

Fostering Functional Public Open Space within Low-Income Post-Apartheid Environments

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Abstract

Public open space is fundamental to the lives of residents within low-income post-apartheid settlements. With the prioritisation of the provision of housing post-apartheid, limited consideration has been given to the public realm and the functioning of public open space. It is essential that we regard the public realm as an integral component to the lives of the people who inhabit these environments. Because of the living conditions, large portions of people's lives are conducted outside of this prioritised private realm. It is evident that public spaces within these environments become neglected due to a lack of ownership and management. The intention of this paper is to find principles of enhancing public life through encouraging shared open spaces. Delft South, a post-apartheid suburb on the periphery of Cape Town, is a representation of how the legacy of apartheid persists within the landscape. Using the case of Delft South, this paper highlights the attitude towards the provision and upkeep of public open space by the state whilst foregrounding its importance to the lives and livelihoods of residents. Qualitative research analysis is conducted within the area to elicit how the current open space network is used and to grasp the consequences of a lack of public open space provision. The use of the public open space network by school children plays a significant role in the public life of the area. Using this analysis and further theoretical unpacking, this paper seeks to elicit principles of fostering functional open space within post-apartheid South Africa.

Keywords: place-making, public open space, urban commons, post-apartheid, South Africa

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Introduction

Low-income settlements in Cape Town historically reflect that the private realm is prioritised over the public realm. The delivery of housing has been prioritised with limited consideration for the supporting amenities and broader public realm. It is essential that we regard the public realm as an integral component of the lives of the people which inhabit these dire socio-economic environments. Because of the living conditions, large portions of lives are conducted outside of this prioritised private realm. It is evident that public space within these environments become neglected due to a lack of ownership¹ and management.

Delft South, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Cape Town is representative of this. A low-income, post-apartheid neighbourhood developed through state subsidised and funded housing schemes for residents previously classified as “black” and “coloured”. The neighbourhood reflects the clear prioritisation of housing delivery devoid of consideration for necessary public space and amenities.



Figure 1. Delft South, a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Cape Town

¹ Spaces within communities which people within the community feels responsible for. The notion of owned space is applicable to all spaces regardless of them being public or private. Owned space is primarily based around perception or feeling, rather than legal ownership.

The intention of this paper is to find principles to enhance public life through encouraging shared open spaces – and how this may exist in a post-apartheid, low-income environment. It considers notions of place-making, provision as well as active citizenship. Furthermore, it will highlight the importance of various user-groups, particular school children, in the successful functioning of shared open space. This paper will provide an introduction to Delft South, the study area, then problematise public space in low-income suburbs to outline the underlying issues specific to South Africa. This is followed by general principles that public spaces should embody. The section, thereafter, will analyse the spatial structure of Delft South and how it is being inhabited. This analysis was done using various exercises to elicit both a quantitative and qualitative understanding.

Delft South: a post-apartheid neighbourhood

The apartheid regime endeavoured to segregate races from one another to benefit the minority white population. The Group Areas Act was enacted to achieve this goal, displacing black and coloured populations to the periphery of the city, removed from opportunity. Following the end of the apartheid regime, the newly elected government embarked on projects aimed to increase service delivery and provision to those who were severely disadvantaged by the regime. One such project was the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which aimed to provide free housing for all and has since delivered more than 3 million homes (Cirolia, 2016: 622; Muyebe, 2016: 629). This project, however, has had extremely negative consequences with the vast majority of these new housing areas being located on the periphery of the city, intensifying sprawl and constraining the poor to the margins of the city.

Delft South is a representation of this reality. It is a subsidised housing settlement located 34 km from Cape Town's City Centre. It was planned in 1994 as one of the first housing settlements in post-apartheid South Africa and funded by the government. Construction began on Delft South in 1996. It is located adjacent to the airport and the R300, a national highway. These two elements inform its shape. Many of the houses in Delft South are owned by the people who occupy them. This has allowed for the urban fabric to be greatly changed since the area's initial construction. Although established post-apartheid, legacies of segregation persist within the area (Oldfield, 2004). Delft South was constructed following the end of apartheid to house previously disadvantaged residents formerly classified as black or coloured. The area is adjacent to the older suburb of Delft, which was established under the apartheid regime on the periphery of Cape Town for people previously classified as coloured. The density of Delft South is higher than that of the older suburb of Delft, but is further under-resourced with respect to public facilities and amenities. Racial tensions continue to divide the area of Delft South with groups contesting for the few available facilities and amenities. The public realm is under strain as public spaces are neglected, leaving residents with little respite from their private homes.

