

Participatory Planning and the Global South:  
A Case Study of Local Planning and Development in Vrygrond



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# ***'Participatory Planning and the Global South: A Case Study of local planning and development in Vrygrond'***

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## **Abstract**

Urbanisation is occurring most rapidly in the global South, where cities are characterised by increasing levels of poverty, socio-spatial inequality, and informality. Mainstream planning theories have tended to originate from the North, responding to a context that differs greatly from that of cities of the South where theories have been uncritically adopted and imposed. State planning systems in developing countries often reflect traditional technocratic approaches and have become increasingly disengaged from rapidly changing urban conditions. In a context in which neoliberalism is becoming increasingly hegemonic, such planning systems may serve the interests of capital over the needs of the poor. There has therefore been a call to focus on developing descriptive and explanatory theories through case research from which new and more contextually appropriate approaches to planning might emerge. I offer the case of Vrygrond as a contribution to this ongoing endeavour to 'theorize from the South', regrounding planning theory and practice in the realities and complexities of global South contexts.

The case study explores the nature of development in the densely populated, low-income settlement in Cape Town, from 1997 to 2014. The main research question asks how services, public facilities and amenities have been secured in Vrygrond, and how planning theory and practice might learn from this experience. The dissertation therefore draws on semi-structured interviews to understand the interaction between development processes adopted by key actors and contextual factors which include racial and ethnic diversity, power struggles, oppositional forms of citizenship, mistrust, and pervasive crime. The findings are then interpreted through the application of three contrasting theoretical frameworks of technocratic planning, communicative and collaborative planning, and co-production. I argue that the assumptions underlying technocratic and communicative planning are problematic in the context of Vrygrond, and that co-production might be better placed to respond to a lack of access to public facilities as well as a broader sense of disempowerment and marginalization. Recommendations include institutional rearrangements that might foster a social context that would be more receptive to co-production. I call attention to the nature of citizenship in post-apartheid communities, to social difference and power relations, and to the impact of crime and gangsterism on local governance, as important considerations for participatory planning approaches such as co-production.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction



# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1. Introduction**

In this dissertation I offer the case of Vrygrond as a contribution to the ongoing endeavor to ground planning theory in the realities of the global South. The case study describes the nature of development in a small but densely populated settlement located 25 kilometers South of Cape Town's CBD, and relates the developmental context of the settlement to debates in the planning theory literature regarding public participation and forms of citizen-state engagement in planning processes. In this the first chapter of the dissertation, I provide background knowledge to enable the reader to understand the nature of the research, and to facilitate an engagement with the content of the dissertation. I therefore start by describing two areas of background to the study, firstly the challenges facing urban planning in the global South, and secondly the nature of local development in post-apartheid South Africa. I then describe my philosophical standpoint relating to urban planning, and lastly set out the structure of the dissertation, briefly describing the focus of each chapter.

## **2. Background to the study**

There are two areas of background knowledge that are important to the study. I describe each in turn below, firstly explaining the current planning context that has led to a need to 'theorize from the South', followed by the approach that the post-apartheid government has taken to informal settlement upgrading and local development in South Africa.

### **2.1 Urban planning in the global South**

Countries situated in the global South are currently undergoing rapid urbanization that is placing a strain on the ability of governments to meet the needs of citizens. It is predicted that in the future, the majority of the world's population will live in urban areas of the global South, where problems of poverty, socio-spatial inequality, and informality are becoming increasingly widespread and pervasive (Watson, 2009). This is occurring in the midst of weak or failing states, as well as serious environmental concerns (Watson, 2009). State urban planning systems in many countries of the global South, often having been imposed by Colonial governments or adapted from Northern contexts, remain largely technocratic, are disengaged from the realities of their rapidly changing urban environments, and are ill-equipped to respond to these growing urban problems (Watson, 2009).

Mainstream planning theory has been strongly influenced by theorists situated in the global North (Yiftachel, 2006), with theories often having underlying assumptions regarding the nature of urban societies that may hold in contexts from which they originated, but are problematic in the diverse and rapidly changing urban environments of the South. Planning theory has therefore not been a strong source of guidance or insight for planners practicing in ‘developing’ countries. A number of planning theorists including Vanessa Watson, Oren Yiftachel, and Ananya Roy, have led a turn towards re-engaging planning theory with the realities of urban conditions faced by the majority of the world’s urban dwellers. Central to this ‘global South turn’ is a desire to develop descriptive and explanatory theories regarding the nature of urban contexts in the global South, through case research in Africa, Asia and South America. If we are to find new and more suitable approaches to planning that are better able to comprehend and respond to these complex and challenging urban conditions, then case research is vital in ensuring that planning theory doesn’t repeat the uncritical adoption of planning approaches across vastly differing contexts, which has hindered planning in the past. In this dissertation I seek to provide such a case study.

## **2.2 Local development in post-apartheid South Africa**

During apartheid years, access to the city for non-White citizens was restricted due to racially discriminatory policies and laws. The Group Areas Act preserved much of the well-located land in South African cities for White residents, while many Coloured residents were forcefully removed to suburbs in more marginal areas. Access to the city was most severely restricted for Black African citizens, with the majority being restricted to ‘homeland’ areas such as the Transkei and the Ciskei in the Eastern Cape. Following the demise of apartheid, rural-urban migration contributed to the growth of informal settlements in South African cities including Cape Town, often located on the outskirts. The post-apartheid government has faced a profound challenge in addressing problems of a lack of housing, infrastructure, services and public facilities in poorer areas, and has adopted a strategy of mass state-led housing and service delivery through the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which held dual aims of poverty alleviation and economic growth (Lodge, 2003), and later through the Breaking New Ground (BNG) strategy. While the programs have achieved impressive figures regarding housing and service delivery, the approach has been criticized for the quality of the houses delivered, the nature of the resulting RDP settlements (Lodge, 2003), and the poor location of land used for housing provision (Huchzermeyer, 2003, 2011). The

extent of the need for housing meant that the cost per housing unit needed to be minimized, resulting in cheap, marginal land being used (Huchzermeyer, 2003). In many ways the RDP has therefore entrenched spatial segregation. In years since, many of these settlements have experienced a proliferation of informal dwellings in the backyards of formal houses, which are leased to tenants by homeowners. Other forms of informality include a lack of compliance with state zoning restrictions, informal electricity and water connections, non-payment of municipal rates and taxes, and informal economic activities in the homes and on the streets of settlements. Economic problems of poverty and unemployment have persisted alongside social problems such as crime, gangsterism and drug abuse.

The post-apartheid government has attempted to address these persistent problems through adopting an approach of Developmental Local Government (DLG), in which many state functions were progressively decentralized to local government. The Municipal Structures Act (1998) and the Municipal Systems Act (2000) gave force to this strategy, in which municipalities play a strong role in guiding and driving development in local areas. These Acts provide various processes and structures that seek to enable the public to have input into the content of policies through public participation, such that local-level needs can be met by municipal-level policies. Municipalities have been divided into a number of wards with each ward having a designated ward councilor (City of Cape Town, 2012). The role of the ward councilor is vital in ensuring that local needs are met. Paradza (2010: 11) describes this role:

“Councillors ... serve as the interface between the citizens they represent and the municipal officials who design and implement development policies. The councilor’s job is not just to serve as the voice of the people, for the expression of their community needs, but also to act as a watchdog and ensure the municipality implements policies to address the needs of citizens.”  
(Paradza, 2010: 11).

Ward councilors represent the needs of local residents to Council, with these needs then being responded to through a municipal Integrated Development Plan (IDP). The IDP, reviewed annually, sets out public spending on capital projects in the municipality for the next five year political term. IDPs thus “articulate all of the state’s plans for a local area” (Pieterse et al, 2008: 4; Patel, 2006). Public participation is sought within Integrated Development Planning, as well as in service delivery. Ward committees provide a third avenue for public participation, in which groups of ten representatives of

local groups within the ward sit in a committee chaired by the ward councilor (Oldfield, 2008).

Alongside the IDP, a municipal Spatial Development Framework (SDF) details a strategic spatial vision for the municipality over a longer time period of twenty years or more. This vision is progressively achieved through regulatory strategies, such as the consideration of development proposals against a Zoning Scheme, and strategic or 'forward planning' strategies such as spatially defined economic incentives for businesses or industries. In the City of Cape Town, the SDF has been supported by a further eight District Plans which provide a strategic spatial vision at a more localized scale.

### **3. Brief description of the case**

Vrygrond is a settlement with an estimated population of 50000 people, located 25 kilometers South of Cape Town's CBD. The location of the site is provided in Figure 1. Vrygrond is regarded as having been the oldest informal settlement in the Western Cape (Schrire, n.d.), and was formalized between 1999 to 2002 through the Housing Subsidy Scheme, a financing mechanism of the RDP. In contrast to many former township areas that remain racially segregated, Vrygrond houses a mix of Coloured and Xhosa residents, as well as a considerable proportion of foreign nationals from African countries. The formalization occurred through a partnership between the state and the Vrygrond Community Development Trust, a local community body established to facilitate the development, and the delivery of houses to qualifying residents. The Trust was also given formal ownership of parcels of land in the settlement, with the view that the organization might lease or sell land to private developers as a source of income generation, which would then enable the Trust to provide community facilities for residents. The development delivered 1 500 formal houses with formal electricity, water and sanitation, 100 serviced plots, and formal infrastructure including roads and storm-water drainage. However, the formalization was also steeped in conflict between opposing community leaders. Initially the Trust consisted of a mediated agreement between two groups of community leaders, however one group broke away from the Trust over disagreements relating to the development. Public meetings were conflictual and often disrupted, and conflict eventually became violent leading to the murder of two community leaders in the settlement. Following the development, further conflicts arose relating to the allocation of houses to beneficiaries.



Figure 1: The location of the site for the case study (Google Earth, 2013)

The delivery of houses led to rapid in-migration that saw the population increase from approximately 8 000 at the time of the development, to a current estimate of 50 000. The Trust, the state, and various NGOs have achieved notable successes in delivering services and facilities to residents, however residents face considerable challenges in their everyday lives. Basic needs have largely been met, including in an area of informal dwellings located on a designated road reserve, however social problems including crime, gangsterism, alcoholism and drug abuse, as well as persistent poverty and unemployment, have proliferated.

The case of Vrygrond was therefore chosen for its clear relevance to debates regarding public participation in the local planning and development of low-income communities. Through the case study I have sought to document the development of Vrygrond since 1997, relating the experiences of residents as well as key actors driving development, to debates in the planning theory literature. I seek to use the case study to interrogate some of the prevailing theoretical arguments relating to planning in the global South, with the hope that I might be able to provide theoretical propositions regarding public participation and citizen-state in the global South, as well as practical policy recommendations that might be used to improve development processes and outcomes in Vrygrond.



Figure 2: Densification of the Vrygrond settlement from backyard dwellings (Groves, 2011)

#### **4. My philosophical position in relation to planning**

Urban planning is an inherently political activity in that it involves interventions in urban environments that seek to advance certain values, or to bring about a desired future. Urban populations are comprised of diverse groups of people who may differ in terms of their philosophical worldview, their cultural background, their material context, their needs and desires, and in aspects relating to identity including race, gender, sexuality or religion (Sandercock, 1998). Groups hold interests that differ and at times may be in direct conflict. For the professional planner then, whose decisions may have some impact on the future of urban environments, the question remains as to whose interests should prevail, and whose ethics should inform 'good' urban futures.

I view the essence of planning as an activity, and indeed a normative activity in that it involves intervening in space according to a notion of what should be. The planner is therefore he or she who undertakes such interventions, and may not necessarily be affiliated with the planning profession. Urban contexts are shaped by a number of social, political and economic forces occurring simultaneously across multiple scales, and planning is but one of myriad forces influencing urban change. Nevertheless I view state planning systems as having an important role to play, particularly in a context in which neoliberalism is becoming increasingly hegemonic in many societies (Purcell, 2009). Neoliberalism, which involves the insertion of a market rationality into all aspects of public life, is increasing social inequalities resulting in the marginalization of poorer residents (Purcell, 2009). I view a central task of state planning to be that of promoting cities that are socially just and equitable. I therefore see Susan Fainstein's (2010) *The Just City*, which calls on planners to pursue equity, diversity and democracy in urban environment, as an excellent source of insight for professional planners. I also find David Harvey's (2008) advancing of 'a right to the city' to be a valuable contribution for planning. He describes Lefebvre's (1968) concept in relation to urban planning:

"The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights." (Harvey, 2008: 23).

I feel that state planning should serve to foster a democratic society in which all are empowered to contribute to the collective activity of city-making. In this way cities may become spaces that are inclusive and accessible, that reflect the diversity of urban populations, and that provide equal opportunities to all residents to meet their needs and pursue their desires.

## **5. Structure of the dissertation**

The structure of the dissertation reflects the process that I followed in the research, starting with an exploration of the literature that enabled me to identify a research problem. This exploration is described in the Literature Review in chapter two, in which I describe three differing approaches to planning.

I then used the research aims to pose main and subsidiary research questions, and selected the case study method as the research method that was best placed to answer a research question relating to complex social environments (Yin, 2009; Flyvbjerg, 2011). The third chapter seeks to demonstrate the logic underlying the research. To do this, I present a more detailed research outline, before explaining the nature of the case study research method, the selection of the site and unit of analysis, and the main sources of evidence, with semi-structured interviews being the primary source.

In chapter four I present the context of the case study. I describe the historical, social, physical and governance contexts in turn, seeking to provide an understanding of historical events and trends, as well as present day factors that influence the case.

In the fifth chapter I present and analyze the findings of the case study. I do this by identifying three main actors or groups of actors driving development in Vrygrond, namely the state, the Vrygrond Community Development Trust, and NGOs. I describe the developmental achievements of each, the approaches and processes used, and the challenges encountered in relation to the local context.

In chapter six I apply the three theoretical frameworks described in the literature review to the findings of the case study. I seek to use the theory to understand and explain the nature of development in Vrygrond, while also using the case to develop theoretical propositions, as well as practical recommendations in relation to the ongoing development of the Vrygrond settlement.

Finally, in chapter seven I present the recommendations and conclusions. I firstly reiterate the focus and purposes of the research, before describing the main findings and conclusions. I then state the theoretical and policy recommendations and areas for further research, and end with a reflection on the value of the case study.

## **6. Conclusion**

In this introductory chapter I have sought to enable the reader to understand the nature of the research conducted towards this dissertation, and have aimed to facilitate an engagement with the content described in the coming chapters. The dissertation describes the nature of local development in the settlement of Vrygrond, and explores theoretical arguments regarding forms of public participation and citizen-state engagement in planning in the global South, so as to provide theoretical propositions and practical policy recommendations. In the next chapter I provide a theoretical contextualization for the dissertation, describing three planning frameworks that vary in the extent and forms of public participation and citizen-state engagement in urban planning processes.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 1. Introduction

In this chapter I describe important debates, arguments and concepts from the literature, which I later apply to the case study in the Interpretation chapter. I outline three approaches to planning that vary in the extent and nature of public participation and citizen-state engagement that they propose, namely technocratic planning, communicative and collaborative planning, and finally co-production.

I firstly describe the emergence of the planning profession, in which professional planners assumed a technocratic approach to planning during the Modernist-era. This approach was critiqued due to its view of planning as a technical rather than a political activity. Critics questioned technocratic planning's claims to a singular 'public good' that could be objectively determined and advanced through expertise.

I then describe the emergence of communicative and collaborative approaches to planning, which seemingly provided planners with an ethically defensible means by which to make planning decisions in a plural public domain, through processes focusing on building consensus regarding future courses of action through controlled dialogue, debate and argumentation. Communicative and collaborative planning gained a dominant position in planning theory in the 1980s and 1990s, but faced critique from theorists who questioned the validity of the assumption that power differences could be neutralized in discourse. A strong global South critique also emerged in which theorists questioned the uncritical adoption of Northern planning theories in the South, where urban conditions differ greatly, and where assumptions underlying mainstream theories are unlikely to hold. This global South turn has led to some emerging ideas regarding the nature of global South planning contexts, which are described in the penultimate section.

