also not inclusive participation.

4.3.1 Gender

UGS with all their values and significance to society should be a resource accessible to all living in the city. Access and benefit to UGS should not discriminate, exclude, and segregate other groups of people based on class, race, gender, etc. However, research and empirical evidence suggest that that is not the case in UGS. For example, women are often excluded from parks, limiting their use and participation for fear of being physically violated (robbed, beaten, raped). Amongst many examples justifying women's fear of using and participating in UGS, on the 29th of October 2023 a 34-year-old Johannesburg female teacher was murdered, raped and her possessions taken by a 21 year old male at George Lea recreational park in Parkmore, Sandton (Marriah-Maharaj, 2023).

South African legislation such as NEMA Section two recognizes and acknowledges the role of women and youth in environmental issues. The Act calls for their inclusion in dynamics pertaining to the management of the environment and decision-making processes. This research was looking at whether community involvement plays a role in re/producing exclusionary practices in UGS restoration. The notion of gender and youth came out strongly, albeit not in the form of these groups being denied access to participation. Scholarship on UGS widely recognizes the exclusion of women in green spaces such as parks. Personally, my

unease exploring the park on my own would be heightened by some of the questions I would get asked when I was alone. For example, one cold Sunday morning while buying tea from a coffee stall at the park the vending operator asked me "are you here to hike alone so early in the morning?" hence it is such occurrences and reminders for women that reduces park use from fear of being robbed, raped, or even killed. Three out of nine female park users interviewed alluded to feeling safe at the Wilds, largely because of the presence of security personnel at the entrance who also patrol the area frequently. Two of the women indicated that albeit that would not result in them accessing the park on their own because of boredom. Nonzwakazi Mthiyane had the following to say about this:

> "No, I wouldn't come here alone, not because I think it's not safe but because it would be boring. It's nicer to be here when you come as a group or family. Other parks are not as big, safe, clean, and quiet as this one."

While the third woman, Grace Miller, admitted to having made a conscious decision not be constrained by her own fear and stereotypes and instead use and access the park to the best of her abilities. The women would also mention that they would not attempt to use the park unaccompanied; they felt safer in pairs or groups. This non-use thus reduces the number and flexibility of park use by women. From my participant observations I noted that nine out of ten times women always used the park in the company of other people. The dynamics were that sometimes they would be with a male partner, or female friends, which was common particularly on weekends where women would walk in pairs or groups together with their children. In turn people seldom advocate for or want to be involved in decision making processes of things they do not benefit from (Maseko, 2022). Only one male out of the nine interviewed indicated feeling unsafe exploring a big and densely vegetated public space like the Wilds. While the rest expressed no concern for using the Wilds on their own, with similar sentiments as those shared by Temba Dlamini:

> "It's a big open space, people here are chill and minding their own business and no one looks at you in a funny way. So yes, I would come here alone because I think it's safe."

4.3.2 Social class

Degeneration of parks is usually blamed on local governments with claims of limited resource capacity to deliver quality services to users (Mattijssen et al., 2017). As a result, regeneration initiatives are hinged on the availability of resources, both financial and skilled labour to execute set out projects and plans. The Wilds is regarded as one of Johannesburg' beautiful and well maintained UGS and it can be seen the amount of time and investment resources that have

gone into producing its current state. Conversations with participants and from the tour revealed how the restoration process could not have been possible had it not been for donations from well-wishers and park users who were interested in the transformation of the park.

One participant, Arthur Mathers, mentioned a total amount of R200 000 from donations that had gone into the resuscitation of water ponds. On one incident, it was announced on the Facebook group that a well-wisher had donated a sum of R100 000 towards construction work that was taking place. What is to be noted from this account is that at the very least restoration is a resource issue. It is a process that can be successfully, to the extent of the Wilds, carried out by people with the financial resources for it. In the context of South Africa with high inequality and poverty rates it is nearly impossible that poor people from low-income communities could embark on such a process and be successful while also dealing with many competing challenges associated with poverty and lack. This low involvement by poor people only works to worsen their social standing and deprivation of urban nature along with its benefits.