Cape Town remains a starkly polarized city with apartheid planning principles being perpetuated. Previously "white" demarcated affluent areas straddle the mountain and remain in close proximity to opportunities. The affluent suburbs embody rich opportunities and access which contrasts the dire conditions of the densely populated and largely poverty-stricken "Cape Flats" that Delft South represents.



Figure 2. A map locating Delft in Cape Town [source: author].

Furthermore, it must be stated that the experience of public space and public life differs in the affluent, previously white areas, within the city to that of areas such as Delft South. Established parks and public spaces are often well maintained and school properties are large and in superior condition (see figure 3). The affluent middle class has the ability to retreat into their larger properties and access well-kept parks and public space when choosing to do so. The prioritisation of the state to deliver and maintain functional public spaces in affluent neighbourhoods further perpetuate inequities and entrench the apartheid legacy into the landscape.



Figure 3. Parks and public spaces in Delft South neighbourhood.

There has been a failure to deliver functional and sustainable public open space where it is most needed. Open space exists in Delft South, but the vast majority of these open spaces function as retention ponds or electrical servitudes which limits its use as functional shared open space. Swathes of land remain in Delft South, demarcated for public open space but never having materialized. Many of these sites as well as parks have become dumping grounds for litter and waste having a detrimental impact on the urban environment (see figure 4).



Figure 4. A neglected park in Delft South [source: author].

The state needs to shift prioritisation of how and where public space is delivered and maintained. Although provision has been made in the planning of Delft South for public open space, these spaces need to be delivered and sustained through appropriate governance levers. This paper aims to highlight the importance of public open space and how it can be delivered to suit the needs and improve the lives of the end-user in low-income neighbourhoods such as Delft South.

SECTION I: A Need for Public Space

1.1 A need for public space in low-income settlements

In low-income communities, there is often little opportunity for the community to withdraw into the private realm, as their houses and plot sizes are too small to accommodate all of their household needs (Southworth, 2010, p. 103). This emphasises the importance of public space within these areas, as it is common for people to be dependent on the public realm to support their daily functions.

Following the end of apartheid, the ANC Government delivered approximately two million houses in its first decade of governance. Delft South, as a post-apartheid suburb, is representative of the fact that the private realm was privileged at the expense of the public realm. The nuclear family housing model was deployed: a single house per plot to house one family (Low, 2012). A characteristic of the South African urban landscape is that the focus of public investment has been put on the individual house and providing the hard infrastructure to service the individual house resulting in limited consideration given to the functioning of the public realm (Pieterse, 2013, p. 186). Today, Delft South

accommodates over 15.000 households, however only has 8.5 hectares of functional public open space. To conform the CSIR Guidelines for the Provision of Social Facilities in South Africa² a total of 30 hectares of functional open space is required to support the approximate population, which represents a significant shortfall. Due to the prioritisation of housing provision, the urban spaces such as the streets, parks and pavements display characteristics of abandonment.

This is used as the point of departure for this paper: the public realm needs to be greatly improved in order to improve the living conditions of people within low-income areas. A simple observation can be made within Delft South that people greatly depend on the spaces outside of their homes. This can be seen in the presence on the street as well the load placed on the rare public spaces and amenities. The street is clearly a vital component of the public realm (UN-Habitat, 2013). With the insufficient provision of public spaces, the street accommodates an array of public functions which other spaces fail to do. Urban living involves much more than the use of one room or a singular house (Correa, 1989). Rather, the room is only one element in an entire system of spaces that is needed by people. The house is a mere component within a large urban network and other components, particularly public space, are vital to the livelihoods of the community.

The premise of this paper is to elicit broad-based principles in Delft South to create much needed productive public open space. It is evident that the housing crisis cannot be reduced to maximising the number of dwellings placed on a site at the expense of much needed public open space that is fundamental to the functioning of the system.

1.2 Public Space as a Social Necessity

The insufficiency of public space within Delft South results in very few public forums to engage with other community members. Public space is essential for increasing social cohesion within communities as it provides platforms for social engagement (Hajer & Reijndorp, 2001). A common space is required for these engagements to occur. An ideal public open space is a space that the community can take *ownership* to create a safe meeting space and engage. Common land has two specific functions: firstly, it allows people to feel comfortable outside of their private properties and therefore allows them to feel connected to a larger social system; and secondly, common land acts as an important meeting place for members of the community (Alexander, Ishikawa, & Silverstein, 1977). In seeking these forums, the residents of Delft South often resort to engaging each other on the side of the street or within residual and neglected spaces (see figure 5).