Finally, I describe co-production as a more radical approach to citizen-state engagement that sees the state and communities partnering over service delivery. More than just enabling increased access to services, co-production fosters increased political influence for disempowered communities by introducing new forms of community-led local governance through various strategies.

## **2. Technocratic planning**

The planning profession emerged as a means of introducing greater rationality to public decision-making, with educated planning professionals working for the state, seeking to bring about “the rational planning of ideal social orders” (Hall, 1988: 11-13; Watson, 2009; Sandercock, 1998). This traditional approach to planning assumed that planners, drawing on expertise in scientific knowledge, models and techniques, could objectively determine ideal courses of action that would be in the interest of the public (Sandercock, 1998). Planners produced comprehensive master-plans representing a desired final state for an urban area, based on modernist urban ideals and drawing inspiration from the ‘founding fathers’ of planning such as Ebenezer Howard, Le Corbusier and Patrick Geddes (Watson, 2009; Sandercock, 1998). These detailed master-plans were then enacted through legal forms of development control, with zoning schemes emerging as an important mechanism (Watson, 2009). Key underlying assumptions therefore included a belief in an unproblematic notion of a singular ‘public good’, as well as a belief in the capacity of rational experts to comprehend and comprehensively plan for complex urban environments.

### **2.1 Critiques of technocratic planning**

A number of fundamental assumptions underlying modernist planning were revealed and critiqued as the field of planning theory emerged and developed. Firstly, planners had faith in their own expert knowledge and rationality, and assumed an ability to fully understand and comprehensively plan urban environments. Positive urban change was thought to equate to increased order and structure, with the separation of land uses and the controlled growth and expansion of settlements. Jane Jacobs (1961) was perhaps the first to unsettle this approach to planning. Her much celebrated book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* argued that urban planning, in its attempts to comprehensively plan and order towns and cities, was threatening the inherent complexity, diversity, and fine-grained human interaction that allowed neighborhoods to thrive. She critiqued the prevailing theories of good urban form, instead proposing various strategies including mixed land use that would better support the social complexity of successful and much-loved urban areas.

The more substantial critique of modernist planning, however, was in its uncritical approach to the planning process. Planners saw themselves as objective experts advancing the ‘public good’ by presenting a ‘benign state’ with plans that would advance the ‘public interest’ (Sandercock, 1998). In this way planning was understood to be a

technical rather than a political process. Paul Davidoff's (1965) essay 'Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning' criticized planning's attempt to maintain a position outside of the messiness of politics, and argued that planning urban environments was an inherently political activity (Sandercock, 1998). Davidoff showed that the public consisted of diverse groups with at times conflicting interests, and that, as a result, plans were political in that they advanced the needs of some groups over others.

### **3. Communicative and collaborative planning**

In the post-modernist era, with a broad epistemological shift away from expert knowledge and instrumental rationality, towards local, situated knowledge and 'multiple ways of knowing' (Sandercock, 1998), planning faced something of a crisis of professional legitimacy. Whereas before planners were safe in a context that valued expert, technical knowledge and sought to introduce greater rationality to decision making, now the very notion of objective truth was being broadly challenged. Urban futures were seen to be far more contestable, and planners realized their implicitness in systems of control and marginalization, with an adherence to market rationality producing growing social inequality (Friedmann, 1987). Innes (1995: 186) paints a picture of planners who were "beset by competing loyalties and mandates", were "uncertain about what authority or knowledge gives them legitimacy to act as they do", and were "uncomfortable with the expert role for themselves, recognizing that they have their own biases and that expertise has its limits".

In this context, communicative and collaborative approaches emerged and took up a dominant position in planning theory (Watson, 2003). These approaches aimed "to replace scientific and technical information as the source of planners' decisions with public deliberation, democratic debate and local knowledge" (Watson, 2011: 135). The work of the sociologist Jürgen Habermas became a valuable source for many communicative planning theorists. Habermas postulated that truth was collectively established between individuals or groups through communicative processes. This 'communicative rationality' could be achieved through meeting a set of requirements, known as 'discourse ethics', which included conditions such as the inclusion of all parties affected by the issue being discussed, the elimination of power differences between parties, and the elimination of strategic action, with all parties participating openly and transparently (Habermas, 1981; Flyvbjerg, 1998). 'Ideal speech situations' were achieved when all these requirements were met. Habermasian communicative planning seemed to provide an ethically defensible position for planners in that it placed

value in local knowledge, and shifted the role of the planner away from one of an expert making judgments to advance the public good, towards a participant or collaborator guiding a democratic process in which truth is collectively established through consensus. It also provided a philosophical foundation and source of thinking for communicative planning theorists seeking to improve the communicative work of planners. While many acknowledged that Habermas was describing an ideal, hypothetical scenario, it was thought that, by aligning participatory planning processes more closely with Habermas' discourse ethics, the practice of planners could become more effective. Planning theorists such as John Forester, Patsy Healey and Judith Innes turned towards a focus on the communicative work of planners in their everyday practice (see Forester, 1989; Healey, 1992). Theorists emphasized the 'social learning' that could occur in communicative discourse, as well as the building of social capital amongst participants.

### **3.1. Critiques of communicative and collaborative planning**

Communicative planning theory has been the subject of much critique since its emergence in the 1980s and 1990s. Much of the critique focused on the Habermasian ideals underpinning communicative planning (for example Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Huxley, 2000), with Habermas' desire to eliminate power differences and strategic action, as well as his universalistic assumptions, drawing criticism. In more recent years, a strong global South critique has emerged from planning theorists such as Vanessa Watson and Oren Yiftachel, opposing the uncritical adoption of approaches developed in the global North, including communicative and collaborative planning, in vastly differing global South contexts. This section describes these two critiques as well as their implications in shaping future approaches to planning theory.

#### ***The power critique***

The first major critique of Habermasian communicative planning is that the processes proposed do not adequately acknowledge and respond to power differences between participants, leaving communicative planning unable to achieve its goals of social transformation. As stated by Flyvbjerg (1998: 192), "Habermas lacks the kind of concrete understanding of relations of power that is needed for political change". For critics, those who enter a participatory process with greater power within a society will inevitably benefit at the expense of less powerful participants. In line with Habermas' discourse ethics, many forms of communicative and collaborative planning sought to

equalize the power of groups within a deliberative process through the use of various methods from the literature. The view of power contained within communicative action is of power as a “discrete and alienable” resource that can be set aside for the duration of deliberation (Purcell, 2009: 151), to ensure that only the ‘force of the better argument’ prevails (Habermas, 1981; Huxley, 2000). Critics draw upon the work of Foucault who conceptualizes power as relational, enacted within and through the interactions between social agents (Purcell, 2009). In this view, power is inalienable and ever present, always shaping all human relations (Purcell, 2009; Hillier, 2003; Huxley, 2000). While those with a Habermasian view of power may believe that communicative methods and approaches are able to prevent existing power relations from being deterministic, a Foucaultian view of power deems Habermas’ ideal speech situation to be no more than a utopian ideal. Indeed, “any active attempt to neutralize power through facilitation is itself an imposition of particular relations of power” (Purcell, 2009: 151; Hillier, 2003), thus neutralizing power relations must be seen as an impossibility. While agonism proposes an insightful way of understanding the nature of power and conflict in societies, it has not resulted in specific proposals regarding planning processes, and I therefore did not apply it to the case of Vrygrond in the interpretation chapter.

A second problematic requirement of discourse ethics is the call to eliminate strategic action from participatory processes. Habermasian communicative planning envisions groups participating with transparency, willingly engaging and cooperating without hidden agendas or ulterior motives. Again, critics view this ideal as being too far removed from reality, with inequality in society meaning that strategic action is inevitable and in fact a necessary and valuable political tool for marginalized groups. Outhwaite (1996: 20, cited in Huxley, 2000: 372) states that Habermas views “as deviant and pathological ... the ‘latently strategic action’ of those who enter a discourse with an ulterior purpose; but this is the norm when the discourse is rigged in advance by inequalities of power and knowledge.” By suppressing strategic action in favor of adherence to communicative planning processes that futilely attempt to neutralize power relations and prevent strategic action, unequal power relations are more likely to be entrenched, with disempowered groups being condemned to a marginalized position in society, undermining the transformative goals of communicative planning (Purcell, 2009).

### ***The global South critique***

The second critique of communicative and collaborative planning is that they have been widely adopted around the world, including in the global South, with little consideration for the significance of context and locale. Having emerged from the works of academics situated in the global North, specifically in North America and in North West Europe (Watson, 2011; Yiftachel, 2006), these theories are rooted in an understanding of the political economies of the regions from which they originate (Watson, 2011). The participatory approaches contained within communicative and collaborative planning have since been widely adopted by planners in vastly differing global South contexts. This has occurred with very little interrogation as to their appropriateness for contexts that differ greatly from the regions in which they first emerged. The literature provides two factors that may have contributed to this uncritical adoption of communicative planning regardless of context.

Firstly, many forms of communicative planning adopt the universalistic claims of Habermas' communicative rationality (Flyvbjerg, 1998). Habermas views all humans as democratic beings, "*homo democraticus*", with a universal desire for consensus and freedom from domination (Flyvbjerg, 1998: 188). Habermas' (1990: 198) belief is that, if all forms of communication distortions are removed, people will seek to work collectively and cooperatively to establish truth through discourse and argumentation. The implication is that, through skillfully guiding communicative processes, planners can ensure 'good' planning outcomes in any context in which they operate. The acceptance of Habermas' ideals in many forms of communicative and collaborative planning has resulted in planning being portrayed as "an unproblematic global activity, adhering to a similar logic of communicative rationality wherever it is found" (Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000: 336). Flyvbjerg (1998: 190) argues, however, that Habermas treats this belief as axiomatic when it should rather be viewed as a hypothesis that ought to be subjected to 'empirical verification'. Others such as Foucault and Machiavelli disagree with Habermas, holding less optimistic views of human behavior. Machiavelli (1984: 96, cited in Flyvbjerg, 1998: 196) famously said that "one can make this generalization about men: they are ungrateful, fickle, liars and

deceivers". For Machiavelli, the pursuit of individual interests through strategic action is a universal tendency. Foucault on the other hand avoids such universal claims, but calls attention to power and conflict as ever-present in all human interaction (Flyvbjerg, 1998). The presence of social universals in sociology is widely contested, and as such, models of social behavior should arguably be tested for relevance and appropriateness in differing contexts (Flyvbjerg, 1998).

A second factor that may have contributed to the uncritical spread of communicative planning is in mainstream planning theory's emphasis on "micro-studies of practice" at the expense of an understanding of broader structural and contextual forces (Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000: 337). Practice-based studies such as those provided by Healey (1992, 1997), Forester (1989, 1999) and others, apply an ethnographic approach to analyzing the communicative work done by planners in their everyday practice. By drawing attention to the details of planning practice, these theorists treat as inconsequential the various social, economic, and political forces that shape and define the contexts in which planners practice (Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000). The lack of attention given to structural factors implied that these processes were not dependent on any particular contextual requirements and could be replicated in any context. These studies gave rise to an overly normative position regarding planning processes that, although not necessarily directly stated, held an implicit assumption of context independency and were insufficiently rooted in an understanding of present contextual realities. This finely detailed practice-based approach is the subject of criticism:

Just as it is not possible to arrive at theories of social justice and how to create it in practice simply by studying lawyer's everyday interactions with their clients, nor theories of public health and how to improve it only by observing doctors in their surgeries, it is not possible to arrive at theories of urban processes and how to change the spatial or social effects of those processes by concentrating on the study of a planner's day" (Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000: 337).

The dominance of communicative planning theory meant that planning theory in general became increasingly concerned with process, to the neglect of any critical assessment of the outcomes of such processes. Communicative planning theorists assumed that any outcome resulting from processes guided by Habermas' discourse ethics would constitute a 'good' outcome, thereby absolving planners of the ethically challenging task of making judgments regarding outcomes. However, a lack of concern with context and with outcomes meant that planning theory was in danger of losing the ability to critically self-examine the efficacy of the normative theories proposed by communicative planning theory:

“...without a thorough knowledge of the context of that work – the constraints and opportunities that derive from wider structuring [forces] and discourses of power and the specific and local conditions and effects – thick description and attention to everyday details can become ends in themselves, reflecting back to practitioners unchallenged, even enhanced, images of their own understandings” (Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000: 337).

In taking a 'micro-study' approach that neglected broader contextual factors and failed to critically assess outcomes, planning theory had developed “a conspicuous mismatch between the main concerns of planning theory and the actual, material consequences of planning” (Yiftachel, 2006: 212). Yiftachel (2006: 213) argued that mainstream planning theory had come to emphasize “*planners* rather than *planning*”, with the latter being defined as “the broader arena of publically guided transformation of space”. Indeed he criticized the way in which the communicative turn had “worked to ‘disengage’ the field’s center of gravity from its core task of understanding and critiquing the impact of urban policies, as a platform for transformative intervention” (Yiftachel, 2006: 212). Most notably, however, Faludi and Friedmann, two of the most influential proponents of procedural planning, have “openly regrounded their recent work in the spatiality of city and region” (Yiftachel, 2006: 221). Thus, planning theory in more recent years has shifted towards a much more intentional focus on the spatial concerns of planning.

Castells' (1998) paper reminded planning theorists and educators that planning is a *profession* that draws from various academic disciplines, rather than constituting a specific academic discipline in and of itself (Huxley and Yiftachel 2000). The very narrow focus on communicative processes saw planning theory become somewhat isolated from many of the theoretical sources that should form the foundations for planning thought. This contributed to planning theory developing an uncritical view of itself, assuming that in all circumstances, planning was a force for good in urban

environments. This critique has seen a shift towards a greater emphasis on relating theory from other fields to the direct concerns of planning practice, while also acknowledging that professional planners “form but one (at times marginal) element in myriad forces shaping the nature of cities and regions” (Yiftachel, 2006: 213).

#### **4. Re-framing planning theory in a ‘post-collaborative era’**

The lessons learnt through the emergence and critique of communicative and collaborative planning theory have begun to reframe planning theory in what Watson (2012: 82) has described as a “post-collaborative era”. Recent planning theory has incorporated a focus on: power relations and conflict, as conceptualized by Foucault; state-society interactions, with an acceptance of strategic action as inherent in local groups; assessing outcomes of planning processes, with an understanding of spatiality as being a central concern of planning; grounding normative theory in well-developed explanatory and analytical theory; developing a critical lens to view planning as one of myriad forces impacting on urban environments; and drawing in valuable theoretical contributions from diverse academic fields outside of the narrow planning theory literature. Most notably, many planning theorists have taken a ‘global South turn’, seeking to build theories that are more able to respond to the realities of global South contexts, accepting that urbanization trends are such that Southern contexts are increasingly becoming the norm around the world, and that cities of the North may well increasingly face challenges that have characterized the global South for many decades.

Central to this ‘global South turn’ was a desire to assess the underlying assumptions of mainstream planning theories through building a more detailed understanding of the realities of planning contexts outside of the traditional Anglo-American heartland of the planning profession. This was necessary due to the overwhelming dominance within mainstream planning theory of theories originating from the global North, as demonstrated by Huxley (2006). In order to overcome the perpetual academic and professional dominance of the North over the South (Escobar, 1992), and in order to realign planning theory with the urban realities facing planners in many parts of the world, the global South turn has sought to ‘theories from the South’, through comparative empirical case studies that enable the development of theoretical propositions that can be tested in other global South contexts (Watson, 2003). This endeavor is ongoing, and has begun to reveal a set of assumptions with which to characterize the nature of global South contexts, along with providing some emerging planning theories that seek to respond to this context. This section of the literature

review will map out some of the important theories that have emerged, and that may have power in building an understanding of planning contexts, and improving the nature of planning practice in the global South.