It is unfortunate as highlighted in the above discussion of stewards vs users, that some participants feel that every user of the space should contribute financially towards continued restoration and maintenance of the Wilds. One participant Grace Miller expressed contempt for people who 'just' used the park and never thought of donating towards its maintenance. Grace felt that it should be made mandatory that people who use and enjoy the Wilds should donate at least a R100. She felt that R100 was an insignificant amount of money although collectively from many donors could become a large sum that could undertake large projects. I disagreed with Grace on this, citing known examples including myself of how R100 was not so insignificant, in addition, given the cost of accessing these spaces by public transport. It was only then that she did not relent that donations should be made mandatory but at least to lesser money such as R20 per person, or even for people to purchase their entrance to the park. This only further highlighted multiple ways of exclusion in UGS premised on social class. An indication of the impacts of high inequalities in South Africa which widen the gap between those who have and those who do not. Resulting in some affluent people being ignorant of the plight of majority of South Africans who struggle for basic services and human rights such as adequate housing, healthcare, education, and food.

Two examples highlighting the extent of such insensitivity and ignorance to systemic and structural issues of inequality in South Africa is the 2021 Cabbage Bandit story and

Rondebosch Golf course protests. in 2021 a man who later became known as 'The Cabbage Bandit' was arrested for having planted vegetables on his pavement (Banda, 2021). Of interest to this case was how while South Africa has high levels of poverty and food insecurity, some By-laws and law enforcement have not reconciled with the need to accommodate urban agriculture albeit under informal circumstances. The second example is that of housing activists who staged a protest at the Rondebosch Golf Club in Cape Town demanding land redistribution (Washinyira, 2020).

Furthermore, good upper social class is also intrinsically linked to social capital and networks, a characteristic that some participants involved in the restoration process admitted having. They commented on having ties with high profile people in stakeholder institutions who approved and supported their participation even though it was under unorthodox circumstances.

4.3.3 Voice, power, and privilege

Those who were involved in the restoration process had in one way or another access to not only knowledge about the existence of the Wilds, but nature and environmental issues. It should not be taken for granted that some groups of people may know about the existence of parks in the city but would have never had any interaction nor relationship with urban nature. Relating to this, one participant, Sibongiseni Mlambo had this to say:

> "I come from a rural area in Mpumalanga, so I grew up around nature. When you grow up around something you take it for granted. But for people who grew up in the city with the concrete and skyscrapers a park to them is like a nice experience. But at home, I leave the gate, there's trees, there's grass, there's cows, so maybe that's why I don't frequent the parks because it's not a Wow! thing for me."

Sibongiseni's comment shows some of the reasons for non-use of UGS and (mis)participation because of certain events in the South African history that left a legacy of a lack of belonging in the city by black people. As a result, this lack of belonging deters people from participation because what they identify with and feel a sense of ownership for is nature in the homelands as stated by Sibongiseni. One such significant historical event was the enactment of the Group Areas Act of 1950 which relegated black people to townships and Bantustans limiting their access to, exposure and interaction with nature. Therefore, it is such circumstances and more that privileged white over black people leaving an apartheid legacy of a system that favours and affords certain groups power and voice.

As indicated by the photographs below in figs 10 and 11 which show some pieces of artwork found at the Wilds by different Johannesburg artists. These artworks have become landmark features at the Wilds with different symbolisms and attracting people to visit, going as far as initiating adventure games of locating and identifying them. Park users who do not have the voice, power, and privilege to contravene the Public Open Space By-laws, seek permission to display their works even with the risk of being turned down. I was made aware by the officials interviewed that these features had been enacted without the permission of JCPZ. Those who had asked for permission were still in waiting as JCPZ was in the process of engaging relevant stakeholders on the issue given the Wilds is a heritage site. The long waiting process and proposal rejections are some of the reasons why some participants decide to bypass the authorities. One participant, Thomas Smith commented: “The management would rather let the entire park collapse, but as long as you are not breaking the law”.



Figure 10: Some of the sculptures found at the park by artist James Delaney. Source: (Author, 2023).



Figure 11: Mosaics by late Johannesburg artist Andrew Lindsay. Source: (Author, 2023).

A key takeaway from Thomas' comment is how the Wilds is governed by a lot of legislation and By-laws because of its status as a nature reserve, heritage site and national monument. The many conflicting and sometimes outdated legislation acts as hindrances to progress, innovation, and effective partnerships between the public and JCPZ. In addition, Authur Mathers had this to say highlighting the tiresome process of seeking approval from JCPZ:

> "Sometimes if you feel it's right, do it, even if it's in the dark, do what you believe in your heart is the right thing to do and deal with the officials later. It's easier to ask for forgiveness than permission."