Social urbanism can be described as both the phenomenon of architecture and public space being used towards social goals, as well as being a type of urban intervention which is defined by a social process (McGuirk, 2014). With this being said it is important to establish what these social goals are. The immediate common goal is to acquire a space which can be regarded as a shared open space – a space that serves the need of the collective as opposed to an individual. This space needs to be informed by social processes.

² CSIR Guidelines for the Provision of Social Facilities in South Africa was first published in 2012 and aims to provide guidelines for the provision of social facilities for human settlements in South Africa. The guidelines prescribe a total of 0.5ha per 1000 people for open public space.



Figure 5. Residents gather and socialise in the middle of a traffic circle.

The notion of sharing is an integral one with regard to creating an urban commons. This idea of “common” signifies something that is shared by people. The upkeep of the space must be driven by the shared desire, amongst the community members, to create and inform their own urban environment (Simone, 1998). In addition to this, social space facilitates encounter, assembly and simultaneity (1991, p. 101).

1.3 Creating Successful Public Space

The following sub-section looks at various ways to create successful public space. In particular, the following elements will be considered: diversity (through both use and time), encouraging participative citizenship, physical comfort and economic viability. The open spaces within Delft South do not currently display these principles which results in their downfall.

1.3.1 Diversity through use and time

By accommodating various activities, there is opportunity for the space to be used at different times and for different occasions. This adds another dimension to temporality as the different uses are able to extend the daily life of the space. This reduces homogeneity through encouraging access to supplementary activities. Public space with a diverse range of activities attracts a range of people. It is also a natural occurrence for people to gravitate towards other people (Lerner, 2014, p. 47).

The utilisation of public space is dependent on the time of day as well as the occasion. Ultimately safety is promoted through the presence of others. Therefore, when a space is occupied by more people, the perception is that the space is safer (Mehta, 2013, p. 60). Presently, many of the public spaces within Delft South are not utilised entirely, rather they are only utilised at certain times of the day. Spaces often have a singular function

which results in its limited use. The idea of temporality and use within public space can be analysed through a series of lenses in order to understand the manner in which they function. The physical composition of space as well as the elements that make up the space greatly affects the temporality (Whyte, 1988). Currently, public space within the area is composed to encourage a singular function. Limited consideration is given to ancillary or supporting functions which may support the intense use of public space for extended periods of time.

Intensity and diversity of activity is a factor of positive urban environments (Dewar & Uytendogaardt, 1991). Public open space should promote the intermixing of people and diverse activities. This diversity results in a complexity of conditions of activities, ultimately resulting in spontaneous interactions (Sennett, 2002). These spontaneous interactions are fundamental in promoting social cohesion resulting in urban opportunities that are created through intense interaction (Dewar & Uytendogaardt, 1991). Fundamentally the diversity of use is developed naturally over time as the community will respond to their needs. This complexity that is developed over time should be celebrated as opposed to isolating or separating their elements from one another (Jacobs, 1961, p. 177). Diversity of use was not observed in the open public space within Delft South and it is evident that open public space within the area has not facilitated diversity to develop over time. This paper will outline how diversity of use could be fostered within these spaces.

1.3.2 Participative Citizenship

Using Delft South as a case study, we can identify the role that each of the realms (both the public realm and the private realm) play in the lives of society. The socio-spatial boundary between the public and private realms can be further explored. There is a particular ambiguity that exists between the public and private realms within the area. The change of emphasis between public and private space ultimately alters the character of the area (Sennett, 2002, p. 32).

The private realm can be regarded as the space in which personal activities takes place, and the public realm as the space in which impersonal activities take place. Public space, however should have the ability to facilitate interpersonal activities (Madanipour, 1996). Within low-income environments these aforementioned differences between the public realm and the private realm become less distinct. Public space within low-income environments should have the ability to fulfil both of the aforementioned characteristics: to account for both personal and impersonal activities, as well as facilitate interactions. The urban surface should intend to diversify activities in time, allow for flexibility and for people to engage (Wall, 1999).

The objective of public space is to facilitate an environment where participative citizenship is achieved through presence and friction. Currently, public spaces within the area of Delft South are abandoned and neglected for large portions of the day. Through the occupation of public space by residents, social cohesion is encouraged and people are prompted to participate in the creation of a positive shared open space. The urban commons is constituted by people working together towards a particular goal (McGuirk, 2015). However, appropriate forums to participate and engage do not currently exist and thus shared goals cannot be determined and reached.

