

PEOPLE PROCESS POLICY PRACTICE PLACE

*Processes and outcomes of a creative
and participatory approach to inner-city
park development and management*



“It is important to understand that each park or site is dynamic, with its own unique characteristics and issues and therefore one cannot use a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. The answer lies in reaching a common, agreed understanding about what needs to and can be done within the current limitations of that space. Once we agree on what to do, and on the roles and responsibilities required, plans can be put into practice and the journey towards safer space begins”

City Official, 2017

POLICIES and RIGHTS

Locally, nationally and internationally there is a multitude of policies and legislation that talk about government departments working collaboratively, with and through meaningful, fair and inclusive engagement with stakeholders and the public. However, policy doesn't always translate into practice. Through this process, we've seen a major shift in the mind-sets of both city officials and public and private stakeholders on how public spaces should be designed, developed and managed. We can achieve real integration, but this requires a lot of people to work together at different levels to make it work.

“As the public we are well aware and respect the fact that there are structures and protocols to be followed, but our people are still dying on our streets”

Hillbrow Resident, 2017



INTER-GOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION

Collaboration is difficult to achieve because each city department has its own set of priorities and budget allocations. Getting departments to work together in the same public space helps them realise the role each one plays towards safety in that space.

Johannesburg City Parks & Zoo

As the initiator of this project, JCPZ brought together state and non-state actors united under one vision - to create safe, inclusive and accessible parks.

The sustainable provision, preservation and management of open spaces, biodiversity, environmental and conservation services through education, research, direct conservation action and recreation, with a focus on the zoo, parks and cemeteries.



Municipal Partners

Johannesburg Development Agency

The Johannesburg Development Agency is an agency of the City of Johannesburg that stimulates and supports area-based economic development initiatives throughout the metropolitan area.



Department of Public Safety

Championing the development and revision of the Joburg City Safety Strategy, which is focussed on citywide issues related to safety and security.



Department of Public Safety



International and Local Partners

Partners were brought on board to assist with aspects that the City of Johannesburg did not have the specialised expertise or resources for.



UN-Habitat Minecraft design workshop

GIZ - Violence and Crime Prevention Programme

A joint South African-German Development Cooperation programme supporting collaborative action amongst government and civil society stakeholders to make communities safer.



UN-Habitat

UN-Habitat Global Public Space Programme with the support of Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct trained residents and users of ESN Park including IH Harris Primary school in using Minecraft video game which served as a useful tool for involving citizens, particularly young people, in urban design processes.



Peter Gotsch GLORA/ Placematters

Urban researcher, planning expert and registered architect, based in Karlsruhe and Darmstadt, Germany. He is interested in the effects of world-wide processes of urbanisation on the space and society nexus, putting a specific emphasis on the social and environmental dimensions of urban change.

Sticky Situations

Using creative participatory design methodologies to facilitate, co-ordinate and implement community-driven projects, grounded in capacity building, assisting stakeholders to identify their goals, and then building the skills and confidence they need to create change.



Story
telling



PLACE

The chosen site to experiment with a new participatory, integrated approach was the End Street North Park in Doornfontein on the edge of vibrant Hillbrow in inner-city Johannesburg. This intervention aimed to turn an under-utilised public space into a place that would have value and meaning for local residents and users. The neighbourhood was full of illustrious characters and diverse demographics, with challenges of safety, homelessness and drugs.

Hillbrow, developed in the 1950s and 60s during a property boom for European immigrants in apartheid South Africa, is one of the densest residential neighbourhoods on the African continent. Due to the economic recession and South Africa's political instability in the 1970s, an oversupply of building stock resulted in the influx of people of colour in defiance of the Group Areas Act, and in 1982 Hillbrow was declared a "Grey Area". Financial institutions redlined the area and racially prejudiced landlords exploited the new tenants, purposefully neglecting building stock while simultaneously escalating rents, which led to subletting, overcrowding and stress on the built environment.

With the dawn of democracy, relationships within the continent and beyond resumed and Hillbrow, as it was originally intended, became a key migrant neighbourhood for new arrivals to the City. Today Hillbrow is home to a diverse population and, like much of the Inner City of Johannesburg, is a place of opportunity for people seeking to gain a foothold in the City. Hillbrow is reflective of many of the challenges of post-apartheid South Africa with large-scale unemployment, poverty, crime and inhumane living conditions in 'hijacked' highrise buildings. However, Hillbrow remains an attractive neighbourhood to many and has increasingly become a home to families who require quality public space to breathe, live, play and learn.