Despite poor communication, coordination and lack of consensus between Friends of the Wilds participants and JCPZ, some of the restoration work that has taken place even without City Parks' approval symbolises how much effective dialogue is needed. There is an urgent need to harmonise the community's vision for the space with that of JCPZ which follows strict guidelines issued by By-laws, national and provincial legislation. "It's citizens reclaiming their turf" is a statement that was said by one of the participants at the Wilds Revival and Restoration Tour. The participant explained that restoration work that has been happening at the Wilds is a statement to the government that parks belong to people and citizens could not sit still anymore waiting on JCPZ to deliver on the kind of services they expected and could enjoy. As a result,

the efforts were actions symbolising citizens stepping up and taking control. Another interviewee on a separate occasion raised similar sentiments saying:

> "When I arrived here, I was like Wow! Security at the front, sometimes security walking around to ensure the place is safe. It showed the thought and process of private citizens saying, "No More, we're taking Over!" - Authur Mathers.

Albeit under unauthorized circumstances, the creative features such as the mosaics, sculptures, colourful benches, offer an opportunity to members of public who can, to showcase their work and talent. One participant, Grace Miller commented that these works represented the amount of untapped creativity and innovation held by civil society. Grace, who normally photographs a lot of park features as a hobby, spoke to this issue:

> "Old pictures of what the Wilds looked like in the olden days are hard to find. Of course, every now and then you would find someone who would share one or two pics, but they are rare. So, by documenting this place through photography and drawings you are assured that one day future generations will have a reference point that will also guide them in how they move forward in taking care of this place."



Figure 12: Photograph showing a mosaic depicting a genet a small cat like animal believed to have been at the Wilds at some point. Source: (Author, 2023).

The photograph above depicts Brenda's thoughts on how the restoration process is also focusing on collecting and documenting the history of Wilds as in occurs. Artistic features such as the mosaic of a genet in fig 12 creates environmental awareness about the need to protect ecosystems for biodiversity conservation. In conclusion, this section has described how voice, power and privilege inform participation at the Wilds. It has highlighted how people who do

not have the historical privilege of having a relationship with UGS, voice and power to effect and command change in public platforms get excluded from the restoration process.

4.4 Public-private partnerships and hybrid spaces

4.4.1 Public-private partnerships

As demonstrated by the literature reviewed above, for a long-time private citizen have been coming to grips with failures of the traditional forms of governance. These include the responsibility of public service delivery being solely dependent on local governments. Research and empirical evidence thus suggest there has been a rise of public-private partnerships as alternative models of governance and public service delivery. Findings from this research conclude that similarly, private, and public actors involved with the restoration and maintenance of the Wilds acknowledge the significance of meaningful partnerships. Hence, they look forward to a point in time where that would be possible in their case.

> "I know that sometimes City Parks are problematic, but we've got to respect that they have a job to do, and we've got to find better ways of communicating" (Authur Mathers, 2023).

Although participants expressed desires of partnership, their actions were to the contrary. At the first MOU meeting I attended, all other Friends groups working with JCPZ and Zoos were present except Friends of the Wilds who had to be contacted during the meeting to remind them of their required attendance. After having a representative join the meeting, he offered his apologies citing that they had not been informed about the meeting. In the second meeting, attendance was by JCPZ officials and one Friends group with suggestions that Friends of the Wilds had not received an invite to the meeting. Hence the meeting proceeded without the other representatives. Reflecting on this, it was difficult to decipher what the root cause of the issues of non-attendance was. I asked Anita Nhlapo why there were glitches in arranged strategies and efforts for dialogue and her response was that community participants were resisting these efforts because they enjoyed the autonomy and freedom of doing as they wished without seeking approval. This response is synonymous with Benit-Gbaffou (2018) discussion about why co-management of parks is not working in Johannesburg. The author postulated that community participants' resistance of partnership could be an effect of wanting to retain their autonomy to do as they pleased without following protocol.

In addition, Anita felt that community participants resistance was because of their impatience as they always wanted things to be done on a whim whereas JCPZ operated on standard

protocols, annual budgets and set plans. Hence, this unresolved back and forth resistance of parties in engaging in dialogue poses enormous strain to the effectiveness of public participation and success of public-private partnerships in UGS restoration. Some of the noted resistance from either party involved is an indication of power dynamics at play. Scholars have noted that public participation is implicated in power relations that include public officials feeling threatened about their careers and roles in public service delivery. Some note that in the South African case specifically power dynamics on the side of civil society are shaped by the apartheid legacy (Bradlow, 2021). Benjamin Bradlow in his paper *Weapons of the Strong,* argues that the change of government structure to democratic governance coupled with its failures of corruption, embezzlement of public funds and poor service delivery have led to a lack of trust and respect for authority. This then leads to poor public-private partnerships as different actors fail to acknowledge each other's positions and prove to each other who holds more power and authority.