1.3.3 Physical Comfort

The physical makeup and components of the street contribute to its physical comfortability. The composition of the street, with regards to the exposure or protection from the elements, play a major role. Successful streets offer protection from the natural elements, but at the same time acknowledges the surrounding environment (Jacobs A. B., 1993).

There is an under provision of urban furniture within Delft South and the urban furniture that exists within the area is under maintained and underutilised. Benches should offer a resting place on a street. The placement of benches determines specific meeting and resting points along a path. The orientation and placement of them also determine their use. To increase the use of benches they should be orientated towards a view of surrounding activities and positioned in a way that they support the adjacent functions (Gehl, 2011).

The experience and comfort of the street and public space within the area is largely dependent on the relationship between pedestrians and vehicular traffic. Minibus taxis often dominate the streetscape, making it challenging for pedestrians to traverse the landscape. The fact that pedestrians and vehicular traffic are mutually dependant needs to be acknowledged. The relationship and friction should provide a great deal of urban opportunity (Alexander, Ishikawa, & Silverstein, 1977, p. 271).

1.3.4 Economic Viability

A major issue with regard to public spaces within South Africa, is the lack of management and funding to maintain them. In Delft South as well as most other cases, the upkeep and provision of public space is purely reliant on limited state funding often resulting in their poor condition. Therefore, alternative funding models need to be explored to ensure economic sustainability. To ensure their success, public spaces need to financially sustain themselves with minimum help from the state. As a solution is sought to be found for the provision and upkeep of public space, an endeavour should be made to increase economic activity through these interventions (Correa, 1998). The following section looks at two existing models of delivering public spaces within Cape Town. This information can then be used as a basis for an alternative model.

1.3.5 Dignified Public Places Programme

The Dignified Public Places Programme as well as the Quality Public Spaces Programme were implemented in order to provide adequate public spaces within Cape Town. These spaces were delivered by the City of Cape Town. The spaces needed to be “robust well made public spaces that communicate a sense of permanence” (NM & Associates, 2010). These spaces were inserted into areas without a management system being put in place in order to maintain them. This “drop and go” approach to the delivery of public spaces is insufficient to the production of positive and well-utilised public spaces. The lack of a management system has ultimately resulted in many these spaces becoming neglected and vandalised. Sibanye Square is a central public square within Delft South and was delivered under the Dignified Public Places Programme. Following its implementation it has run into disrepair due to issues of mismanagement and neglect by the state (see figure 6).



Figure 6. Sibanye Square located in Delft South [source: author].

1.3.6 VPUU

A more feasible model is that of Violence Protection through Urban Upgrading (VPUU). VPUU secures funding from both the City as well as external donors (such as the German Development Bank) in order to fund their Active Boxes and Public Spaces. In addition to this they incorporate a top-down management structure which includes members from the VPUU NGO, the City of Cape Town as well as members of the community (VPUU, 2014). The incorporation of a caretaker as well as other positions within the organisation presents employment opportunities for members of the community. Income for the Active Boxes (see figure 7) and Public Squares are generated from the Laterite sports field and meeting rooms.



Figure 7. A VPUU Active Box and public forecourt [source: author].

These user fees are in line City Sports and Recreation annual tariff guide. Live work units are constructed on site and are rented to tenants who are able to reside in the unit as well as work from them. The rental income generates additional income to sustain the public space.

The cost of the maintenance is therefore shared between VPUU and the City of Cape Town. It is clear that the income generated by the sites does not cover the total maintenance cost of the sites. However, it is evident that due to this funding model and management structure, the condition of these spaces is in far superior condition. This model can be used as a basis, but more income needs to be generated to ensure economic viability.

SECTION 2: Delft South Public Open Space Analysis

In order to gain an understanding of the Delft South area and the manner in which public open space currently functions, three primary methods of obtaining information were used. The intention of these methods was to elicit the way in which the people of the area make use of the urban environment:

1. *Mapping and Spatial Observations.*
As part of the Design Research Studio, Space of Good Hope at the University of Cape Town, information is elicited through mapping. This served as a primary form of acquiring relevant information. In addition, observations were made intermittently over the period of a few months. These provide a more nuanced insight into the neighbourhood.
2. *Narratives through discussions*
Spending time on site enabled the opportunity to engage with people from the area. Through discussions personal stories that pertain to life within the area were documented.
3. *School's Workshop*
As part of the Space of Good Hope Studio children from schools within the area was invited to a workshop. This workshop presented the opportunity of engaging with children located in the area. This was treated as a design exercise to creatively think of ways of eliciting information. This will be elaborated upon in the forthcoming section (see 2.3).