#### **4.1. Conflicting rationalities and deep difference**

Watson's (2003, 2006) concepts of 'deep difference' and 'conflicting rationalities' provide useful lenses through which to understand the nature of global South contexts and the challenges facing planners in these regions. While communicative planning theory acknowledges that diversity and difference can exist within societies, it assumes that differences between participating groups will "occur only at the level of speech or ideas", and that the actions of facilitators and mediators of participatory processes can overcome these differences (Watson, 2011: 136). Watson argues, however, that "the reality of fundamentally different worldviews and different value-systems is still often treated as superficial" by mainstream planning theory, and, particularly in the global South, these differences can produce conflicting rationalities that cannot be reconciled through the participatory approaches and methods of communicative planners. Watson (2006) views difference as being "inextricably linked to the issue of power", as power acts on various aspects of difference (class, ethnicity, gender, race, etc.) to empower some groups while marginalizing others. She emphasizes an understanding of identity as being flexible and dynamic, constantly negotiated by groups in relation to forces such as migration and globalization, and invoked in strategic or opportunistic ways in response to the contexts that they find themselves in. In this way, difference is seen to be an important force within societies, particularly in the global South.

Watson also highlights deep difference that arises between the state and citizens, with governance and citizenship being shaped and contested by the rationalities of the governing as well as the governed (Watson, 2003, 2006). Governance contexts in the global South are commonly shaped by post-colonialism as well as an ongoing pervasive 'modern' or Western form of governance in which neoliberalism is becoming increasingly hegemonic. Planning systems at times remain largely unchanged from the modernist-era master-planning approach under colonialism. At the same time, governments are under pressure from international agencies and donors to implement New Public Management principles such as participatory local governance, and the decentralizing of governance activities to civil society, NGOs and the private sector. This form of governance envisions 'universal citizenship' in which citizens operate according to "rational entrepreneurial action", pursuing their individual interests through official

and recognized channels (Watson, 2006: 36-37; Brown, 2003). The case of Crossroads in Cape Town, South Africa, described by Watson (2003), demonstrates that the urban poor in cities of the South commonly operate according to a fundamentally different rationality, formed mainly in response to challenges of survival in harsh urban environments. Here, actions of citizens may include a combination of compliance and protest, clientelism and patronage, formality and informality. It is important to understand that these actions are not irrational but constitute a rational and strategic response to the very real and material challenges faced by communities (Watson, 2003; Chabal and Deloz, 1999).

The work of Watson and Purcell both emphasize neoliberalism as an important factor influencing governance and planning in the global South. Neoliberalism involves the insertion of a market logic into all aspects of political economies, with the state reducing regulation and control to promote free markets, competition, and capital accumulation (Purcell, 2009). Purcell (2009: 143) argues that neoliberalism produces “stark social inequality” with “an increasing population of marginalized and desperate people”. In light of the ‘democratic deficits’ that such inequality produces, neoliberalism faces problems of legitimacy that result in neoliberals seeking governance processes that lend democratic legitimacy without challenging the underlying foundations of neoliberalism. For Purcell (2009), communicative planning is such a process, due to the extension of legitimacy through the inclusion and participation of local groups, along with the perceived inability of communicative action to challenge existing power relations.

#### **4.2. Stubborn realities**

Yiftachel has advanced one of the strongest arguments in favor of ‘theorizing from the South’, demonstrating an incongruence between the assumptions of the nature of society and planning underlying Northern planning theories, and the ‘stubborn realities’ of non-Northern and non-Western contexts. While mainstream planning theories imply universal, global applicability, Yiftachel (2006: 214-215) argues that “they mainly emerge from the dominant liberal North-West and reflect the concerns and intellectual landscapes of these prosperous, liberal societies, where property relations are relatively stable, and where most individuals, even members of minorities, have reasonable ... personal liberties, existential security and basic welfare provision.” The presence of such characteristics should by no means be assumed in global South contexts, “where liberalism is not a stable constitutional order, but at best a sectoral and mainly economic agenda; where property systems are fluid; inter-group conflicts over territory inform

daily practices and result in the essentialization of ‘deep’ ethnic, caste and racial identities” (Yiftachel, 2006: 214-215).

Watson’s (2012) article entitled ‘Planning and the ‘stubborn realities’ of global south-east cities: Some emerging ideas’, was a direct response to Yiftachel’s (2006) call to develop south-eastern planning perspectives, and sought to review some of the useful theoretical ideas that have emerged. The article argues that the ‘stubborn realities’ identified by Yiftachel (2006) persist, while also presenting various other concepts that describe the nature of planning contexts around the world. Some of the most valuable conceptualizations include the following:

### ***Contested urban land markets and exclusionary economic policies***

Development is generally strongly market-driven despite the impact of the 2008 economic crisis (Theodore et al., 2011), exacerbating problems of spatial exclusion as private developers, supported by neoliberal policies, compete with poor communities for well-located and well-serviced urban land. Many cities are influenced by a rhetoric of ‘world class’ cities that contributes to marginalization and spatial exclusion, as elite, high-end projects and developments are favored. “Global and local property finance capital” is an increasingly powerful force shaping urban environments, with informal settlements also beginning to be shaped by burgeoning informal property markets (Watson, 2012: 83; Shatkin, 2008; Gulyani and Talukdar, 2008). Many regions are experiencing a growing urban middle-class with demands for formal housing and facilities which are shaping urban space and adding to tensions around access to land (Simone and Rao, 2011). Some instances have also been documented in which informal residents, low level bureaucrats and politicians, and small businesses have opposed and circumvented large-scale infrastructure projects and mega-projects, through strategies “rooted in alternative social dynamics” (Watson, 2012: 83; Benjamin, 2008; Shatkin, 2011).

### ***Rights-based social movements***

Watson (2012: 84) identifies a growing prevalence of ‘rights-based social movements’, many invoking Henri Lefebvre’s notion of a ‘right to the city’, in which citizens directly oppose the urban policies of the state. The growth of democracy and the inclusion of rights in national constitutions, alongside persistent social inequality have fueled protest, urban conflict and violence in many cities of the South. Holston’s (2007, 2009) research on insurgent citizenship in Sao Paulo, Brazil, demonstrates how the notion of

rights is invoked by social movements as a justification for 'illegal' processes through which to pursue certain political ends. Social movements see such actions as "a legitimate claiming of deserved rights from an 'illegitimate' state which has withheld them" (Watson, 2012: 87).

### ***Conflict and violence***

In some cities of the South, divisions between social groups have caused urban environments to become "polarized", characterized by "potent political, spatial, and socio-psychological contestation", with "a depth of antagonism and opposition" between conflicting identity groups (Bollens, 2012: 6, cited in Watson, 2012: 82). Ethnic and religious conflicts, at times "reinforced by partisan and repressive governments", have been seen to produce spatial divisions in cities that reflect but also constitute the ongoing violence between identity groups (Watson, 2012: 84). While 'civil and interstate wars' have decreased globally, many residents face an 'everyday violence' in which organized crime, gangsterism, the drug trade, xenophobia, domestic violence, and other sources of violence, form an everyday reality (Watson, 2012: 84-85; World Bank, 2011). In the *World Development Report: Conflict, Security and Development* (World Bank, 2011), 'insecurity' is seen as 'a primary development challenge' in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Watson, 2012: 84). Similarly, Winton (2004: 165) argues that "urban violence has reached unprecedented levels in many cities of the South and is increasingly seen as one of the most portentous threats to development on a local, national, and international scale" (Winton, 2004: 165, cited in Watson, 2012: 84). It is unlikely that communicative planning is feasible in such contexts, and the role of planning in situations of conflict and violence is raised as an important consideration for planning theory (Watson, 2012). Reports by the World Bank (2011) and UN Habitat (2007) have highlighted local spatial interventions as a possible strategy to reduce crime. This approach involves the use of urban design principles to promote urban form and public space that promotes visibility and safety, with the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrade Project (VPUU) in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, being a good example (Watson, 2012). Advocates do however acknowledge that such an approach needs to be part of a broader set of approaches across local, national and international scales (Watson, 2012).

Watson (2012) proposes a number of other common characteristics of cities of the South that should act as a starting point for future planning theory inquiries. These include: weak states that might include corrupt practices; civil society which is "not a source of democracy", may be oppositional to the state and may be associated with

criminality and violence; community organizations that may choose not to participate, rather drawing on strategies such as insurgency and protest; NGOs and social networks that may serve their own interests over democratic ideals or the building of social capital; and planning environments that are characterized by a mistrust of the state, of professional planners, and of 'official' sources of information (Watson, 2012: 85).

### **4.3. Urban informality**

Ananya Roy's (2003, 2005, 2009b) work conceptualizes urban informality in a way that provides valuable insight into the nature of urbanization in global South contexts. Roy (2005: 148) seeks to develop the concept from simply a distinction between legal and illegal forms of housing and economic activity, to an understanding of informality as a "mode of metropolitan urbanization". She argues that frequently in cities of the South buildings that were developed outside of legal planning processes are deemed acceptable and formalized, such as gated communities that utilize informal subdivisions, while slums are deemed to be illegal and problematic. In this way, Roy (2005: 149) argues that there exists a "differentiation *within* informality", rather than simply a binary of formal or informal. The state and its planning processes are thus complicit in producing informality, and in advancing legitimacy to certain forms of informality and illegitimacy to others. In Delhi, Ghertner (2008: 66) suggests that it is buildings that have the "world-class" look that are deemed acceptable despite development outside of official planning protocols (cited in Roy, 2009a: 80). Holston (2007: 228) observes a similar "unstable relationship between the legal and illegal" in Brazilian cities in which the "misrule of law" is widespread and inconsistently deemed acceptable or unacceptable (cited in Roy, 2009a: 80). Roy (2003) identifies the 'unmapping' and deregulation of land on the peripheries of Calcutta as a form of informality utilized by the state to enable the acquisition of land and altering of land use. Roy (2009a: 81) describes the state in this instance, as "a deeply informalized entity, one that actively utilizes informality as an instrument of both accumulation and authority". This broader understanding of informality, in which the state itself is complicit in producing informality, and draws on informal processes within the planning of cities, therefore seems to be a phenomenon that may well exist in many cities of the global South. If informality is commonly seen as a barrier to planning, then it is Roy's project to demonstrate, rather, that planning itself is currently often complicit in producing urban informality.

## **5. Co-production**

Co-production is gaining increasing attention in Development Studies as well as in planning theory as a more radical form of citizen-state engagement. In this section I describe the earlier form of state-initiated co-production, before explaining the form of co-production practiced by grassroots organizations such as Slum/Shack Dwellers International.

### **5.1 State-initiated co-production**

The concept originated in the 1970s in the Public Administration field, and was developed by the work of political economist Elinor Ostrom. Ostrom (1996: 1073, cited in Watson, 2014: 3) describes co-production as “a process through which inputs from individuals who are not ‘in’ the same organization are transformed into goods or services” (Ostrom, 1996: 1073, cited in Watson, 2014: 3). Co-production was seen as a more efficient and cost effective means of state service provision, in which the quality of services provided to communities could also be improved through bringing together the complementary forms of expert knowledge possessed by the state, and local knowledge possessed by communities (Watson, 2014; Ostrom, 1996). Watson (2014: 3-4) describes Ostrom’s co-production as “state-initiated”, involving state officials engaging directly with communities over issues of service delivery, without any “direct mention of mediating social movements or NGOs” (Watson, 2014: 3-4). Importantly, this conception of co-production did not entail any direct theorization of power relations or conflict, assuming that “all community members and households would gain equal access to services, that exclusion on the grounds of income, gender, ethnicity, for example, would not play a role, and that the relationship between state and citizens would be fair, consensual, and not corrupt or politicized” (Watson, 2014: 4).

### **5.2 Social movement initiated co-production**

Mitlin (2008) brought co-production into the realm of politics, arguing that ‘grassroots organizations’ were increasingly using co-production not only as a means of increasing access to services, but also as a means of transforming relations with the state while promoting local autonomy and building the organizational and political bases of communities. This form of “social movement initiated co-production” (Watson, 2014: 4), with its cognizance of power relations between communities and the state, is particularly relevant to urban planners seeking to uplift poor and marginalized communities. Mitlin (2008: 339) describes “the use of co-productive strategies by citizen groups and social movement organizations to enable individual members and

their associations to secure effective relations with state institutions that address both immediate basic needs and enable them to negotiate for greater benefits.”

Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), and its various affiliated organizations, has become a source of much innovation and insight into co-production strategies that have had successes in various global South contexts. SDIs approach involves partnering with organized groups of the urban poor in opposing the state and demanding greater access to services. Siame (2013: 13) describes the main strategies used by SDI, which include:

- *Self-enumeration, mapping and surveys.* Residents capture data regarding the number and location of residents and households in the community, and use the data to negotiate with the government, for example in resisting evictions or demanding tenure or services (Watson, 2014). The strategy also enables residents to jointly establish the needs of the community.
- *Settlement upgrading.* Residents engage directly with government in designing and constructing housing or infrastructure interventions. This can reduce costs for the state, increasing the likelihood of service delivery, while also enabling residents to design outcomes according to local needs. Inputs of time, skills and funding are shared jointly between the state and the community.
- *Savings schemes and precedent setting.* Members of community groups collectively save funds for uses such as settlement upgrading and service provision. Watson (2014: 7) also describes saving schemes as being “an entry point for relationship building between individuals and groups”, and expressing “a moral discipline in the organizations and a commitment to the public good.” In precedent setting, residents construct models of housing or infrastructure such as sanitation, which serve as a means of communicating options to the community, but also demonstrating the “knowledge and expertise” that the poor may possess (Watson, 2014: 7).
- *Local and international networks and ‘learning exchanges’.* Establishing relationships between community organizations in different areas, enabling learning through the sharing “of materials, practices, designs, knowledge, personal stories and local histories” (McFarlane, 2011: 69, cited in Watson, 2014: 7). Networks also add to the authority and legitimacy of organizations (Watson, 2014).

Roy (2009b) discusses the co-production strategies of SDI and other organizations under the term of 'civic governmentality'. She seeks to bring attention to a 'politics of inclusion' in cities of the South, describing how grassroots organizations have been able to "construct and manage a civic realm" through instituting "norms of self-rule", using various "technologies of governing" such as the self-enumeration strategy discussed above (Roy, 2009b: 160-161). Similarly, Appadurai (2001) sees SDIs approach as enabling 'deep democracy', 'rights from below', and 'counter-governmentality'.

### **5.3 Co-production and collaborative planning: The difference**

Watson (2014) acknowledges some similarities between co-production and communicative and collaborative planning. Examples include both adopting an "incremental, evolutionary and social learning approach" over more radical social change, and both assuming a certain context of democracy, with 'active citizens' that are "able and prepared to engage collectively and individually (with each other and with the state) to improve their material and political conditions", an assumption that may well struggle to articulate with the realities of local groups in global South contexts that may engage strategically and inconsistently with democratic processes envisioned by governments or NGOs (Watson, 2014: 8-9). It is a central objective of Watson (2014) to demonstrate, however, that there are key factors that differentiate co-production from earlier communicative and collaborative approaches to planning. She describes five key differences:

- (i) While communicative planning generally may seek to work within existing governance processes co-production "almost inevitably works outside (and sometimes against) established rules and procedures of governance" precisely because existing channels are ineffective or do not exist.
- (ii) Co-production more explicitly focuses on the implementation and management of outcomes, and on the ongoing empowerment of local groups through the creation of a 'counter-governmentality'. Co-production focuses on "empowering marginalized communities to manage their own living environments, to deal effectively with state structures, to structurally advance citizen control over state resources and political power, and to pass on tactics for achieving this to other communities through global networks" (Watson, 2014: 10).
- (iii) Co-production considers power more directly than does communicative planning, for example through promoting knowledge production and

enabling access to important surveys and maps, and through the ways in which social movements are able to impact on development processes and change existing modes of governmentality. Watson (2014) does however identify the need for greater consideration of the issue of power both within community organizations and in all forms of engagement with the state.

- (iv) Co-production has a stronger reliance on “showing and learning by doing” than on talk and debate, and deals with material and tangible objects such as models and existing precedents.
- (v) Finally, co-production seeks to increase the power base of local organizations by connecting organizations with global networks, enabling learning through relating local experiences to those around the world, and lending legitimacy and authority to local organizations.

## **6. Conclusion**

In this chapter I have described the main theoretical arguments and positions relating to public participation in planning. I have described the emergence and critiques of technocratic planning, which lacked any form of community engagement, and communicative and collaborative planning, which promotes an idealized means of collective decision-making based on problematic assumptions relating to power and conflict. I then set out key emerging ideas regarding the nature of global South planning contexts, before presenting co-production as a more radical form of citizen-state engagement. In the following chapter I describe the research outline in more detail, and provide the logic underlying the research design.