A study on 'Friends groups' by Robert Jones in 2002 highlighted a few similar findings to this research. These findings include firstly the issue of power dynamics between public officials and community participants when asked what factors contributed to the degeneration of green spaces. Five out of six Park user participants actively involved in the restoration process concurred that it was not a matter of lack of resources or shortage of stuff, but power. Participants felt that city officials were reluctant to relinquish some of their formal powers of managing the park and that is detrimental to development efforts. Suggestions were made that officials were in a habit of making a show off who held the power and authority to make decisions. That was shown in how participants would sign multiple agreements of participation, but officials would never try to get back to them by facilitating meetings nor agreeing to any of their proposals. Thomas Smith had this to say pertaining to this issue: "You can have a Rolls Royce of agreements, but nothing ever changes they'll always say No!". This statement reflects the need for stakeholder engagement to review some of the guiding legislation, By-laws and policies that serve to hinder the development of a healthy working relationship and partnership between JCPZ and Friends of the Wilds.

4.4.2 From public/private to hybrid spaces

> "Sometimes you find out that something may be public on paper but on the ground it's something completely different and with the apartheid city, issues of entitlement and ownership always come up" - Nomzamo Ngubeni.

The above quote from Nomzamo supports Murray's (2010:182) claims that private management of public spaces results in four outcomes: "publicly owned and privately managed; publicly owned and publicly managed; privately owned and privately managed; privately owned and publicly managed." Findings from this research disagree with Murray's postulates and contend instead, that the case of the Wilds falls in between the lines in the first outcome. This is because as much as the Wilds is formally publicly owned by JCPZ it is unofficially jointly managed by both JCPZ and community participants from Friends of the Wilds.

The case also indicates an informal parallel management by the community participants which is at par with JCPZ in terms of people's knowledge of who is responsible for its restoration and maintenance. This also came out strongly with some of the interviews held with JCPZ officials and first MOU meeting. Officials were aware of some of the misleading information about the management dynamics of the park and maintenance activities that misled some of the uninformed public members. One official revealed to me that sometimes they would find on social media pages pictures of volunteers having accomplished a certain task whereas the volunteers would have engaged in the activity with some employees of the park but that would not be published. Hence this creates an impression that City Parks employees were not doing their work and community volunteers were the ones leading on restoration and maintenance activities at the Wilds.



Figure 13: Photograph showing a combination of objects 'co-produced' by JCPZ and Friends of the Wilds in one space. Source: (Author, 2023).

The Wilds is formally identified as a nature reserve, a heritage site, and a national monument. Many users identify it as a park. There are slight differences between these terms that influence meaning given to the space and how it is appropriated. This conflict of meaning for a public open space in the case of the Wilds agrees with what Hadebe (2016:3) explains as a "crisis of meaning". JCPZ officials interviewed and a few users were aware of the official identification of the Wilds as a nature reserve, heritage site and national monument. This was reflected by Thomas Smith who offered his insights by saying:

> "This is a very high-profile space, it's a nature reserve, it's a heritage site, blah blah, blah! There's more ego at stake here, so it makes it more complex".

One official Anita Nhlapho responded to this by explaining that as much as community participants were aware of the nature of the Wilds and what's at stake pertaining to its development, community participants were not paying heed to that as their activities and efforts

reflected that they wanted to treat the Wilds like a park. Interviews with community participants indicated that they were aware of the rules and regulations that need to be observed for a heritage site and/or national monument. They appreciated how different the Wilds is from other ordinary community parks or botanical gardens and they were not intent on having the Wilds look like them. Thomas Smith reflected on this by stating:

> "In the olden days, the colonial days when parks were laid out, they tended to reflect the country where settlers came from. So, they would plant Oak trees from England or Pine trees from America. I don't know why but this park is different, they said let's make it all South African plants."

Instead, participants viewed their activities and contributions as more up to date with popular contemporary needs of park users. They viewed their contributions as reflective, modern, innovative and creative. This was justified by some of the legislation and By-laws still applied by JCPZ that they felt were ancient and did not represent current times nor public needs for the space. One participant Grace Miller brought up the issue of benches at the Wilds and stated that most City Parks benches are painted in a uniform green colour across the various green spaces they manage. At the Wilds community participants had brought in some colour into the park by painting them in different bright colours, saying in that way people find it lively, can identify with it and thus are encouraged to visit more often. Below are some of the colourful benches that have been repainted by Friends of the Wilds in contrast to the green ones by JCPZ.