2.1. Mapping and Spatial Observations

Observations allowed for the urban environment to be viewed passively and to observe the occurrences of the urban every day. This was done through a series of drive-arounds as well as walking in the streets. Methods of observation enabled an insight and overview of the general life that occurs within the area.

Delft South has a very particular spatial structure which facilitates certain patterns of movement throughout the area. This spatial structure will be analysed, in order to gain a better understanding of how it enables and constricts the movement patterns of the existing community. Because of its planned nature, life and activity has manifested itself within the area as community members respond to both their individual and collective needs through accepting, adapting or capitalising on the spatial structure. The public spaces within Delft South should be understood as a network, as opposed to isolated

elements. They should be understood as a family of spaces, varying in scales (Dewar & Uytendogaardt, 1991, p. 57).

The following section will attempt to address the nuances of the manner in which life has manifested within the spatial structure and how the components of the spatial structure are used. In particular, the insufficiency of open public space within Delft South, and the manner in which they operate will be assessed.

2.1.1 Street Hierarchy



Figure 8. A map indicating the hierarchy of streets within Delft South [source: author].

Through the spatial structure there is a clear hierarchy of streets within Delft South. The road hierarchy is fundamental to understanding how public space is utilised.

- *The Main Road:* The Main Road serves as the high street and is the key structuring route and activity spine. The life and activity of the street is most vibrant immediately after the end of a school day. Immediately after school, children take to the streets, many of whom make their way out of the area via means of public transport. Because the Main Road is vehicular dominated throughout the course of the entire day, the activity occurs on the pavements of the Main Road. The spaces outside spaza shops³ are popular points of contact (see figure 11).

³ A spaza shop is a small convenient store, often operated out of or in front of someone's home.



Figure 9-10. the spaces outside spaza shops [source: author].

- *Loop Roads:* Loop Roads attach to the Main Road and are the secondary movement routes. They serve to divide the larger area into neighbourhoods in an attempt to create a sense of community. The objective of the loop roads was to stitch the area together, but at the same time allow for variations to occur at the local scale to ensure that each neighbourhood has its own sense of place (MLH Architects & Planners, 1995). Each community possesses its own specificity as well as multiple boundaries. The patterns uncovered by these characteristics are unique, yet comparable to that of another community (Simone, 1998).



Figure 11. Teenagers playing football in a loop road [source: author].

- *Concealed roads:* Concealed roads are attached to the loop roads and are embedded within the neighbourhood fabric. They are planned in such a manner as to encourage communal interactions and to improve the sense of community. They perform a major public function which can be displayed through children occupying and playing in the entire width of the street (see figure 12). The house is not detachable from the city and this can be seen in the activity of the concealed roads (Choay, 2003).

What determines the intimacy and scale of the neighbourhood streets is the relationship between the built fabric – in this case the house and the street. The fabric is tightly woven; therefore, neighbours are in close contact with one another. This results in the spaces immediately outside the property becoming natural spaces for people to dwell (Gehl, 2011) (see figure 13).



Figure 12-13. Outdoor spaces [source: author].

The street performs a significant role in the everyday lives of the residents, as it adopts functions that the larger public opens spaces would normally accommodate.