Having and maintaining safe, clean and inclusive public spaces, remains a challenge for the City of Johannesburg and for residents

Despite an extensive accumulation of legislation, by-laws and policies that have been envisioned to implement, regulate and protect public spaces, they often remain spaces that are avoided by communities and users for a wealth of reasons. One main reason has been the lack of structure and meaningful stakeholder participation in the park upgrading and management processes. Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo (JCPZ) has initiated a pilot project which sought to generate a framework of response to issues of safety as well as attending to the under-development and under-utilisation of parks and open spaces in the Johannesburg inner city. This project had three key goals:

1. To test and demonstrate a community-based approach to park development and management using a methodology of engaging the community in the design and management of a selected park using participatory tools and techniques.
2. To develop an approach whereby government departments and officials collaborate more effectively around public spaces.
3. To work towards 'bridging the divide' between citizens and the City and between City departments, where the intervention creates a better understanding and cooperation between all concerned and where public spaces begin to work for communities and users.

Whilst there is still some mind-shifting that needs to occur, the End Street Park North project has given impetus for this shift in methodologies and processes, and a goal to work towards.

The work at End Street Park North is not yet complete, so further resources have been sourced to formalise a co-management structure within the existing institutional framework so as to keep working closely with residents on key issues that have not yet been addressed, such as road safety and crime.

In conclusion, participatory processes are not once-off projects, but rather an ongoing part of the city fabric. Hopefully in the future we will see more meaningful engagement processes and better collaboration between residents and the government institutions, with many more networks that residents can be involved in. Moving forward, we hope to do this again in

OVER 2,000 JOHANNESBURG PARKS

INITIAL PROCESS

The initial consultation process tentatively explored who the stakeholders were, the status quo of the neighbourhood and what type of creative engagement methodology would suit this public park and neighbourhood. The people first engaged with, not only assisted with knowledge, but also helped drive the engagement process to the next phase. In particular the whole team would like to acknowledge local activists, people and organisations from near and far who joined and supported the project, for really kicking off the participatory process, assisting with methodology development and in reaching out to the broader neighbourhood.

**COUNCILLOR TYOBEKA + WARD COMMITTEES +
I.H.HARRIS PRIMARY SCHOOL + JOHN HOSTEN
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT + UNHABITAT (MINECRAFT)
+ GIZ-VCP + JOZI@WORK (MA'M YVONNE)**



ACTIVATION AS A METHODOLOGY

The purpose of activation was to try to bring the neighbourhood together to discuss challenges and solutions, specifically around the park, as well as an attempt to draw people together to create change. As a public space, the Park provided a platform where all were welcome and where differing opinions were accepted.

The activations ranged from public meetings to cultural events to children's activities around considerations of design and safety, each one carefully planned to be as inclusive as possible.

It is important to note here that many City of Johannesburg officials were instrumental in this process, going beyond their mandate to be in the Park on Saturdays, evening meetings, sourcing resources to assist park events, hosting workshops on weekends, and so much more.

In addition, the whole team absolutely would like to acknowledge the volunteered time and dedication of residents, many of whom were disillusioned about Government due to a perceived (in some cases real) lack of service delivery, but who stuck to the process for over a year and developed their own relationships with various City of Johannesburg Departments so as to carve a way forward, and to create positive change for the Park and for the whole neighbourhood.



SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

A number of organisations supported the Park participatory processes, such as NGOs, government departments, universities, sporting clubs, turning up to Park events, showcasing their wares, sharing information, undertaking HIV testing, hosting sports and cultural events, and much more. In turn, these organisations have become a resource and network for other public spaces nearby and around Johannesburg.

**GEORGE KHOSI'S BOXING CLUB + HILLBROW RADIO
+ WITS REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INSTITUTE + WITS
CENTRE FOR URBANISM AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT
STUDIES + GEORGE KHOSI'S BOXING CLUB +
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH + JOBURG AMATEUR
BOXING ASSOCIATION + SPORTS FOR SOCIAL
CHANGE NETWORK + OUTREACH FOUNDATION &
HILLBROW THEATRE + JEPPESTOWN FIRE STATION
+ HILLBROW COMMUNITY POLICING FORUM +
JEPPESTOWN STREET PATROLLERS + ANC WOMEN'S
LEAGUE + MANY LOCAL RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES
AND STAKEHOLDERS + MANY MORE**



OUTCOMES

Achieving successful outcomes of any process can take time. Already though, there are a number of positive steps forward, most of which are still in process.

A new support network of Park Activations has been created by connecting people to supporting organisations and departments.

Establishment of a Stakeholders' Forum in End Street Park as well as neighbouring Pullinger Kop Park.

Many more residents now have direct communication with government officials, an ongoing process of re-building trust between the public and the City.

This project has opened the way for citizen/City park co-management structures to be piloted in more formal institutional arrangements.

The idea of a substantial increase in community engagement is being tested in other parks upgrading processes within Johannesburg City Parks and Zoo.

A number of people from other parks around the City have come forward to request assistance with similar projects in their neighbourhood, creating potential for neighbourhood based upscaling.

A substantial list of 'lessons learnt' from this project has been used to inform the Strategy for safe community parks in the Inner City.

Agency has been built in terms of helping the public to demand greater accountability from public institutions and the City, be it on local, provincial or national level.



“Residents used to see us as a threat, but now they are helping us to get jobs and into shelters. Now a group of us are helping keep the Park safe and cleaning the Park before events”

Person sleeping in the Park