Figure 14: Photographs showing JCPZ standard colour green bench and bright coloured orange and yellow benches by Friends of the Wilds. Source: (Author, 2023).

Middelmann (2021) draws attention to the idea of public and private notions in public spaces, posing and addressing a question of what lines are drawn regarding acceptable behaviour(s) in public spaces. Middelmann (2021) posits that lines of distinction between the public and private become blurred when there are contestations of rights and belonging. Following the author's argument and looking at the case of the Wilds, this blurred distinction comes about firstly after the decision to fence off the park was made. When various participants were asked to describe their knowledge of the reserve before and after community involvement, all respondents pointed to issues of safety and security of the reserve which was lacking at the time because the park was not fenced and was inhabited by homeless people. Hence the participants were happy with the current state of the park where they had a sense of safety because of the enclosure and presence of security personnel who ensure that everyone coming into the park is searched and must sign a register with their personal details such as name, surname, purpose of visit and cell phone number. Middelmann (2021) does not agree with interventions that focus on closing people out, particularly vulnerable, and already disadvantaged groups of people as it only worsens their living conditions and perpetuates South Africa's spatial injustices and structural inequalities.

Similar findings by Middelmann (2021) and Benit-Gbaffou (2018) on intervention attempts and strategies aimed at developing collaborative and healthy working relationships between City Parks and Friends groups have been made. However, these attempts are rarely successful and productive. Literal connections and use of public open space to mean people are and or should be allowed to use the space as they see fit.

To conclude, this chapter sought to respond to set out questions for this research. This was done through grouping of findings into themes that laid foundation for analysis of the implications of community participation in UGS restoration. Community participation through invented spaces is often praised for driving innovation and inclusion through bottom-up approaches. However, it is seldom critiqued for how it complicates boundary lines in the working relationships between public employees and private actors. In addition, an unorthodox and unconventional parallel working system, production of hybrid spaces serves to further highlight a deeper challenge of urban governance in South Africa and growing interest in changing the status quo. Andrea Couvert, a civic activist in Cape Town had this to say pertaining their proposal for a new civic participation By-law:

> "The narrative that we elect people, and they make laws, regulations and decisions in our interest, and that if they are nice, they will allow us to comment on their regulations." (Couvert, 2020).

It adds to increasing cases showing public dissatisfaction with current forms of governance, management, and service delivery leading to the idea of "citizens taking over or its citizens saying no more!" as alluded to by some of the participants. Therefore, an important takeaway from these findings is the need for continued dialogue in formulating the best possible model of governing and managing commons, public and green spaces. With formal, coordinated public-private partnerships more can be done for the restoration of not just the Wilds but a lot of deteriorating UGS in Johannesburg. Most importantly, coordinated formal working relationships will ensure that restoration occurs in a way that does not exclude and marginalize other groups who might even already be victims of structural inequalities.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, I reflect on the main initial questions and theoretical framework guiding this research. Having discussed and analysed the findings, in this chapter I conclude this research report by outlining and discussing below, the overall implications of UGS restoration. In as much as the main question for this research sought to investigate implications of community participation in re/producing systems of exclusion and segregation, it is also important to note and highlight that there are also positive implications to restoration at the Wilds. Lastly, I pose a few questions worth future research in this field and suggest recommendations or possible solutions to prevailing challenges hindering effective public-partnerships and restoration not only for the Wilds but Johannesburg UGS in general.

Albeit given limited attention and priority, unequal spatial distribution of UGS is an urban challenge contributing to urban inequality. In what Venter et al. (2020) refer to as "green apartheid" poor black communities such as the townships were deprived of and denied access to UGS such as parks and botanical gardens. Thus, this resulted in spatial divisions where affluent neighbourhoods are characterised by how greener they are, and the poorer ones, townships and informal settlements are characterised by less green spaces of poor quality to none (Bobbins et al., 2019; Maseko, 2022). This argument is also substantiated by Bradlow (2021) who notes that decades post-apartheid, democratic local governments have failed to address inequalities in the distribution of public goods. Based on the main research question which sought to determine the implications of community participation in UGS restoration, a different kind of urban inequality arises.