2.1.2 Open Spaces

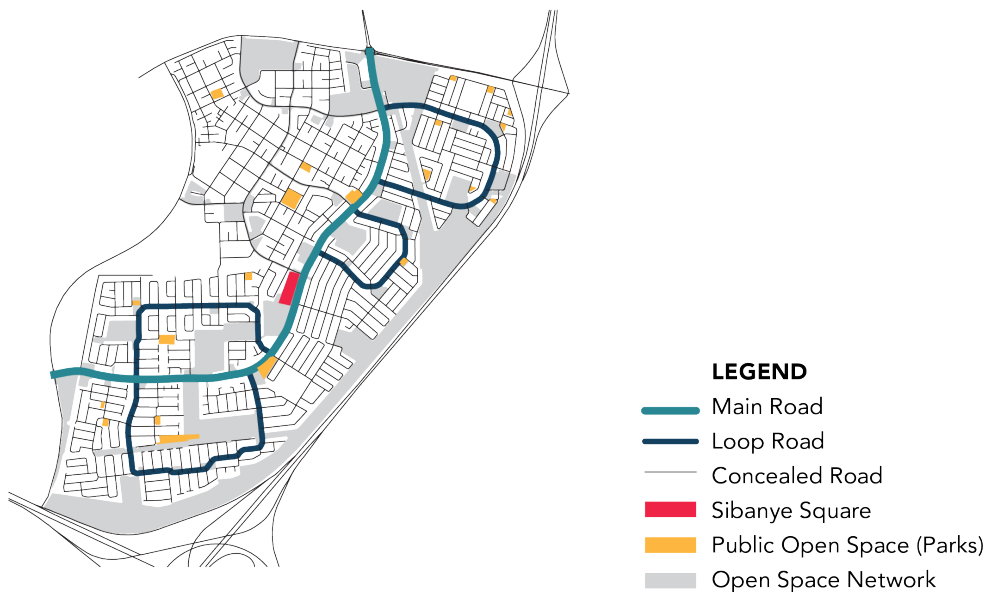


Figure 14: A map indicating public open space within the open space network [source: author].

Public open spaces are positioned within the open space network serving as crucial points of relief within the ever-densifying urban fabric. Sibanye Square serves as the central open public space (see figure 16). It is located centrally and can be seen as the

*maidan*⁴ of the area. Within Delft South other public open spaces take the form of retention ponds, parks and fields. In addition to this there are neglected open spaces within the various neighbourhoods, which are in a poor condition. These spaces are poorly managed and underutilised.



Figure 15. Sibanye Square as a trading space [source: author].

Parks within the area can be found along the Main Road as well as within the various neighbourhoods. The larger parks are strategically placed along the Main Road as they are accessible to larger portions of the community.

The parks nestled within the neighbourhoods are smaller in size, therefore accommodating less people and aiming to serve a different purpose. These shared spaces are intended to provide a space for people to interact, thus creating a sense of community within the various areas (Madanipour, 1996). The different scales of the park serve to aim varying scales of communities.

It was found through observation and discussion that some of the crèches use certain neighbourhood parks during the day. The few parks that are adequately maintained are located along the Main Road and are frequently used by nearby crèches. Teachers often bring the children to the park as many of the early childhood development centres have limited outdoor space. The teachers spoken to at the park mentioned that they try to bring the children to the park at least once a week or when the weather is suitable. They did however, mention that many of the parks were unsuitable for children, and therefore, some crèches have to walk a fair distance to an appropriate park.

A popular park is the one along the Main Road which is fenced, separating the children from the vehicular traffic. The park has a grass surface as opposed to some of the other parks which are gravel. At the time of observation, the park was accommodating two separate classes from two different crèches within the area (see figures 17 and 18).

⁴ Charles Correa the *maidan* as the principle urban which is used by the entire city. It is the central public area. (Correa, *The New Landscape - Urbanisation in the Third World*, 1989)



Figure 16 - 17. Crèches occupy parks during the morning period [source: author].



Figure 18. A fruit vendor located on the periphery of the park [source: author].

The life of the parks is also dependant on the school children. Through the workshop activity it was found that children up to grade 7 (aged 13) utilise the parks after school, while the older children did not. The playing equipment as well as the courts and fields are well used and it is common for the boys to play soccer on the courts and the girls to play netball.

Essential to the park is the fruit vendor, positioned on the periphery of the amenity (see figure 19). This constant presence provides an element of surveillance over the space for large portions of the day.

Through these observations and exercises, it is apparent that the parks within the area of Delft South play a significant role to the youth. Unfortunately, the condition of the parks does not meet the needs of the users with the majority of the play equipment being dysfunctional (see figures 20 and 21). Surfaces are often gravel; play equipment often broken and unmaintained; and parks are largely unsupervised, creating an unsafe and unpleasant environment for children.



Figures 19 – 20. The condition of the playing equipment and the park [source: author].

2.1.3 Open Space: The Network

Due to the condition and of the parks and open public space undue pressure is placed upon other components of the open space network. Residents are forced to find spaces to support their daily needs. This results in children finding other spaces to play and adults finding spaces to gather and do their daily chores. Children often play and occupy the electrical servitudes, using the pylons as play equipment and play within the unsafe retention ponds. It is also common to find people gathering outside their homes or in the street. The images below depict the manner in which public life plays out within the public realm.

2.2 Narratives from Delft South

Discussion allowed for specific happenings to be uncovered. A series of discussions were held with community leaders, community members and children within the area.