# Chapter 3: Research Methods



## **Chapter 3: Research Methods**

### **1. Introduction**

This dissertation uses the case study method to explore the ongoing development of the Vrygrond settlement in relation to some of the prominent arguments and propositions in the literature. The site was selected due to its relevance to debates regarding public participation and citizen-state engagement in the development of low-income settlements. The research seeks to describe the processes by which various developments have been achieved, as well as explaining how contextual factors influence these approaches. In this chapter I seek to demonstrate the logic underlying the research design. I firstly describe the research problem in more detail, and state the primary and secondary research aims, and the main and subsidiary research questions. I then explain the selection of the case study method in light of the stated research questions, before providing the reasoning behind the selection of Vrygrond as the site, and the developments within the physically defined area since 1997 as the 'unit of analysis'. I describe the various sources of evidence used in the case study, with semi-structured interviews forming the primary source, before explaining some of the challenges associated with each, and finally detailing the ethical considerations for the research.

### **2. Research outline**

#### *Research problem*

In the literature review in chapter 2 I sought to describe the theoretical context in which this research is situated. The research problem arises from some of the central debates relating to planning theory, specifically the critique of communicative and collaborative planning, which occupied a dominant position in planning theory for many years (Watson, 2003). Mainstream planning theory has been criticized for being overly focused on developing normative theories regarding planning processes, with an inadequate grounding in explanatory and descriptive theory based on actual planning contexts, and the physical outcomes of planning processes (Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000; Yiftachel, 2006). Planning theories, predominantly originating from the global North, have been uncritically adopted and applied in vastly differing global South contexts, with very little critical investigation into their underlying assumptions. The work of global South planning theorists has sought to highlight these assumptions, and has argued that in various ways existing Northern planning theories may be ill-equipped to respond to complex and challenging Southern planning contexts. From these arguments

has emerged a call to ‘theorize from the South’; developing understandings of the planning context through case research in urban areas in Africa, Asia and South America, and proposing new approaches to planning that might be better equipped to respond to the challenges and opportunities that exist in these contexts (Watson, 2003, 2012).

As we have seen, a particular area of focus in both planning theory and in development studies has been that of public participation in relation to development processes, specifically in the planning and development of low-income urban areas of the global South. In both fields, academics have demonstrated various challenges associated with citizen-state interactions, and have challenged the traditional forms of public participation that prevail as a result of the dominance of the ‘good governance’ agenda. Far from seeing a return to authoritarian and top-down forms of planning and development, the literature contains burgeoning theories that identify and develop new approaches to citizen-state engagement that might see low-income communities overcome immediate physical challenges in terms of services, infrastructure and facilities, as well as the broader social, political, and economic marginalization through which low-income residents often experience cities of the South.

As such, this dissertation explores the topic of public participation and various forms of citizen-state interaction, in relation to efforts to uplift low-income communities of the global South, in broad terms, including improving access to physical assets as well as overcoming various forms of marginalization.

*Primary research aim:*

- To explore themes of public participation and citizen-state interaction in local planning and development processes, through a case study of a settlement in the global South that has undergone developmental changes in the recent past.

*Secondary research aims:*

- To understand the specific contextual challenges faced by role players seeking to develop a low-income settlement in the global South.
- To identify and describe the approaches used in response to contextual challenges to secure access to services and public facilities.
- To conduct a well-grounded and detailed case study against which existing theoretical propositions can be tested, and from which new propositions might be able to be identified.

*Main research question:*

- How have services, infrastructure, public facilities and amenities been secured in Vrygrond since 1997, and what lessons can be learnt for urban planners practicing in the global South?

*Subsidiary research questions:*

- What services, infrastructure, public facilities and amenities have been developed in Vrygrond since 1997, and who are the key actors that have been responsible for them?
- What processes or approaches have these actors adopted, and how do they respond to the challenges presented by the context of Vrygrond?
- How has public participation shaped or informed the planning processes and outcomes in Vrygrond?
- How do global South planning theories help explain the experiences of key actors in Vrygrond?
- How might existing planning theories assist in responding to the context of Vrygrond?
- How might existing planning theories be refined or developed in light of the experiences of development in Vrygrond since 1997?

### **3. The case study method**

The case study method is well equipped to enable researchers to answer the call to 'theorize from the South', as planning theory seeks to turn back towards grounded explanatory and descriptive theories. Rather than basing planning practice on theories arising from universalistic claims of social behavior, as is arguably the case with Habermasian communicative planning (Flyvbjerg, 1998), the global South turn seeks to provide planning theories that are grounded in detailed case research in urban contexts in the global South.

Such a project requires a research method that can provide detailed understandings of complex social environments, and here, the case study method is highly relevant. Yin (2009: 4) argues that "The distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena ... The case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events...". Far from the controlled experiments of the natural sciences, social research in cities of the South

requires an ability to negotiate myriad interconnected variables simultaneously. While the direction of my research has been guided by a review of the literature as well as previous experience of the Vrygrond settlement, I sought to pose research questions that would allow for the diversity of contextual forces to be explored in relation to their impact on development processes, rather than attempting to isolate specific variables based on pre-conceived notions. Many of my research questions are explanatory and seek to develop an understanding of causal links between the context of Vrygrond and processes of development. Yin (2009: 9) explains that the case study method is particularly suited to answering 'how' and 'why' research questions that seek an understanding of complex social phenomena, and that "deal with operational links needing to be traced over time." The case study method therefore seems best placed to answer my research questions.

The issue of generalizability is important in relation to case research being used to develop planning theories that respond to the conditions of cities of the South. Yin (2009: 15) argues that case studies "are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes." Using a case study to attempt to build universal theories of human behavior is therefore not possible – as Flyvbjerg (2011: 303) argues, "Social science has not succeeded in producing general, context-independent theory and has thus in the final instance nothing else to offer than concrete, context-dependent knowledge." Such knowledge is nevertheless highly valuable, as existing theoretical propositions can be tested and refined, and in some instances falsified, through application to physical cases. Similarly, the explanations and descriptions that arise from single case studies provide a detailed level of knowledge that can "be the basis for significant explanations and generalizations" (Yin, 2009: 6), and can contribute to a "collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society" (Flyvbjerg, 2011: 305). Finally, new theoretical propositions can emerge, which can then be tested in other case studies.

Flyvbjerg (2011: 311) explains a significant challenge in producing reports for complex case studies in which findings may not be easily summarized or generalized. He warns of a 'narrative fallacy' whereby humans commonly seek "to simplify data and information through overinterpretation and through a preference for compact stories over complex data sets." He explains that "It is easier to remember and make decisions on the basis of 'meaningful' stories than to remember strings of 'meaningless' data. Thus, we read meaning into data and make up stories, even where this is unwarranted" (Flyvbjerg,

2011: 311). In light of this, many case study researchers avoid summarizing altogether, rather providing a detailed description of all aspects of the case, which they argue reflects the complexity of real-life social situations. I found this to be a considerable challenge in a dissertation in which space is limited: I didn't want to exclude information regarding the case, however I needed to answer specific research questions. As a result, I've given priority to information that is more closely related to the central research problem, while seeking to avoid any overinterpretation or inaccurate imposition of meaning onto research findings.

#### **4. Selection of the site and the unit of analysis**

I first came to know the settlement of Vrygrond in 2006 through my involvement in the leading of a youth group at a church in Capricorn Business Park, located immediately South of Vrygrond. The youth group, held on Friday evenings, was attended by teenagers from the surrounding neighborhoods, with many coming from Vrygrond. Through the youth group I began to build relationships with a number of young people living in the community. The youth group would finish late in the evening, and youth leaders with vehicles would drop the young people off at their homes in Vrygrond to ensure their safety. Thus, my first experiences of Vrygrond were of navigating the settlement's streets on a Friday night, avoiding debris and stray dogs, with a car full of teenagers. Vrygrond's many shebeens (local tavern, often unlicensed) would be operating near capacity, and groups of residents would be populating the streets, making it a somewhat chaotic environment for those who did not know the settlement. I would invariably be greeted with the phrase, '*Molo mlungu!*' (hello 'white man'), as I dropped off teenagers at their houses. My first experiences of Vrygrond were thus intriguing and indeed slightly intimidating at times.



Figure 3: Vrygrond streetscape (Davies, 2013)

In 2009 I had the opportunity to learn about the settlement in a more formalised way when I conducted a dissertation as part of a BSc Honours in Disaster Risk Science. A personal interest in the context of Vrygrond, as well as a relationship with a number of existing residents, led me to select Vrygrond as the site for a case study. Through the dissertation, which explored fire risk before and after the formalisation of the settlement, I learnt of the settlement's history and formalisation through the establishment of a community body, the Vrygrond Community Development Trust. While the dissertation produced interesting findings regarding the issue of fire, such as the existence of various social factors that helped limit the realization of fire risk (Davies, 2009), I felt that the settlement was more broadly significant due to its tumultuous journey towards development through the vehicle of the Trust, and hoped to return to the settlement for further research with a broader scope.

When I had the opportunity to undertake research towards a Masters dissertation, I therefore had a personal desire to return to the settlement of Vrygrond. In intervening years I had observed various developmental changes in the community, such as the delivery of formal services to a group of residents living informally on a road reserve, and I felt that the settlement possessed lessons that could be potentially valuable for urban planners in the global South. Specifically, I saw the strategy of establishing a community body for the purpose of community development, as an approach that differentiated Vrygrond from many other informal settlements that were formalised in a more top-down, state-led approach. Furthermore, my own personal perception was that Vrygrond had been more successful in securing services, infrastructure and public facilities, than many other low-income areas of Cape Town. While a single-case study method precludes any investigation into service delivery achievements in relation to similar settlements in Cape Town, I felt that this perception, alongside the settlement's somewhat unique racial and ethnic diversity, made it a potentially valuable site for a case study.

Flyvbjerg (2011: 306) argues that by strategically selecting an "atypical" or "deviant" case, the "generalizability of case studies can be increased." With one of the secondary research aims being to test theoretical propositions, I felt that selecting Vrygrond as the site might increase the generalizability of the research findings. Flyvbjerg (2011: 306) explains that "When the objective is to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given problem or phenomenon, a representative case or a random sample may not be the most appropriate strategy ... Atypical or extreme cases often

reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied.” While I do not feel that Vrygrond is necessarily an ‘extreme’ case, I do feel that the approach used has some variations that differentiate it from many other settlements, and that make it well-placed to contribute to knowledge accumulation in the area of public participation in the planning and development of low-income settlements.

A second consideration in the selection of a site for the case study was that of access. Social research relies on a level of trust and openness between participants and the researcher, and here, my established relationships with some residents, and with friends working for the Sozo Foundation, an NGO operating in Vrygrond, as well as my previous engagement with Trustees of the Vrygrond Community Development Trust, meant that Vrygrond was a suitable site. While there may well be many other settlements in which development has been sought through participatory processes in a similarly diverse and conflictual context my engagement with other low-income settlements is limited to brief research projects in my prior studies. I therefore felt that Vrygrond presented a worthwhile case, to which I would also have a good level of access.

In defining the ‘unit of analysis’ for the case study, I had two main options. Firstly, with the Trust being an important vehicle for community development, and one that differentiates Vrygrond from many other settlements, the organization of the Trust might have been chosen as the unit of analysis. The second option was to define the physical area of Vrygrond and Overcome Heights as the unit of analysis, with the case study focusing on the physical developments that occurred in the geographical area of the settlement over a specified course of time. The research would then investigate the key roleplayers that secured various developments, the approaches that they used, and the contextual challenges that they encountered. A particular strength of the case study method is the flexibility that it allows within research, with researchers being able to adapt to research findings and reframe the lines of inquiry being pursued within the research (Flyvbjerg, 2011). I felt that by selecting a geographically defined unit of analysis, the broader scope of the research would see me better placed to benefit from this favorable aspect of case study research. Had I selected the organization of the Trust as the unit of analysis, other important roleplayers operating within Vrygrond might have received inadequate attention, based solely on an assumed position of pre-eminence of the Trust. This decision to select a geographically defined unit of analysis

enabled me to identify Government actors and Non-Governmental Organizations as two other important groups of roleplayers operating in the settlement, thereby increasing the scope for learning and for knowledge accumulation in the case study.

I then further defined the unit of analysis temporally, by focusing solely on development after the establishment of the Trust in 1997. This decision was predominantly due to the limited access to information regarding development actors and processes in the earlier history of Vrygrond. I defined development broadly to include the provision of physical services (e.g. electricity, water, sanitation), infrastructure (e.g. roads, drainage systems, public transport facilities), public facilities (e.g. schools, crèches, libraries), and social services (e.g. healthcare, educational support, skills training, feeding schemes, urban agriculture, etc.). Services and facilities established after 1997 but that are no longer in existence, were not directly included in the research.

## **5. Sources of evidence**

Yin (2009: 11) views the case study method's "ability to deal with a full variety of evidence" as a "unique strength" of the research method. Using multiple sources of evidence presents a challenge to researchers, who need to have an adequate grounding in the strengths and weaknesses of each source (Yin, 2009). None of the sources of evidence are infallible, and as such, multiple sources need to be used together in an effort to 'triangulate' or corroborate research findings (Yin, 2009). To this effect, I have used five sources of evidence, namely interviews, documents, archival records, aerial photography, and observations.

### *Interviews*

Yin (2009: 106) describes interviews as "one of the most important sources of case study information", and indeed interviews constituted the primary source for my research. I conducted 17 interviews with a total of 20 participants. 15 interviews were one-to-one interviews, while 2 were with small groups, consisting of two and three respondents. Interviews varied in length with the shortest being 25 minutes, and the longest being 1 hour 40 minutes. On average, the interviews were around 1 hour, and could be described as "focused interviews" which were conversational and relied largely on open-ended questions, while still being guided by specific topics and questions prepared prior to the interview (Yin, 2009: 107). Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions are valuable in that they allow interviewees themselves to raise issues that they deem important, and to re-interpret or redirect questions onto new topics that

the interviewer may not have been aware of. While other research methods involve the isolating of key variables for testing, open-ended interview questions enable new variables to be raised – variables that may not have been previously considered by the researcher, and that may in fact be more important (Flyvbjerg, 2011). While critics of the case study method argue that the method suffers from a verification bias, Flyvbjerg (2011: 310) argues that this ability of participants to “talk back” to the researcher, means that case study research is often a learning process that sees ones original assumptions and perceptions falsified during the course of field research.

I also used two forms of visual aids which could be used during interviews when needed. Firstly, I printed a series of photographs of various aspects of Vrygrond, and on some occasions invited interviewees to describe any of the content of the photographs, or any memories, experiences, or events that they would associate with the photographs. This strategy was particularly useful in one or two instances where interviewees were less forthcoming in their answers. Secondly, I used a printed A1 aerial photograph of Vrygrond as a visual aid to facilitate the discussion of particular areas of Vrygrond, or issues that had a directly spatial component. I found that after helping respondents locate key landmarks in the settlement, they were able to make use of the aerial photograph when needed. Finally, I used trace paper as a means by which to record any spatial trends that they described.

In selecting interviewees, my aim was not to gather a ‘representative sample’, as generalizations to populations are not possible through the case study method (Yin, 2009). I did however seek to ensure that representatives of particular groups or organizations were present, including residents, Trustees, a community leader not aligned with the Trust, staff of NGOs, politicians (including the present and former ward councilors), and a Captain at Muizenberg Police Station. Amongst residents, I sought to ensure some level of diversity in terms of gender, age, and race/ethnicity (Coloured and Xhosa residents as well as foreign nationals). In order to ensure some level of trust, I first interviewed people with whom I had an established relationship, and then asked them to introduce me to other people that they knew in the community. The limited period of time for primary research meant that building trust amongst those with whom I had no prior relationship was difficult, but I found that this approach helped to mitigate this to some extent.