Observations from this research are that participating members in restoration are people who have a certain level of power, influence, privilege, and are middle to upper class. These are people with financial and knowledge resources that come in handy in helping them to achieve what they set out to. A few participants mentioned having good friendships with some City level people who in a subtle way to avoid trouble did support what they did even without formal agreements. This then could be an explanation as to why the public-private relationship of the Wilds would persist for so long in unorthodox circumstances. The point I am driving here is that such a level of success in UGS restoration under unusual circumstances like the ones at the Wilds is only possible in communities with UGS to begin with and secondly a combination

of factors such as financial and knowledge resources. Knowledge in the sense that there must be among the community members, people with the prerequisite knowledge and skills to execute successful restoration. With the case of the Wilds, amongst community members involved in the restoration there are professionals trained as architects, landscapers, photographers, botanistsand engineers to name a few that I interviewed or were mentioned to me. As a result, public-private partnerships under South African circumstances with one of the World's highest rates of inequality, exacerbate existing inequalities and social polarisation (Bénit-Gbaffou et al., 2008; Francis and Webster, 2019).

A lot of research on UGS attests to their attribute of promoting social cohesion. However, I find the conceptual use of social cohesion by scholars lacking in definition or clarity of meaning. Scholars seldom provide a specific definition nor explanation of what they mean by 'social cohesion'. Thus, a conceptual gap is left as to what exactly is social cohesion? Therefore, having encountered certain attributes in this research that point to the idea of social cohesion, through little pockets of relations or small communities of friendships that develop because of participation at the Wilds, I pose the following question: Is social cohesion a theoretical utopian idea of what human societies should strive for? Or is it a reality that exists in certain societies regardless of the extent to which it occurs?

Participants interviewed who lead certain activities at the park such as walks, hikes, tours inferred to their work as an intersection of values, passion and awareness. They viewed what they do as giving back to the community in a way that they could also fulfil their different passions for nature and other things like physical exercise and wellbeing. Sibusiso Khumalo one interviewee who initiated physical activities (walking and hiking) said:

> "This is my give back time, I started with clean up hikes, went on to Facebook and invited people. And now this thing has created a community. Friendships develop, we celebrate birthdays, have picnics and holidays. We have created a family here."

These family-like relations develop further not only from the activities that happen at the park but invitations to other external activities that they end up inviting each other to. For example, I was told about one event which was to occur in October involving the viewing of Jacaranda trees blooming with the promise of tea and lunch at Arcadia, Johannesburg. Substantiating these statements of UGS restoration at the Wilds having developed endearing communities, friendships and family-like relations, was a comment by Diana Andrews who adds:

> "You will not believe this but ever since I started these hikes three years ago, Tuesdays have become the highlight of my week. I always look forward to coming here every Tuesday, we come here every week, sometimes walking the same path. But I tell you it is never the same every week, also because the space is just different every season."

UGS restoration at the Wilds not only provides for non-human species communities of animals, birds, and plants to thrive, but also gives humans an opportunity to interact and form new relationships and friendships. Therefore, I posit that as much as some park users and participants in the restoration process have been able to develop communities, relationships, and friendships within the space it does not count as social cohesion. This is because communities formed only account for a small group of people with similar interests and social standing. Wherein, an ideal form of social cohesion is that advocated for by Steyn (2011) "being different together", where diverse groups of people can exist together all the while acknowledging, appreciating and accepting of each other's differences.

Another implication of community participation is the perpetuation of a single story. As highlighted earlier on in the report that at the start of this research having read the different sources of information about the Wilds, personal conversations, and participant observations of the Facebook group that I was already a member of prior to the commencement of the research, they all gave off the impression that it was a community led restoration. This narrative was rejected by both JCPZ officials interviewed who pointed out that from their perspective, the Wilds was or is not a case of UGS restoration. The officials were adamant that to them the Wilds was work in progress just like all the other UGS in Johannesburg and that what the public may view as neglect may not necessarily be the case. Citing reasons that there were times JCPZ was not well staffed nor resourced which led to constrained resource distribution across all the UGS under their management. Therefore, given both sides of the story it is important that the wider public is well informed about such dynamics and challenges JCPZ may be facing and be open to the public about their efforts in merging working partnerships with the public. The value of this is in the legacy of both JCPZ as an institution and the Wilds as a public open space, such that it remains that way and not end up being privatized and commodified.

Positive implications pertain to how the restoration promotes environmental awareness. More people are educated or get to be aware of different environmental issues through activities such guided tours, engaging signage, blogs, and social media posts. In that way people can reflect on the value of UGS and make efforts to be part of the environmental agenda of restoring degenerating urban nature. There are also successful stories of biodiversity conservation and

the restoration of different species of bird life and vegetation to mention but a few. Such restoration thus allows for healthy urban ecosystems and lifestyles for both the physical environment and humans.