2.2.1 Narratives

Through discussions with park-going school students it is understood that children have different routines throughout the course of the day. Despite the differences in routines, there are many commonalities in their practices and habits include moving between multiple spaces after school, animating the open space network. This was a clear indication of their independence and agency which highlights their importance to the contribution to urban life. Children are often unsupervised after school due to the circumstances of the majority of the households. This foregrounds the independence and agency of the children within the area. It also highlights role that children have in the use of public space as well as importance that shared public space plays in the lives of school-going children.

An interview was conducted with a Community Policing Forum (CPF) member, who explained how the spatial structure was used as a mechanism to self-organise. The CPF forms a prominent role within the area, performing neighbourhood watch duties as well serving as a touch point between the police and the community.



Figures 21 and 22: Outdoor spaces for public life [source: author].

In her personal capacity she fosters six children, who she does not allow to play outside due to issues such as gangsterism and safety. These children are therefore confined to the private property after school hours.

This results in the assured safety of the children at the expense of occupying the urban environment. The reality remains that not all children have the privilege of having a safe space to retreat. Many wander the streets, unsupervised, before returning home. A consequence of this is that children and teenagers' resort to gangsterism and anti-social behaviour if they do not have a safe space to occupy, further highlighting the importance of functional shared open space.

The discussion with the CPF member was extremely valuable as it highlighted issues of security and existing measures which are put in place to counter this. It also signified the spatial structure as a device which allows the CPF and neighbourhood watch groups to order themselves. Smaller neighbourhood watch committees are made of a representative of each street. These smaller neighbourhood watch groups are organised within the spatial structure and make up a large portion of the CPF. When patrolling, boundaries are also informed by the spatial structure.

2.3 Workshop Findings

The Space of Good Hope Design Research Studio hosted a workshop at the Delft South Library. Children were invited from schools within the area to partake in the workshop for one afternoon after school. The children that participated in the workshop ranged from ages eleven to sixteen representing a target group from both primary and high schools. The workshop presented the opportunity to interact with the children who inhabit the urban environment every day.

In order for the workshop to be both beneficial for the research studio as well as entertaining for the children, activities were designed for the children to partake in. These activities also had the objective of eliciting information about the area and the lives of the children. The workshop exercises allowed for specific issues and happenings

to be teased out. These exercises needed to be designed with a specific objective in mind.

A particular research question was probed during this workshop: *How do people occupy the public space within Delft South?*

An exercised was designed for the children to partake in which would see them map out their activities through the course of the day, as well as on weekends. Magnetic icons represented various activities as well as locations. The participants were tasked to place these icons along a daily timeline. For every activity icon that was placed the participants were required to place a location icon. This indicated the location at which the various common activities take place.

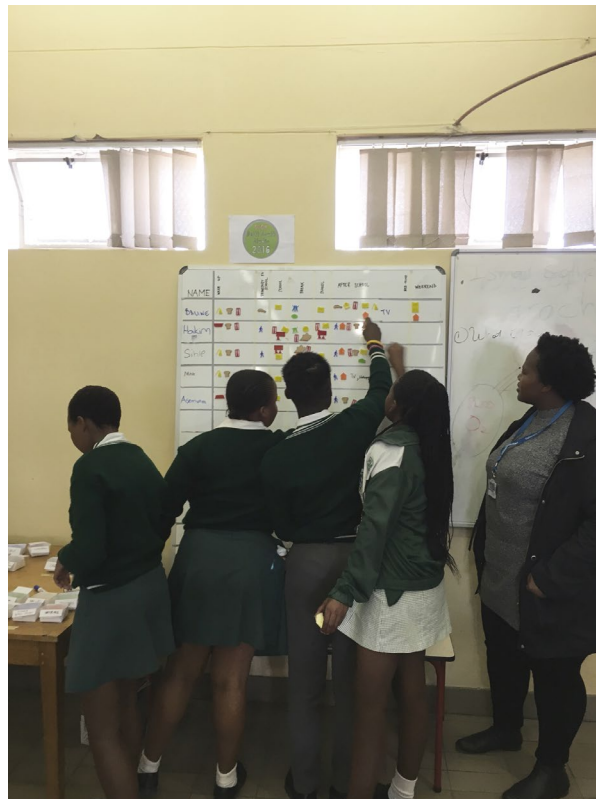


Figure 23. Students documenting their activity through the course of a day [source: author].