I aimed to use the interviews to gain an understanding of factual events, but also to understand contrasting perspectives and opinions, and occasionally insights or interpretations (Yin, 2009). Yin (2009: 108-109) emphasizes that interviews constitute “verbal reports only”, and are thus “subject to the common problems of bias, poor recall, and poor or inaccurate articulation”. By exploring similar issues and events with different interviewees, I was able to corroborate certain factual events. Similarly, by contrasting the perceptions and opinions of different interviewees, I was able to gain some insight into the nature of conflicts, tensions, and disagreements that exist in Vrygrond. I also sought to probe tentative interpretations of findings by adjusting lines of inquiry towards specific themes or issues, as they began to emerge.

I recorded interviews on a portable voice recorder for two main reasons. Firstly, recording interviews meant that I did not need to take notes during interviews and could focus on listening attentively, and carefully guiding the conversations where necessary. Secondly, I could listen to interviews again during the analysis phase, taking notes as well as transcribing some of the key parts of the interviews for inclusion in the research report.

#### *Documentation*

Vrygrond has experienced increasing attention from researchers in various academic fields, with a number of research documents having been produced in recent years. In years following my own Honours Dissertation in 2009 (Davies, 2009), three further case studies of Vrygrond have been produced: Wicht (2010) conducted a case study of Overcome Heights to explore the coping strategies of households recovering from fire events; Jensen et al (2011) published findings of research conducted in Vrygrond from 2007 to 2009, exploring xenophobic violence; and Bøgh (2012) explored violence in everyday life in Vrygrond. Jensen et al’s (2011) large sample of 517 households in Vrygrond provided a valuable source of quantitative data which I was able to use to corroborate and contrast with other sources of qualitative information. On the Vrygrond Community Development Trust’s website, Jonathan Schrire, the chairman of the Trust, has written a detailed description of the history of Vrygrond and the tumultuous path to formalisation, as well as covering certain topics relating to the Trust (Schrire, n.d.). While Mr Schrire was not available for an interview during the research, this source provided a great deal of insight into the chairman’s experiences of Vrygrond. Finally, the Vrygrond community library had a small number of historical and more recent

newspaper articles and photographs, as well as a map of public facilities developed by the Trust.

Yin (2009) reminds us that in much the same way as interviews, documents need to be carefully interpreted in combination with other sources of evidence. He suggests that documents “are not always accurate and may not be lacking in bias,” and that any document is “written for some specific purpose and some specific audience *other than* those of the case study being done. In this sense, the case study investigator is a vicarious observer, and the documentary evidence reflects a communication among other parties attempting to achieve some other objectives” (Yin, 2009: 105). Each of the research reports address specific research questions that vary from my own, and therefore highlight certain issues above others. Similarly, historical descriptions and newspaper articles reflect the understandings, perspectives and possibly the agenda, of the author. Yin (2009: 103) finds that “the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources”, and this was indeed how I sought to use the various documents in my research.

#### *Archival records*

I accessed census data from the Stats SA website, as well as graphical representations of census data produced by Adrian Frith (Frith, 2014), to provide contextual demographic information.

#### *Aerial photographs*

I used aerial photographs as a supplementary form of evidence, primarily to provide insight into the physical context of Vrygrond and the surrounding area over time, and to corroborate descriptions of historical developments. I accessed digitized aerial photographs from as early as 1944 from the ‘Chief Directorate: National Geo-spatial Information’, while Google Earth imagery provides graphical documentation of Vrygrond from 2000 (Google Earth, 2014).

#### *Direct observation*

I visited the site regularly over the three week period during which I conducted interviews, and as such was able to make direct observations of the context of the settlement. These observations, made while walking around the settlement, at times raised issues that were discussed in interviews.

I aimed to use these five sources of evidence in combination to identify converging findings, in line with Yin's (2009) description of 'triangulation'. Findings that were well-supported by multiple forms of evidence were thereby considered to be particularly reliable, and became the bases on which interpretations and recommendations were made, in combination with the literature.

## **6. Ethical considerations**

The case study presented in this document deals directly with social issues and concerns, and conversations with residents and other roleplayers regarding their experience of Vrygrond formed the basis of the research. As such, certain steps were taken to ensure that the research was ethically responsible. At the beginning of each interview I explained the nature of the research, and emphasized that the research was towards my own academic studies and was not associated with any form of service delivery. Participants gave their signed permission for the interview to be recorded, and we agreed on how I would present the findings of the interview in the text (e.g. 'a former ward councilor explained that...'). I decided not to use the names of research participants. At the end of each interview I asked participants again if there was any sensitive content that they would like me to exclude from the research. In some instances, despite receiving the permission of participants, I exercised my own judgment and excluded particularly sensitive content from this report.

## **7. Conclusion**

In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate the logic underlying my dissertation. I described the research problem, which arises out of a review of the planning theory and development studies literature in the preceding chapter. The main and subsidiary research questions flow directly from the research aims, and seek to ensure that the research findings are able to relate to some of the important arguments and propositions in the literature. I then argued that the case study method is best placed to answer the research questions, as they seek to explain complex social phenomena and establish causal links over time, before explaining the selection of Vrygrond as a suitable site due to some of the unusual elements of the settlement's context, as well as its accessibility for me as the researcher. The remainder of the chapter explained the multiple sources of evidence used to answer the research questions through a process of triangulation and corroboration, as well as some of the challenges relating to the collection and interpretation of the various types of evidence.



# Chapter 4: Context



## **Chapter 4: Context**

### **1. Introduction**

This chapter introduces the settlement of Vrygrond in more detail. It provides a contextual description of various aspects of the settlement and the surrounding area that enables the reader to engage with some of the issues and themes discussed later in the dissertation. Throughout the chapter I use findings from interviews alongside research reports and policy documents, to answer various subsidiary research questions regarding the context of Vrygrond. While the settlement has undergone a process of formalization resulting in residents having access to basic services, Vrygrond is nevertheless characterized by major social problems such as crime, poverty and unemployment, and a severe lack of access to public facilities and economic opportunity. The population is racially and ethnically diverse, and has grown rapidly since the formalization of the settlement. The settlement consists of three housing typologies, including formal dwellings, informal backyard dwellings, and informal freestanding dwellings located in the Overcome Heights area at the Northern boundary of Vrygrond.

The first section describes the history of the settlement from apartheid years through to the present day. It seeks to understand historical events and trends that shape the way in which residents view and experience Vrygrond. It describes a narrative in which physical improvements have occurred alongside the emergence of significant social problems such as crime, gangsterism and drug abuse. The second section then describes the current social context. It provides key demographic statistics, outlines the three main groups of residents that exist, and explores some of the social relations and power dynamics between residents that result from historical and current factors. A section on the physical context of Vrygrond and its surrounding area describes structuring elements of the natural and built environment. Finally, I explore the content of existing planning policies including the Zoning Scheme and the Cape Flats District Plan

## 2. Historical context

What we had back then was *so much better* than what we have now. And that was unfortunate because, we wanted development, we wanted *real, structured homes*, brick structure home with running water, can *switch on your light* and, a *flush toilet* and so forth. And here we have it today, but we have it also with knowing that your house will be burgled if you do too much on your house - you will be mugged. You will be, you know?

Only a few days into my research, the narrative told by long-time residents of how life has changed in Vrygrond since the mid-1990s had become familiar to me. It is a narrative of physical improvements in terms of service delivery amidst an overwhelming proliferation of social problems that increasingly characterize the daily experiences of Vrygrond residents. For many, the development of Vrygrond is viewed with ambivalence due to the social pathologies such as violence, crime, gangsterism, and drug abuse that seem to have emerged concomitantly with the arrival of formal houses, infrastructure and services. This first section describes this narrative of Vrygrond from the apartheid years through to present day, providing a historical lens through which to understand the challenges and complexities that underlie the developmental context of Vrygrond.

### 2.1. Memories of *Old Vrygrond*

Long-time residents described to me their memories of *Old Vrygrond* with a combination of nostalgia and infamy; a tight-knit, unified community characterized by mutual trust and strong family values, living in makeshift houses amongst the sand dunes, with buckets as their only form of sanitation. Residents acknowledged the hardships of life while fondly remembering many aspects of the social context that stand in stark contrast to the current experience of Vrygrond. When I asked the librarian at the community library to describe her experience growing up in Vrygrond, she replied:

“When we lived in the tin shanties? *People cared about people! They loved each other* in Vrygrond. You could have sleep with your door open, and then your neighbor would say ‘hey’, for one of the children, ‘go close Aunty dingus’s door there, man, because she’s sleeping’. Or maybe, you know you take a drink [laughs], and then your neighbor say ‘*ai, junne!* You know Aunty dingus is now again drunk, so go and close her door. See that the stove is switched off, or there’s no candles burning’, you know? [...] And if your child is naughty, my child was your child, and, it was like a whole family tree going on in Vrygrond. If you don’t have some supper tonight you can go to the aunty over the road, can say ‘aunty dingus, my mom didn’t make food so can you borrow me...’ It was just so, I don’t know. They called this place ‘Vry-grond’ and it was like, free. Because, you could live.

Many residents told similar stories of Vrygrond prior to development. They emphasized the safety and social cohesion that allowed them to leave doors unlocked, and to walk to their houses late at night with no fear of crime. These memories frame current day perceptions of Vrygrond for long-time residents.

Regarded by some as having been the oldest informal settlement in the Western Cape, Vrygrond was established in the 1940s primarily as a means by which ‘trek fishermen’ could live in close proximity to the coast (Schrire, n.d.; Bøgh, 2012). A resident remembered how his grandmother, who ran a shebeen in Old Vrygrond, used to be woken by local fishermen at 4am. She would give the men alcohol in six liter bottles, and on return the men would reciprocate by giving her freshly caught fish. The settlement was more dispersed than it is now, occupying a larger area of land that included areas that later became Lavender Hill, Sea Winds and Marina Da Gama. The settlement consisted of informal dwellings scattered amongst sand dunes and low-lying scrub, and extended South towards the coast.



Figure 4: Aerial photograph of Vrygrond, 1973 (ArcGIS, 2014)

The majority of residents were Coloured, with the settlement housing a small but steadily increasing number of Xhosa residents migrating from the Transkei and Ciskei areas of the Eastern Cape (Bøgh, 2012.). Another resident illustrated the racial unity that he saw as characteristic of Old Vrygrond by describing how Coloured residents protected Xhosa residents from eviction by the government during apartheid years: “When the trucks came, for the pass laws, the people actually hide [sic] each other, the Transkei people they used to call them those days, into their houses so that the cops cannot find them.” He and many other older residents described their personal

experiences of being forcefully removed to other suburbs as the Group Areas Act was enforced, leading to Vrygrond becoming what the resident described as “almost like a place of no existence”. The informal settlement was located on state-owned land, and at various times in the settlement’s history government sought to evict residents. The chairman of the Vrygrond Community Development Trust, describes how “shacks demolished by the authorities during the day were surreptitiously re-built at night”, as residents fought to withstand eviction (Schrire, n.d.). Over the years the Vrygrond community was re-established through the perseverance of residents, with the apartheid government gradually weakening in the implementation of its policies (Schrire, n.d.; Davies, 2009).

## **2.2. The formalization of Vrygrond**

The community continued to grow steadily until the establishment of the Vrygrond Community Development Trust (the Trust) in 1997; a key moment that would have a profound impact on the community living in Vrygrond. On the Trust’s website the chairman describes the events that led to the formalization of Vrygrond (Schrire, n.d.). The process started when the municipality agreed to sell an area of municipal land to a group of developers for the development of Capricorn Business Park just to the South of Vrygrond (see contextual map in Figure 12 on page 65). Local community leaders realized an opportunity to put pressure on the municipality to deliver much-needed housing and services to the community by staging protests and formally objecting to the development. One of the developers went to engage with the community to understand their reasons for objecting to the development. Upon hearing the community leaders’ desire to secure formal housing and services, the developer agreed to assist them in engaging with the municipality. With the ANC government’s Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) providing for housing subsidies for qualifying South Africans through the Housing Subsidy Scheme, the municipality agreed to the development, but required the establishment of a community body to oversee the delivery of houses and to enable the state to engage with the community. At that point there were two main groups of community leaders in Vrygrond, namely the ‘RDP Forum’ and a group operating under the label of ‘Sanco (South African National Civics Organization)’. For four months the developer mediated between the two opposing groups in an effort to establish a community organization consisting of members from each. These community leaders then asked the developer to act as the chairman of the community organization, and the Vrygrond Community Development Trust was formed (Schrire, n.d.).

The delivery of formal houses, infrastructure and services from 1999 to 2002 was achieved amidst considerable conflict and opposition. The Sanco group broke away from the Trust after ongoing disagreements, and continued to lead a small group of residents in opposing the Trust during and after the housing development. The chairman of the Trust described this group as 'dissidents' and 'wreckers' who were dedicated to fighting against the formalization of Vrygrond, seeking to disrupt much of the development process (Schrire, n.d.).

When I asked some of the current Trustees why the group was fighting against the formalization of Vrygrond, they proposed various perceived reasons. They suggested that some were concerned that they would lose their position of power in the community in a more formal context. Another perception was that some were engaging in criminal activity that they feared would be stopped if the settlement were formalized. A third proposed reason was that some who practiced livestock farming were concerned that this would no longer be possible. Indeed Trustees explained that residents were ultimately given the option of receiving agricultural land in Malmesbury if they wanted to continue with agricultural activities. In another interview, however, a resident who had been on the Trust as one of the Sanco members, provided contrasting reasons. He felt that agreements that were made in Trust meetings were not being adhered to, and that meetings were being held and decisions taken without the presence of all the Trustees. He described his interpretation of how the Pick 'n' Pay shopping Centre came to be developed on land to the West of Capricorn Business Park: "Today we have nothing left of our land. Our land was very big. But through our own brothers, and sisters, we have nothing today. They sell our land. They sell it. They sell it to Pick 'n' Pay. And that was not the agreement."



Figure 5: Photographs of formal houses being completed in March 2000 (Source: Schrire, n.d.).



Figure 6: The development of phase one with Old Vrygrond to the East (Google Earth, 2014)

Conflict intensified and ultimately broke out into violence. A Trustee had his house and spaza shop (an informal convenience shop) burnt down. Another narrowly avoided an attempted petrol-bombing of his house. The first Trustee to be shot dead in his Vrygrond home was a man whom Schrire (1999) later described as “the pre-eminent community leader in Vrygrond”, and, “the one man who more than any other was responsible for the 1 600 new houses”. After another Trustee survived an attempted shooting, a third was shot dead while walking through Vrygrond, and the remaining Trustees evacuated the area. They returned after a few months, and the housing project was ultimately completed in mid-2002 (Schrire, n.d.). Today the Trust remains a key role player in the development of Vrygrond, with the municipality formally giving ownership of various parcels of land to the Trust for community development as part of the formalization of the settlement.

### **2.3. In-migration and the emergence of social problems**

The delivery of formal housing saw large-scale migration into Vrygrond. One resident described how in the preceding years former residents were contacted by a community leader advising them to return, while many others who had not lived in Vrygrond before also constructed informal dwellings in the area, attracted by the prospect of being able

to secure formal housing. The community has since grown substantially through the constructing of backyard dwellings, largely occupied by African immigrants paying rent to local homeowners. In the narrative told by residents of Old Vrygrond, the social problems faced by current residents are thought to have emerged with the arrival of these newcomers in the community. When I asked a resident who had moved to Vrygrond in search of her mother in 1997 what had caused the various negative changes she had been describing to me, she replied:

The *development* has caused these changes. When we lived in iron corrugated shacks, *people didn't wanna come here, they pulled up their nose!* Cause remember we used the bucket system toilets, and it *stink*. [...] And then we got the *houses!* People *flocked* in. People flocked to get houses, people flocked for *opportunity*, and that's where our drug *dealers*, gang *bosses*, whatever, came in.

For many of these long-time residents, the narrative is one of the corruption of a small, peaceful, and moral community due to in-migration triggered by the development of the area. At times this presented itself in the form of racial or ethnic stereotypes regarding newcomers. Others identified a similar correlation between in-migration and social problems, but interpreted the context more in terms of overcrowding or overpopulation than in terms of race or ethnicity. The resident who had been part of the Sanco group identified overcrowding as an issue, and felt that it was caused by the greed of homeowners who build excessive numbers of backyard dwellings in search of rental income. He used the example of one homeowner whom he said had 9 or 10 backyard dwellings on the property and yet had no space to accommodate her own daughter. Similarly a young Zimbabwean man who lived in Vrygrond from 2011 to 2014 viewed overcrowding as the cause of a perceived increase in crime and infrastructure failure in the area. He felt that the increase in power outages, potholes, and the frequent bursting of sewerage pipes was evidence that the infrastructure was insufficient to cope with the number of inhabitants.