What makes the Wilds an interesting case apart from the many other attributes highlighted in earlier sections is how it serves as an example of decolonisation of the human and nature. In Africa the anthropocentric attitudes and values of humans' superiority and imposed authority over nature came with colonization (Okuyade, 2013). The Wilds, through some of its historical events such as the Empire exhibition of 1936 and humans' imposition over the natural landscape shows the deeply entrenched anthropocentricism. Therefore, to be learned from the case of the Wilds is harmonious coexistence with nature even in urban environments. This is exhibited by how local communities such as the Friends groups mobilise to restore deteriorating UGS. Through restoration, humans reject the colonial mentality of commodification and extraction of nature. Moreover, with the lens of political ecology it allows for urban nature to thrive as opposed to it being a scarce resource only available to a few rich and privileged individuals.

To conclude, another recommendation for planners and decision makers of JCPZ is policy review. As indicated by the findings above, one of the major stumbling blocks to progress at the Wilds is the heavy presence of legislation, some of which is outdated and no longer applies to current times, societal needs, values, and morals. Different By-laws, and policies guiding the management of UGS even more so at the Wilds because of its position as a Nature Reserve, heritage site and national monument. Hence, the need for review of JCPZ structures and policies to ensure they serve current and prevailing trends particularly development and management of public-private partnerships. As well as monitoring and evaluation of hybrid spaces for inclusive use of UGS and park user participation. In the case of the Wilds specifically, there is also need for continued rigorous stakeholder engagement to establish who the 'community' is, a formalised reporting structure to ensure effective planning for further restoration. The importance of this is not only in ensuring effectiveness and successful partnering and coproduction. It is also in ensuring the wellbeing of all actors particularly, JCPZ employees who do not have the autonomy to make decisions on their own but must follow procedure or reporting structure and protocols of the organization.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Permission Letter







Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (NPC)

City Parks House
40 De Korte Street
Braamfontein

P O Box 2824
Johannesburg
2000

Tel +27(0) 11 712 6600
Fax +27(0) 11 403 4495
www.jhbcityparksandzoo.com

26 June 2023

Nozipho P. Marere
University of Witwatersrand
Masters student
2621055@students.wits.ac.za

RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH ON *Community (mis)participation in Urban Green Space restoration: A case of the Wilds Nature Reserve, Johannesburg.*

We received your request to undertake research, Community (mis)participation in Urban Green Space restoration: A case of the Wilds Nature Reserve, Johannesburg.

Kindly note that your request has been granted. However, we would like to ask you to adhere to all ethical standards for research data collection as follows:

i. The information collected is used for academic purposes only.
ii. The information will be treated as confidential. iii. No payment will be due to you for undertaking the research at (name of the facility/ies).
iv. You will be required to make available a copy of your research report to the Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo.
v. You will be required to observe all the company's rules and regulations all times.
vi. Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo shall not be responsible for any loss or injury during your research.
vii. You will provide your own protective clothing equipment suitable for areas you will visit.
viii. Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo will not be liable for any loss or damages as a result of this initiative.

Wishing you all the best with your research.

Yours sincerely

A Roji

……

Ms. Ayanda Roji
Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo
Senior Manager
Environmental Education and Research

Directors: Vuyokazi Thenjiwe Mjoli (Chairperson), Rabone Moripe, Andile Jabavu, Mbulelo Fihla, Peter Kgame, Yongama Zigebe, Ayanda Hlatshwayo, Winnie Ntsongwana, Lucky Fani, John Madela, Yongama Nyalambisa
Mr Marks Sethaelo (Acting Managing Director), Mr Floyd Rikhotso (Chief Financial Officer), Ms Ayanda Shongwe (Company Secretary)

Reg No: 2000/028782/08

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet (PIS)

Good day,

My name is Nozipho P. Marere. I am a Masters student at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr Tsepang Leuta. I am conducting a research study about local community involvement in Urban Green Spaces. The study title is "Community (mis)participation in Urban Green Space restoration: A case of the Wilds Nature Reserve, Johannesburg."

I am inviting you to take part in an interview. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last about 45 – 60 minutes. The interview will take place at the Wilds Nature Reserve at an agreed time.

With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview. This data will be stored in my password encrypted computer for a period of 5years. Only I as the researcher will have access to the data.

During the research activity, I will need to ask for some personal information about you, including, suburb where you stay and role at the park.

The interview will be confidential and anonymous. If it is what you want, when I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you. With your permission, other researchers may use the data collected from this research study, but your name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.

If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study.
The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life. If this happens, I will stop the interview and continue another time.