Schools do not often offer extra-mural activities. Therefore, many children leave school immediately and are then forced to occupy themselves. A key conclusion drawn from the task is that children within the area do not occupy one space during the course of the afternoon. Rather their afternoons are filled with various activities across various locations. Not only does this highlight the importance of a larger open space network, but it also signifies the key role that children play within the urban environment. The life of the area is greatly dependent on the activities and movement of the children. This also indicates that the children are active agents within the urban environment. An observation that is important to reiterate is that the school children often do not occupy a single space after school hours. Rather, they make their way between various

locations in groups, thus making the public space within the area especially dynamic. Activities include participating in sports at sport clubs in neighbouring areas, playing and socialising in the park and street as well as watching television or playing video games at their own home or at a home of a friend. This results in the use of parks and public space fluctuating through the course of the afternoon. When addressing the public space, the importance of popular movement routes and networks needs to be acknowledged. Children should be able to move freely and safely between locations.

3. Towards Functional Public Open Space

‘Social urbanism’ refers to an urbanism which opposes cities to be designed from scratch, but rather establish practices which recognises what was already exists (McGuirk, 2014, pp. 243-244). The fundamental role that school children play in public life has been highlighted through exercises of mapping, observation, and engagement. From this, it is clear that children use all of the available open space despite their unsafe and underequipped nature. At present, public open space within the area is programmed to facilitate singular or limited functions as opposed to encouraging primary uses that are supported by ancillary functions. Public open space can be better equipped to accommodate the needs of school children by ensuring improved condition of the spaces, its playing equipment and the facilitation of additional uses. In doing so, the additional user groups ensure that spaces are used for longer periods of time and public open space is supervised. The public open space network needs to be regarded as a holistic system that ensures the safe movement of children through the urban landscape.

Using the aforementioned analysis of the Delft South area as well as the theoretical understanding, key principles can be derived to ensure the improved condition of public open space as well the increased use of public open space by multiple user-groups. These three principles should be considered when striving to deliver functional public open space within low-income environments in post-apartheid South Africa:

1. Ensure sustainable economic viability as well as governance structures
Partnerships should be established between the state and the community in order to maintain and manage public open space. The previous “drop and go” approach adopted by the state has not delivered sustainable public open space. Rather partnerships should be established at the beginning of the process with affected stakeholders to ensure that the spaces are appropriately cared for and maintained. Revenue streams should be incorporated into the public space to supplement its upkeep as it is evident that the state cannot adequately maintain public open space.
2. Safety and Physical Comfort
Understanding existing spatial patterns and movement networks will contribute greatly to elements of safety. Public space should be designed for the appropriate uses and ensure comfortability and safety of its users.
In addition to this, public spaces should be located appropriately within these structures and designed with passive surveillance and a positive relationship to its surrounds. Additionally, public spaces should be designed to be comfortable, offering respite from the, often, harsh urban environments.
In the case of Delft South, ensuring safe and user-friendly environments for children should be paramount as they are significant contributors to public life. Safety should

extend into the movement networks to ensure that people are able to move safely between locations.

3. Diverse activity through use and time

Activities should be derived from the site and incorporated into the public open spaces where possible. It needs to be acknowledged that uses cannot be over-prescriptive. It should allow diversity of use to manifest organically over time. A variety of uses should be adopted targeted at different user groups and times of the day. It is understandable that children will occupy public space for large components of the day, but this should be supplemented to encourage optimal usage to extend the period of use. This will ensure that public spaces will have maximum uses and increased presence, significantly contributing to the perception of safety.

In conclusion, it is evident that the public open spaces within low-income environments need to be improved. In many of these environments, the spaces of the public realm cannot accommodate the necessary requirements of individuals and communities. Improving the public realm has great potential with regards to benefitting the lives of many people. Because these spaces are integral, there is an opportunity to propose solutions which will promote social cohesion and shared use. The provision of shared open spaces also has the possibility of fostering active citizenship and promoting economic exchange. When dealing with such large-scale issues we need to establish strategic and pragmatic solutions which should emerge from the particular site. This paper has illustrated how this can be achieved through relatively simple principles. Through the case of Delft South, we can understand the importance of public open space as well as identify the consequences due to the lack thereof. Particularly, we have identified the importance of the role open public space has in the lives of school children and the importance of school children in the functioning and life of public open space. This should be used as a departure point when addressing open public space in post-apartheid South Africa. It is clear that alternative strategies need to be adopted to ensure the provision and the sustainability of shared public open space which is fundamental to the lives of low-income communities.

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