Figure 7: Aerial photograph of Vrygrond in September 2002 shortly after formalization (Google Earth, 2014)



Figure 8: Aerial photograph of Vrygrond in March 2013 after ten years of rapid in-migration (Google Earth, 2014)

The most significant negative change perceived by residents was a persistently increasing level of crime and violence. Many shared personal stories of being victims of house breakings and muggings on the streets of Vrygrond, and were aware of incidences of physical violence such as stabbings and shootings. There was a perception that acts of crime could occur at any time of day, with a pervasive sense of lawlessness and oppression from criminals living in the community.

Throughout my research I encountered widespread criticism of the police amongst residents. The majority seemed to view the police as at best ineffective and incompetent, and at worst corrupt and untrustworthy. Some of the complaints of residents included perceptions of a slow response to reports of crime, a lack of assistance during crime events from passing police patrols, and corrupt dealings with local gangsters or drug dealers. In two interviews residents described separate incidences of vigilantism, or 'mob justice', which they perceived to be evidence of an extreme loss of faith in the police. One resident described how his brother-in-law had been beaten to death by a group of residents after having been caught breaking into a house in Overcome Heights. In the second incident, a known gangster was beaten by a group of Malawian residents after a stabbing. The resident who described the event felt that the lack of decisive action from police present at the scene enabled the group to assault the gangster. The following day a Malawian man was murdered close to the scene; an act perceived to be one of retaliation from the gang.

Fear of crime is pervasive and impacts on many of the everyday actions of Vrygrond residents. A resident who moved to Vrygrond as a teenager in 2006 described the fear that he has when walking with friends who are visiting the area: "now, it's a case of, you walk with somebody, you're actually scared for them and their lives you know? Because you know what's gonna happen next." Some avoid certain areas of Vrygrond perceived to be of higher risk, and many feel that it is unsafe to walk to or from their house at night. Residents also expressed low levels of trust of their neighbors and the surrounding community, feeling that witnesses were unlikely to report crime due to fear of retribution from criminals. Perpetrators are often known to victims, and rarely come from outside of the community. One resident told a story of a 63 year-old mother whom she described as being "petrified" of her own son, had an interdict against him, and had resorted to hiding her possessions from him – an extreme example of how close the relationship between perpetrator and victim can be.

This description of crime in Vrygrond is well supported by a study of 517 households in Vrygrond conducted by Jensen et al (2011: 36) from mid-2007 to mid-2009. The researchers reported, that “82 per cent rated violence as the main problem in the community, and 75 per cent believed that violence had remained at the same level or had increased in the past year”. Jensen et al (2011: 37) found crime to be “intimate”, with criminal acts often occurring within the home, and victims having known the perpetrator in 45 per cent of the cases encountered. The authors described similar negative perceptions of the police.

Gangsterism and drug abuse were related problems perceived by residents to have emerged since the development. In three interviews residents named various gangs operating in the community, and were able to map their ‘territories’ – areas of control enforced through acts of violence between members of opposing gangs. Residents were able to describe specific dwellings in which gangsters and ‘gang bosses’ are known to live, and viewed these people as powerful individuals within the community. Gangsters exert control on residents, for example by demanding ‘tax’ money to ensure their ‘protection’ from criminals. Children and youth are seen as being particularly at-risk to the predatory actions of gang leaders and ‘drug lords’ who seek to enlist young people into criminal groups. Another resident described how a homeowner had his home taken over by drug dealers, who gave the man drugs over a period of time, and then claimed his house after he was unable to pay them back. The resident described the house as now being a “drug den” from where the inhabitants openly sell drugs.

In a particularly saddening story a mother in Vrygrond described how her two sons became embroiled in a local gang. When she sought to intervene, the gangsters took one son hostage and demanded a R6000 ransom fee, which she could not afford to pay. The gangsters released her son after she gave them the money that she had, which amounted to R200. The mother then confronted the gang boss, who demanded R6000 for her sons’ release from membership in the gang. After she took a loan and paid the gang her sons were released, but she remains anxious that this may not truly be the case. The mother described how, as a result of her standing up to the gang: “They won’t attack me. Cause at the beginning I showed them I’m not scared. I was now ready to die to show them that I’m not scared. [...] If I see them standing here, I *chase* them. Now what is so nice, they got respect for me, and they know that I’m not a softie, so they listen to me.”

Other problems faced by residents include low levels of education, particularly among older residents, with widespread unemployment and poverty. Two members of staff at the Sozo Foundation NGO described what they saw as a 'generational cycle' of poverty in which younger generations are raised in contexts of apathy, lacking aspirations and role models, resulting in cycles of "despair", of "loss of dignity" and a "lack of self-worth". An elderly Xhosa resident's interpretation of the current context contrasted with this. She described what she saw as a breakdown in values and morals using the cultural reference of the slaughtering of a cow: traditionally hosts offer the best of the meat to guests and keep the bones for themselves, but today, she feels that young people would take the best meat for themselves and give the bones to the guests. The metaphor aptly describes the breakdown in family values, community, and social cohesion that many other older residents seemed to be describing.

### **3. Social context**

Today, Vrygrond is a relatively small but densely populated settlement, facing social problems such as poverty, unemployment, crime, gangsterism and drug abuse. This section describes the social composition of the Vrygrond population in more detail, before exploring the level of social capital of residents, and the relations between social groups.

#### **3.1. Demographics**

Estimations of Vrygrond's population are highly variable. The 2011 Census for Vrygrond was 18 499 people, having grown from a reported population of 4252 in the 2001 census at a growth rate of 15,84 per cent. With the population growth rate for the City of Cape Town having been 2,57 per cent over the same period (Stats SA, 2014), the rapid population growth perceived by residents is evident. Census figures, however, have been queried by a number of local NGOs who feel that the population is far greater. Jensen et al (2011: 28-29) felt that the population in 2009, two years earlier, was likely to be between 30 000 and 60 000, with an official estimation by the police of 40 000. Jensen et al (2011) used their sample to estimate an average household size of 5, and an average of two additional backyard dwellings per formal structure. With 1620 formal structures, and an additional 3540 informal structures in Overcome Heights, they estimated a total population of 42 000 in 2009. The perceived continuation of the increase of backyard and informal structures, together with a birth rate that may well be quite high, means that the population is likely to have grown considerably in the last 5 years, perhaps to around 50 000 or more. With census figures being used to guide

government planning regarding public service delivery (Jensen et al, 2011), the substantial number of residents not officially recorded in the census data may explain the widespread criticisms of inadequate state-led delivery of services and public facilities in Vrygrond.

When asked to identify any 'groups' that make up the Vrygrond community, the majority of residents used race and ethnicity to define three main groups: Coloured residents, Xhosa residents, and foreign nationals from African countries such as Zimbabwe, Malawi, and the DRC, as well as Nigeria and Somalia. Interviewees identified Coloured residents as being the most populated group, followed by Xhosa residents and lastly foreign nationals. Jensen et al (2011) used language as a proxy for race group, and found that 43 per cent of residents in their randomized sample were Coloured, 33 per cent were Xhosa, and 15 per cent were foreign nationals speaking French, Shona or Chichewa. 9 per cent spoke other languages (English, Venda, isiZulu, siSwati, Pedi, Shangaan or other Southern African languages). Each of these groups settled in Vrygrond through migration at different times. Coloured people were the earliest residents, having settled largely through migration from the rural areas surrounding Cape Town. Xhosa residents, for whom access to cities was more restricted during apartheid, migrated predominantly during the 1980s through rural-urban migration as apartheid policies weakened. Finally, in post-apartheid years, immigrants from African countries have settled in South Africa's cities, many fleeing civil war or economic crises (Bøgh, 2012). Historical ties form an important basis by which residents lay claim to the area, with Coloured and Xhosa residents having a longer history in the area than the more recent African immigrants (Jensen et al, 2011).

### **3.2. Social capital**

Jensen et al (2011) also provide useful insight into the nature of social capital in Vrygrond. They suggest that levels of social capital are generally quite low, particularly for foreign nationals. Social support for residents arises primarily through informal relationships with family members, friends, and neighbors, as well as through religious groups. In their study, Jensen et al (2011: 31-32) found that family members (25 per cent) were the primary source of "informational, emotional, and economic support", followed by religious leaders (19 per cent), friends (16 per cent), neighbors (15 per cent), and 'others' (9 per cent). Government officials, charities/NGOs, and politicians were considerably less prevalent as sources of support, with values of 3 per cent, 2 per cent and 1 per cent respectively. While foreign nationals were more likely to rely on

religious leaders, Xhosa residents, and especially Coloured residents, had stronger networks with family members, friends and neighbors.

The study explored methods of solving community problems to give further insight into the nature of social capital. 77 per cent of their sample said that they had not “joined together with community members in the past year to solve a problem”, while 79 per cent had not “spoken with a local authority or government organization about community problems” (Jensen et al, 2011: 33). The same values were 93 per cent and 96 per cent respectively for foreign nationals. Residents therefore seem to rely on individuals within the community with whom they have established informal relationships, and are less likely to engage with formal governmental or community organizations. These findings are particularly pronounced for foreign nationals, who understandably seem to have a lower level of social capital, with less established social networks.

### **3.3. Social relations**

Opinions regarding the level of racial integration in Vrygrond varied greatly in the research interviews. Spatially the settlement seems well integrated, with all sections housing a mix of Coloured, Xhosa, and foreign residents of varying nationalities. When I asked residents to indicate on a map any spatial trends regarding where they felt different groups tend to reside, all residents felt there were no such trends, and that race and ethnic groups are located evenly throughout the settlement. A Trustee argued that the spatial integration that exists in Vrygrond is the result of the choices that recipients made when selecting formal houses – residents had some choice in which houses they moved into, and held no biases regarding the race or ethnicity of their neighbors. Another Trustee expressed similar sentiments of Vrygrond as a racially unified place, arguing that “when they said ‘rainbow nation’ out there in parliament or somewhere else, we were living it here.”

These descriptions contrast greatly with those who felt that race and ethnic groups tend to remain *socially* segregated. Many felt that Coloureds and Xhosas tend to socialize separately, while foreign nationals tend to associate with residents of the same nationality. The CEO of the Sozo Foundation NGO identified cultural difference and racial tension as a challenge that they needed to overcome in their educational support program offered to high school learners. With Coloured learners and Xhosa learners remaining quite segregated, the NGO had to take steps to promote greater unity, such as

through introducing English as a common language throughout the program. Race relations between Coloured and Xhosa residents are no doubt influenced by South Africa's apartheid history, and race seems to remain a key issue framing many of the conflicts in Vrygrond described in this dissertation.

There is a similar lack of agreement when it comes to the extent of xenophobia in Vrygrond. While a minority of residents did use ethnic stereotypes to explain problems such as poverty, unemployment, and the prevalence of litter and debris, others felt that xenophobia was not a factor in Vrygrond. Two Zimbabwean residents each described a level of fear of xenophobic violence that influenced their decision-making, but felt that foreign nationals and South Africans tend to peacefully coexist. One felt that foreign residents are more likely to be targeted by criminals, and explained how rumors that the xenophobic violence of 2008 would be repeated after the 2010 Fifa World Cup, prompted him to move to the neighboring suburb of Steenberg prior to the event, despite struggling to afford the higher cost of rent. The other Zimbabwean resident described how the rumors in 2010 made him fearful when moving from Overcome Heights into a backyard dwelling in Vrygrond, only to find that the relationship with his landlord was positive, describing the South African landlord as having treated him "as her own son".

Jensen et al's (2011) study demonstrated both a higher level of victimization as well as a higher level of mistrust and fear of crime for foreign nationals than for South African residents. The authors argued, however, that in spite of the presence of xenophobic ideology, Vrygrond did not experience the level of xenophobic violence that occurred in many former township areas in South Africa in May 2008. They suggested that cases that did occur largely consisted of opportunistic theft by youths perceived to belong to gangs, and documented an instance in which local women intervened to prevent a group of youths from robbing a foreign resident. While the rental income provided by foreign nationals staying as tenants in backyard dwellings is likely to be a factor, Jensen et al (2011) argued that, more than just the protection of a source of rental income, such actions were evidence of a level of social cohesion in Vrygrond. My own research into fire risk in Vrygrond in 2009, conducted as part of a dissertation in a Disaster Risk Science Honours program, came to a similar conclusion. I argued that through the presence of social control and social cohesion, residents were able to resist existing fire hazard drivers to some extent, with neighbors regulating the behavior of residents, and

assisting each other in extinguishing fires to prevent fires spreading from dwelling to dwelling.

The social dynamics of Vrygrond are thus seemingly complex. Descriptions of Vrygrond as a racially diverse but unified community coexist alongside evident feelings of racial tension, hostility and social segregation. Furthermore there seems to be some level of social cohesion and solidarity that emerges and expresses itself at certain times, while in much of everyday life in Vrygrond, residents perceive neighbors as being untrustworthy and unconcerned about the needs of others. Bøgh (2012: 29) quoted the leader of an NGO who described it aptly: “There’s a commonness amongst us. You know, we are all struggling, and I think that’s the one thing that brings people together. Let something happen and you’ll see how people gather together.”

#### **4. Physical context**

This section describes important aspects of the natural and built environment in which Vrygrond is situated. I firstly detail the physical context of the surrounding region, followed by that of the Vrygrond settlement itself. The aerial photographs in Figure 12 on page 65, and Figure 13 on page 66, have been labeled to indicate the location of some of the key physical elements of Vrygrond discussed in this dissertation.

##### **4.1. The surrounding region**

Key aspects of the surrounding region are depicted in Figure 12 and are described below. Vrygrond is located approximately 25km South of Cape Town’s CBD, close to Muizenberg on the False Bay coast. Situated on the Cape Flats, the area has sandy soils that are relatively infertile. The natural vegetation consists of low-lying scrub and bushes with larger trees being uncommon in the area. Generally the water table is high, giving rise to a number of perennial water bodies such as Zandvlei, Rondevlei, and Princess Vlei, as well as areas of wetlands and marshes. High drainage rates mean that much of the soil is dry during summer months, however high winter rainfall brings flooding to low-lying areas in the region.

The effects of South Africa’s apartheid spatial planning policies continue to be evident in the region, with many of the surrounding suburbs remaining starkly defined in terms of race and income. Suburbs such as Sea Winds, Lavender Hill, Steenberg and Retreat to the North and North West of Vrygrond are largely Coloured areas with predominantly low-income residents. Marina Da Gama to the West is a middle- to high-income area

developed in the 1970s, and predominantly houses White residents. More recently developed suburbs to the South such as Costa Da Gama and Capricorn Beach are racially mixed, lower middle-income areas. The mix of race groups and ethnicities in Vrygrond differentiates it from many other former township areas that tend to remain either predominantly Coloured, such as Heideveld or Manenberg, or predominantly Black African, such as Langa or Gugulethu. These trends in racial distribution are evident in the graphical representation of census 2011 data provided in Figure 9 below.