This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,
NP. Marere
Researcher:
Nozipho P. Marere, Wits email: 2621055@students.ac.za

Supervisor:
Dr Tsepang Leuta, Wits email: tsepang.leuta1@wits.ac.za

Appendix 3: Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of project: ***Community (mis)participation in Urban Green Space restoration: A case of the Wilds Nature Reserve, Johannesburg.***

Name of researcher: Nozipho P. Marere.

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study.	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded.	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report.	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data will not be used by the researcher in their research report.	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.	YES	NO

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)

…… (signature)
…… (name of researcher/person seeking consent)
…… (date)

Appendix 4: Community participants' interview schedule

Interview Schedule for 6 participants from Friends of the Wilds group and 12 from the park.

1. Introduce yourself - who you are, where you stay, your role and contribution at the Wilds.

Research Themes and questions:

1. Factors contributing to community mobilization in UGS restoration

a) When did you start visiting the Wilds and why?
b) Which other parks do you visit in Johannesburg, why and how often?
c) What was the condition of the Wilds when you first saw it?
d) On a scale of 1-10, 1 being the worst condition and 10 being the best, how would you describe the state of parks in Johannesburg?
    i) Explain why?
e) What do you think has changed at the park from your first time up until now?
f) Do you like the changes that have been taking place? Yes / No
    i) Elaborate further.
g) How have you or are you contributing to the parks' restoration?
h) What motivated you to start participating in the park's restoration?
i) Is the Wilds Nature Reserve the only park you participate in and why?

2. Community participants' perceptions and experience of the park's restoration

a) How has been your experience so far in the park's restoration?
b) Participating at the Wilds have you ever had any encounter with municipal officials? Yes / No
c) If Yes, what was/ has been the experience like?
d) Do you feel that your participation and contributions are recognized and appreciated?
e) Who would you attribute the success of the Wilds to? community participants, municipality, or both?
    i) Explain why
f) In your opinion, is the municipality supportive of local community initiatives in restoring Urban Green Spaces?

g) Which other parks do you think also need restoration?
h) What do you think is the best course of action for successful restoration and improved quality of UGS in Johannesburg?

Appendix 5: JCPZ interview schedule

Johannesburg City Parks and Zoos Officials Interview Schedule

Research Themes and questions:

1. **Capacity of JCPZ in restoring UGS in Johannesburg**

a) How long have you been managing the Wilds?
b) What was the condition of the Wilds when you were assigned to it?
c) On a scale of 1-10, 1 being the worst condition and 10 being the best, how would you describe the state of parks in Johannesburg?
    i) Explain why?

d) On a scale of 1-10, again 1 being the least favourable and 10 being the most optimal, how would you describe the current status of JCPZ in managing and maintaining UGS in the city?
e) How does JCPZ develop working relationships with local communities on UGS restoration?
f) What improvements have been made at the park from 2015 when James Delaney started working on it up until now?
g) Do you support the changes that have been taking place? Yes / No

    i) Qualify

2. **Officials' experience working with local communities on UGS restoration**

a) How has been your experience so far working with Friends of the Wilds in the park's restoration?
b) Are you aware of other parks in Johannesburg with active community participation like the Wilds? Yes / No

    i) If Yes, how do they operate and are they successful?

c) Do you think that JCPZ work on developing and maintaining UGS is recognized and appreciated by the public?
d) Do you regard the progress made at the Wilds Nature reserve as a success? Yes / No

i) If yes, why?

e) Which other parks do you think also need restoration and the kind of collaborative efforts like the ones going on at the Wilds?
f) What do you think is the best course of action for successful restoration and improved quality of UGS in Johannesburg?

Appendix 6: Two UGS experts interview schedule

Two UGS experts Interview Schedule

a) What is your understanding of UGS restoration?

b) What UGS restoration projects in Johannesburg are you aware of?

c) Are you aware of the Wilds Nature Reserve? Yes/ No

i) If yes, is Wilds a successful case of UGS restoration in Johannesburg?

ii) elaborate on your response

j) On a scale of 1-10, 1 being the worst condition and 10 being the best, how would you describe the state of UGS in Johannesburg?

i) Explain why?

j) Is the role and significance of UGS recognized and prioritized by national and local governments in South Africa?

k) Whose responsibility do you think UGS management/ restoration is?

l) What would you consider to be the best viable option for developing and managing UGS?

Annexures

1. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING between Johannesburg City Parks (NPC) t/and Zoo and Friends of The Wilds, Kloofendal Friends, Friends of the Jewel of the South, Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve Association (KNRA) and Friends of Johannesburg Zoo.

2. City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality Public Open Spaces By-Laws of 2004.