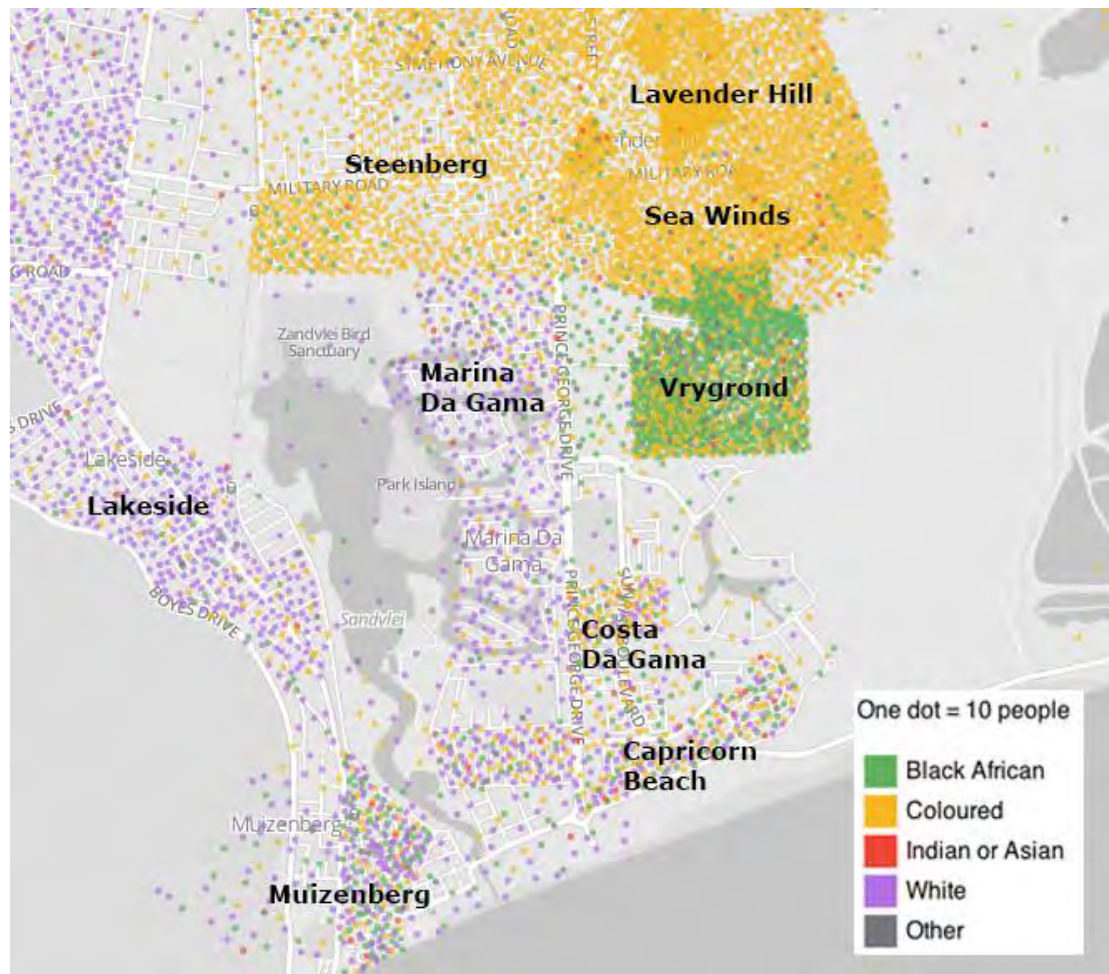


Figure 9. Racial dot map of Vrygrond and the surrounding area (Source: Frith, 2013)

Vrygrond is quite well located and accessible compared to many other former township areas in Cape Town. This, combined with the lower cost of accommodation, has contributed to the high level of migration into the area and the high population density. Proximity to Prince George Drive (M5), one of the major freeways linking Cape Town on a North-South axis, improves vehicular accessibility for the settlement. While Zandvlei forms a physical barrier that limits access, notably for emergency vehicles from Lakeside Fire Station and Muizenberg Police Station to the West, Military Road and

Concert Boulevard enable access to the railway line and Main Road, a historic development corridor linking Cape Town in the North to Muizenberg in the South. Proximity to Retreat Station also greatly improves access for Vrygrond residents, as the station is an important public transport interchange that receives high usage from commuters travelling by bus, by taxi, and by train.

The only change to Vrygrond's physical extent since formalization has been the growth of the Overcome Heights area at the North of Vrygrond. The informal area is located on land previously set aside as a road reserve for a proposed major East-West route connecting to Main Road just South of Steenberg. The road reserve is visible as a corridor of green open space approximately 50m wide on Figures 12 and 13. Overcome Heights was established in 2005-2006, with the number of informal dwellings increasing from 22 in January 2005 to 1947 in June 2006 (Jensen et al, 2011: 30). A former ward councilor for the area explained that the growth of Overcome Heights (see Figure 11) was triggered by the mayor declaring a moratorium on evictions from the area, in response to a group of five households who were resisting relocation. He also explained that the presence of the road reserve meant that the municipality was not permitted to provide basic services for a considerable number of informal dwellings, until the proposed road was abandoned, reportedly due to the presence of environmentally sensitive wetland areas to the East. Further physical growth to the South and East is prevented due to the presence of Capricorn Business Park and Coastal Park Waste Management respectively. Coastal Park is the second largest of the Cape Town's three landfill sites, and is visible from the settlement of Vrygrond (City of Cape Town, 2014a).

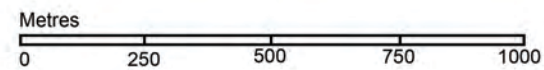


Figure 10: The informal settlement of Overcome Heights with Coastal Park landfill in the background (The David MacEnulty Chess Foundation, 2011)



Figure 11. Aerial photographs depicting the growth in physical extent of Overcome Heights from 15 January 2005 (top), to 28 October 2006 (middle), to 23 November 2013 (bottom) (Source: Google Earth, 2014)

Figure 12: Labelled aerial photograph of Vrygrond and the surrounding area (ArcGIS, 2014)



- |                             |                           |               |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| 1 = Capricorn Business Park | 4 = Steenberg Station     | 7 = Zandvlei  |
| 2 = Pick 'n' Pay Centre     | 5 = Retreat Station       | 8 = Rondevlei |
| 3 = Coastal Park Landfill   | 6 = Lakeside Fire Station |               |

Figure 13: Labelled aerial photograph of the Vrygrond settlement (ArcGIS, 2014)



Metres  
 0 100 200 300 400 500



1 = Capricorn Primary School    3 = Community library    5 = Sozo educentre site  
 2 = Community centre    4 = Formal taxi rank    6 = Local ward councilor's office

## **4.2. The Vrygrond settlement**

The layout of Vrygrond and key aspects of the settlement are depicted in the labeled aerial photograph in Figure 13 on the previous page, and are described below. The settlement has two main entrances, both from Prince George Drive (M5). Vrygrond Avenue enters from the West, while Drury Road enters via the small traffic circle near the entrance to Capricorn Business Park at the Southwest. Drury Road extends West-East through the settlement, as well as North-South into Overcome Heights where it continues as the main informal road through the informal part of Vrygrond. The informal road acts as a third, minor entrance into the settlement from Sea Winds. Vrygrond Avenue, Drury Road, Peach Road, and Trevor Siljeur Road are some of the most important access routes through the settlement. The intersection of Peach Road and Vrygrond Avenue, known as ‘the fourways’ by residents, is often heavily populated by pedestrians during the day, and has a number of informal businesses located nearby. Similarly, a number of informal shops have been established on Drury Road leading up to the intersection with Peach Road .

Some of the key public facilities include the primary school at the corner of Neville Riley Road and Vrygrond Avenue, the community Centre and the taxi rank on Berg Street, and the community library at the corner of Trevor Siljeur Road and Vrygrond Avenue. An educational support facility for high school learners is currently being built by the Sozo Foundation NGO alongside the primary school on a portion of a 3ha area originally set aside as an educational precinct by the town planning firm involved in the formalization of Vrygrond. This plan also included four sites for places of worship, with the mosque on Drury Road and the ‘green church’ on Church Circle being examples. Trevor Siljeur Road and Thys Witbooi Road were named after prominent community leaders involved in securing the delivery of formal houses, while Neville Riley Road was named after a councilor who assisted in the formalization process.

## **5. Urban planning context**

### *Zoning Scheme*

The City of Cape Town’s Zoning Scheme for Vrygrond, depicted in Figure 14, indicates that all residential properties are zoned for conventional single residential (SR1) housing. The *Zoning Scheme Regulations* describes these properties as for “predominantly single-family dwelling houses” with the potential for some “limited employment and additional accommodation opportunities ... provided that the impacts of such uses do not adversely affect the surrounding residential environment” (City of

Cape Town, 2013: 30). The extent of backyard dwellings as well as home-based informal economic activities means that many formal houses in Vrygrond are unlikely to comply with zoning restrictions.

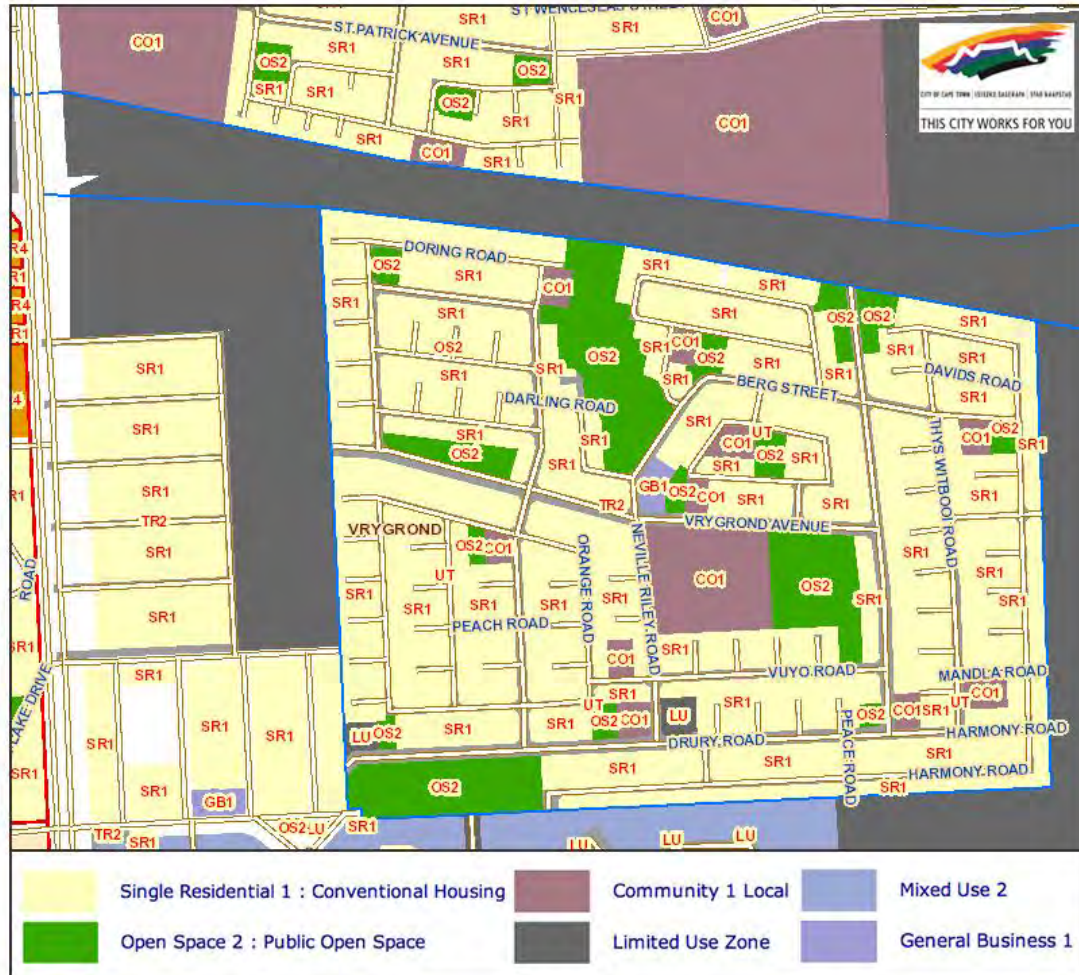


Figure 14. Vrygrond in the *Cape Town Zoning Scheme* (Source: City of Cape Town, 2014b. Used with permission).



Figure 15: The informal economy: A spaza shop (left) and a barber shop (right) (Davies, 2013)

In addition, various parcels of land are zoned for local community zones (C01) and for public open space (OS2). Local community zones are described as being for “social uses directed at community needs, such as educational, religious, welfare or health services” (City of Cape Town, 2013: 42). Here there seems to be a greater degree of compliance, with public facilities such as the primary school, and various places of worship being located on properties zoned for community use. Public open space is described as providing for “active and passive recreational areas on public land, as well as protection of landscape and heritage areas” (City of Cape Town, 2013: 65). Much of the public space in Vrygrond, however, fails to provide for such uses. Public spaces often consist of sand and rubble, and are strewn with litter and refuse (see example in Figures 16 and 17 below). Other areas are primarily used as water retention ponds during winter months. These factors, combined with perceptions of high crime rates in certain open spaces, mean that public spaces are very rarely used for any form of recreation.



Figure 16:: The poor condition of public open space in Vrygrond (Rochat, 2014)



Figure 17:: Public open space with a retention pond and informal dumping of refuse (Rochat, 2014)

The state's lack of enforcement of some of the zoning restrictions has had both positive and negative impacts for Vrygrond residents. Many homeowners have been able to support household income through rental income from backyard dwellings, and through home-based informal economic activities such as spaza shops, barber shops, shebeens, and various other business activities. Jensen et al (2011: 30) found that 80 per cent of the economic support for households in their survey was "self-generated" through activities such as these. In addition to the problems described by residents regarding the extent of backyard dwellings, there has also been a proliferation of activities around which there is some conflict and disagreement amongst homeowners and neighbors. Two examples include the operation of a number of scrapyards as well as two residents running small-scale livestock farms in Vrygrond. Two residents felt that the presence of scrapyards encouraged criminal activity by offering money for scrap metals, and also complained of a negative impact on the aesthetics of the area. Another resident explained an ongoing conflict between livestock farmers and residents who see the presence of livestock as a health hazard and complain of the odour. Others argue that farming is part of the heritage and history of Vrygrond, and thus should be permitted. With the government not enforcing some of the zoning restrictions in the area, these conflicts remain largely unresolved. The current ward councilor forthrightly explained the lack of enforcement of zoning regulations in Vrygrond:

"Let me say to you, in Vrygrond there's no planning enforcement, there's no zonings. There is zoning, for residential, and that's it. If I start a business I'm not going to the City for a business. I cannot go and knock on each door, the officials cannot do it, so it's a free for all. In terms of planning, and plans, extensions etcetera, people just build, they don't care. There's not enough man power to enforce. So there's not much that I can tell you about planning because I don't deal with planning issues in our community. It's just a community that's not interested in planning, city planning."

It is interesting to note that the Zoning Regulations include a zoning for Incremental Housing (SR2), which provides for the incremental upgrading of informal dwellings. This zoning includes less restrictive development rules than the SR1 zoning, with informal economic activity being actively encouraged. The SR2 zoning seeks to enable the upgrading of informal settlements with the view that settlements would be re-zoned to SR1 once informal settlements have been upgraded. The zoning of Vrygrond's residential plots as SR1 therefore indicates the original intention that the development of Vrygrond would see the establishment of a fully formalized suburb in which residents

would not pursue incremental upgrading and informal economic activities. This suggests that bulk infrastructure capacities would have been designed with limited growth expected, and indeed residents perceived an increase in infrastructure failure in recent years due to the overcrowding of the settlement.

#### *Cape Flats District Plan*

The City of Cape Town has two levels of structure plans guiding future urban development, with a municipal Spatial Development Framework, and eight District Plans. Vrygrond falls within the Cape Flats District Plan. Figure 18 depicts the spatial plan for the Sub-District in which Vrygrond is situated. The plan includes four spatial proposals that would impact directly on Vrygrond residents.

Firstly a 'Princessvlei Parkway' connector route is proposed from Baden Powell Drive on the False Bay Coast, between Vrygrond and Coastal Park landfill site, to an intersection with the M5 near Rondevlei. A second connector route, 'Zandvlei Expressway', is then proposed between the new 'Princess Vlei Parkway', across the M5 to Steenberg, in the former road reserve on which Overcome Heights is currently located. It is unclear whether this proposed road would see Overcome Heights residents being resettled on alternative land, or indeed whether the planning department is aware of the presence of Overcome Heights; the informal settlement not depicted on any maps in the Cape Flats district plan. In a number of other maps included in the district plan, only the roads in the first two phases of Vrygrond's housing development are depicted, with the Eastern half of the settlement not displayed. When I discussed the content of the Cape Flats District Plan with the current ward councilor and asked about the inclusion of a road on the road reserve on which Overcome Heights is located, he explained:

"That's been on the cards for twenty-odd years that road, so it's not going to happen soon. But if they do, we'll move, we'll have to move to bring the road through, and then need to relocate etcetera. [...] I cannot give you much information on the roll-out of the specific area in terms of twenty, thirty years planning. I think I've seen something, but that was a city-wide scale, and not a district-scale. So I don't have much involvement with city planning."

The plan does correctly identify Lavender Hill/Vrygrond, as well as Nyanga/Gugulethu, as two areas in which there is “a major gap in respect of public facilities/services as well as areas for recreation” (City of Cape Town, 2012: 32). The plan proposes a local library, a primary school, a sports field/stadium, and a community park as public facilities that should be investigated in the future, in a new civic node. With the Trust having developed a community library and a primary school in Vrygrond, it is unclear whether the planning department is proposing these as possible additional facilities, as upgrades to the existing facilities, or if they are unaware of the development actions of the Trust.

The district plan identifies state-owned land between Vrygrond and the M5 as a potential area for a medium density development consisting of mixed use and inclusionary housing. With the number of informal dwellings in Overcome Heights likely to have risen considerably since the 2009 value of 3540 (Jensen et al, 2011: 29), as well as the large number of backyard dwellers in Vrygrond, it is possible that the parcel of land identified for housing could be inadequate to meet the existing housing need.

Finally, the plan calls for the development of a local spatial development framework for Lavender Hill/Vrygrond as there is currently “limited spatial policy guiding the development of the area” (City of Cape Town, 2012: 127). The Cape Flats district plan therefore takes some steps in identifying and responding to the needs that exist in Vrygrond, however it seems as though there may be a limited level of understanding of the realities on the ground in the settlement.

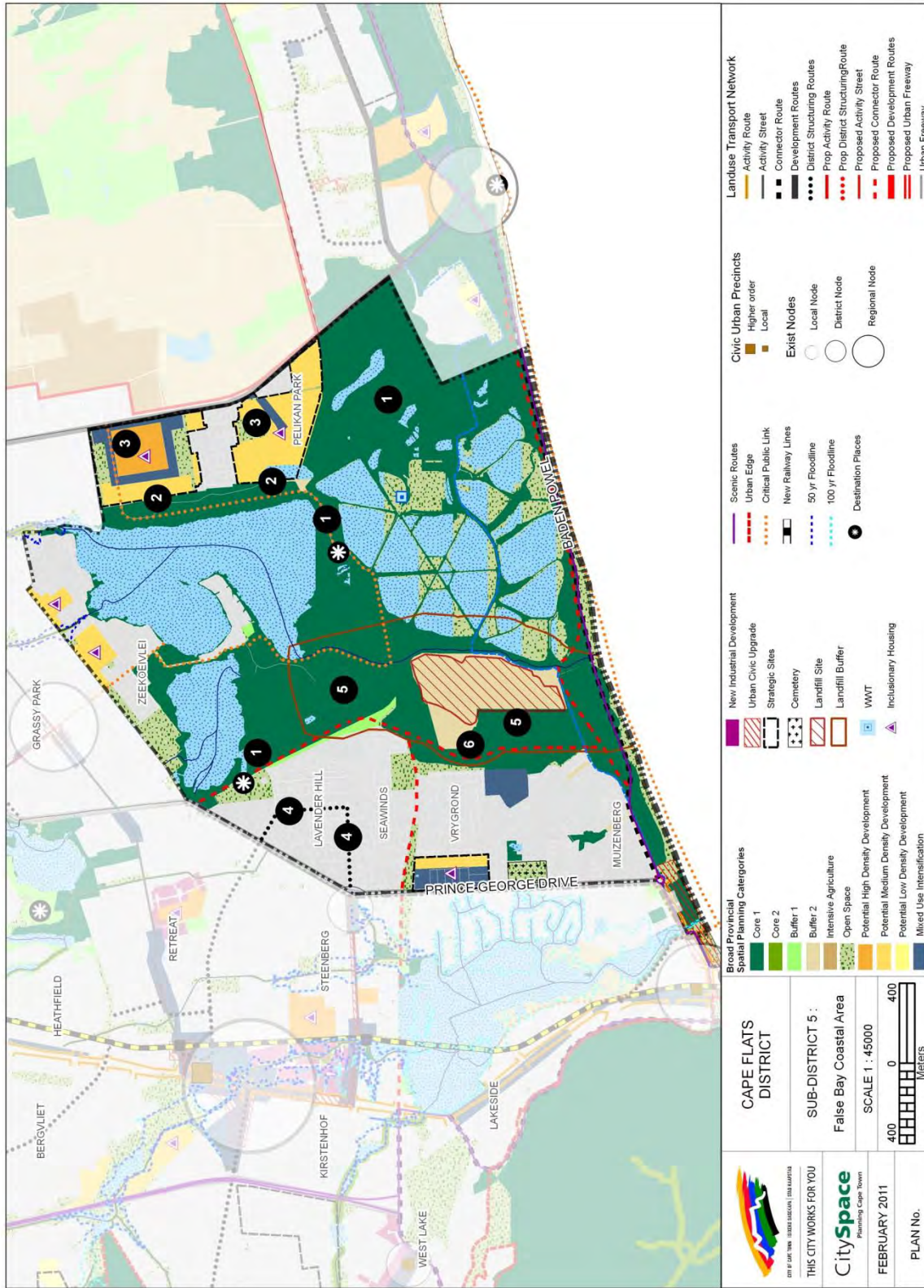


Figure 18 Plan for Sub-District 5 from the Cape Flats District Plan (Source: City of Cape Town, 2012).

Clearly there is a lack of connection and integration between state city planning and local level development in Vrygrond. Planning policy documents do not seem to be adequately grounded in the local knowledge of Vrygrond residents and the ward councilor, despite a DLG framework that seeks to ensure that local needs are responded to in municipal policy documents. In light of this lack of alignment, planning seems to be largely technocratic, and is not widely relevant to the development of Vrygrond. In the current context, the ward councilor and local residents do not seem to have a great deal of input into the content of municipal plans, while the plans themselves are not seen as a valuable source of guidance and strategy for local development in the area.

## **6. Conclusion**

In this chapter I have provided a detailed description of the historical, social, physical and planning contexts of Vrygrond. Some of the most important historical aspects of the settlement include its history of resistance to attempts to eradicate the settlement during apartheid years, its tumultuous history of formalization in the midst of conflict, and the rapid population growth since formalization with a proliferation of backyard and informal freestanding dwellings. Social problems including crime, gangsterism and drug abuse have proliferated alongside persistently high levels of poverty and unemployment. The population has become increasingly diverse through in-migration, and consists of Coloured, Xhosa, and foreign residents. Coloured residents have perhaps the strongest claims to the settlement, with Vrygrond having been a predominantly Coloured fishing village since the 1930s. While foreign nationals occupy a more marginal position in the settlement, xenophobic violence has been limited despite the presence of some xenophobic sentiments. Race and political affiliation are two other sources of division and tension. Residents have widespread access to basic needs through state led service provision, however there is a significant lack of public facilities. Existing planning policies do not seem to have a significant impact on the settlement, and are hindered by a lack of alignment with the realities of the largely informal context. In the next chapter I set out the findings of the case study, describing the nature of development since 1997, which has occurred through interventions by the state, the Trust, and various NGOs.

# Chapter 5: Analysis



## **Chapter 5: Analysis**

### **1. Introduction**

Development in Vrygrond occurs through complex interactions between the various actors driving development, and the residents who are the recipients of development outcomes. Through this chapter it becomes clear that the context of Vrygrond greatly shapes the strategies and approaches used for development, as well as the extent to which outcomes can be appropriated by residents to produce improvements to their everyday lives. In this chapter I aim to build an understanding of the nature of development in Vrygrond. I use the findings of my social research with residents and key actors such as members of the Trust, staff of NGOs, and current and past ward councilors, to answer various questions pertaining to the research. The main questions that I address are, (i) what services, facilities and amenities have been provided to Vrygrond residents since 1997, (ii) who have been the key role players in securing these developments, (iii) what processes or approaches have been utilized, and (iv) how do residents perceive and respond to these development processes and outcomes. Each of the three sections in this chapter focuses on a key role player, or group of role players that influence development in Vrygrond; firstly the government, secondly the Vrygrond Community Development Trust, and finally Non-Governmental Organizations.

### **2. The Government**

In this section I firstly describe the developmental efforts of the State in Vrygrond, detailing the various services, infrastructure, and public facilities that have been provided by the government. I then contrast these achievements with the negative perceptions of the government that prevail amongst residents, as well as amongst Trustees and NGOs. Finally, I describe two issues that present various challenges to the government as well as to residents in relation to services, namely informality and taxi violence.

#### **2.1. State-led services and development**

In interviews with residents, I encountered a highly negative view of the government, particularly in the area of service delivery. Trustees as well as staff from NGOs seemed to hold similar perceptions of a state that is absent and that has failed to meet the needs and the expectations of residents. Yet when one looks at the history of Vrygrond, there is some evidence of state-led service provision. The formalization of Vrygrond from 1999

to 2002, achieved in part through the vehicle of the Vrygrond Community Development Trust, saw approximately 8 000 residents, living informally on state-owned land, receive government funding for the provision of 1500 formal houses, 100 serviced plots, and formal infrastructure. Later, after the rapid proliferation of the informal Overcome Heights area in 2005 to 2006, the municipality provided services including formal electricity, street lighting, a relatively widespread coverage of communal standpipes, and communal flush toilets, as shown in Figure 19 below. Again, these achievements occurred despite residents having occupied state-owned land set aside for the development of a major extension of the R300 freeway. Finally, in more recent years, the government has developed a formal taxi rank in Vrygrond, and non-motorized transport routes linking Vrygrond and Overcome Heights with the M5 and Military Road. So how were these developments achieved, and why have they not resulted in a more positive perception of the government amongst residents?



Figure 19: Communal flush toilets located on an informal road in Overcome Heights

In Chapter 4 I described the years leading up to the formalization of Vrygrond. We saw how the process was triggered by residents objecting to the proposed development of Capricorn Business Park on land adjacent to the informal settlement. In the history of Vrygrond provided on the Trust's website, the chairman explains that the objection was a strategic move by community leaders that sought to secure housing and service delivery from the government – residents were in fact largely in favor of the new

business park as they hoped it would create jobs for residents (Schrire, n.d.). And indeed, after fifty years of the informal settlement's existence, the activism of local community leaders and residents saw the settlement formalized. While explaining this history, a Trustee also highlighted the socio-political context of the time, emphasizing the expectations that residents had of greater service delivery in the early post-apartheid era under Mandela's presidency. The ANC government's Reconstruction and Development Programme, with the Housing Subsidy Scheme policy, provided the R27 million needed for the formalization of Vrygrond. Therefore, while it is important to note the community activism that initiated the development process, one must also acknowledge that the state was central in achieving the settlement's formalization.

The history of Overcome Heights tells a similar story of community activism and strategic action from residents, alongside state-led service provision. The former ward councilor for the area explained that during the formalization, a small group of five households living on the area that is now Overcome Heights, resisted relocation, and lived on the road reserve area after the development. He explained that during the 2006 election campaigns, the Mayor held a rally on the open space to the North of Vrygrond where Overcome Heights is now situated, where she responded to these five resisting households by issuing a 'moratorium' on evictions in the area. The former ward councilor described how this led to a remarkably rapid proliferation of informal dwellings that became Overcome Heights (as depicted in Figure 11 in Chapter 4, page 64).

During my household interviews in 2009, a resident explained that many of these new informal dwellings were erected by families who had been living in backyards of formal houses in Vrygrond. She explained that residents were aware that they had been instructed not to build on the road reserve area, however residents felt that this would provide greater visibility for backyard dwellers in the hope of securing housing and services (Davies, 2009). While the government provided services to the majority of Overcome Heights residents, the former ward councilor explained that they were unable to provide services on the road reserve due to a policy that prevented public spending on an area on which a road was to be built within three years. Servicing of the remaining households was thus achieved later, when it became clear that the road was not going to be built.

In my research I found low levels of knowledge of the more specific processes by which these state-led developments were achieved. This was the case amongst residents that I interviewed, but also with members of local NGOs, as well as the Trust. While there may well be other residents who participated in such processes in some way, my own perception from engaging with residents is that they felt that service delivery in Vrygrond occurs as a result of internal decision-making within government. The perceptions of residents, described below, demonstrate that while there is relatively widespread access to basic services such as piped water, electricity and sanitation, the lack of access to public facilities and to economic opportunity are considerable problems facing residents.

## **2.2. A perceived absence of the state**

“It seems as if Vrygrond is just a city which has been abandoned by the government. They just come now and then to do their services. But you can see there’s litter all over, even the developments, the roads and everything. You only see the government during election time, then after that it seems as though they won’t come back again ‘til next elections.”

The sentiments expressed in this quote from a Zimbabwean resident who rented a backyard dwelling in Vrygrond, reflects the feelings of the majority of the residents that I spoke to in my research. There was a common perception that the state is failing in terms of service delivery, and is largely absent outside of election times; a finding that is supported by the study conducted by Jensen et al (2011). Residents feel that government actors are reluctant to come to Vrygrond, prioritize other tasks and other places, and are not available as a source of assistance and support for residents. In interview after interview, I heard of residents complain of ‘broken promises’ from the government. While residents hope for improved access to services, facilities and economic opportunities, they do not hold a great deal of faith in the government’s ability or willingness to provide.

A CEO of a local NGO held similar sentiments of a severe lack of state-led service delivery. He argued strongly that the state is not playing enough of a role in the settlement, and that the absence of the state has contributing significantly to the opposition that the Trust has faced:

“The challenge lies in the fact that whenever somebody raises their voice and tries to stand up and start leading some sense of *representation* of the community, the moment one person rises up there will always be two people who stand against that. So, that is natural, for *any* community. That is politics. That is the reality. I think for me, I think what you do need in circumstances or communities like this, *I* think a bigger role should be played by local *government*. Because, *the buck stops with them*. The *authority* rests on their shoulders. They *have* the power and the authority. It doesn’t mean that they must *do* it all, but it means that they can *appoint*, or create, or establish these sort of functions within communities. Because even the Vrygrond Community Development Trust, they are not the official governing body. They are just a charity, a Trust, like we are. They develop, they got given the land to develop, as a project, a community project. They are so busy, running all the services that they provide, but *they are not the service provider of this community*. They are just a very big NGO. And therefore being looked to. But where is local government? Look at the services in this community: *none* of the services are provided by local government. *None*. Or very little, let me say that rather. [...] Very few and far between.”

### **2.3 The role of the ward councilor**

In discussions regarding the government, I found that residents spoke of the local ward councilor more often than any other state actor. While many residents knew who the ward councilor for the area is, and some knew the location of his office in Sea Winds, there seemed to be a feeling that the ward councilor was rarely visible in Vrygrond, and some felt that he was unwilling to listen to the views of residents. Complaints against the government were directed at the ward councilor as opposed to any other government actors or departments. While government departments may well have various services or programs in place in the community, they do not constitute a physical and visible presence for residents and are not widely seen as responsible or accountable for perceived service delivery failures.

A Trustee said that he was aware of the current ward councilor holding public meetings with the community, but he had little confidence that these meetings would be productive. He felt that the same small dissident group that opposed the Trust and disrupted public meetings relating to the housing development in the past, were likely to be oppositional in engaging with the councilor. He described his thoughts when he became aware of the ward councilor’s approach: “I thought in my mind ‘I wonder how long you’re gonna be able to do this?’ Because this is a very difficult community, you

must know that.” In an interview with the current ward councilor, his description of holding a recent public meeting confirmed the Trustees concerns:

“I had a personal experience where I had a public meeting a few months ago, and the public meeting was about the shootings and the safety in the area, and it was totally non-political. But then we had the EFF coming in, about twenty of them in their EFF t-shirts, and totally disrupted the meeting. So at the end of the day we don’t get to find solutions for the problems, because everything is disruption, and political agenda. So I had to close the meeting. I’m not going to waste my time, I’m not going to shout at people in a meeting, I’m not going to degrade myself – I closed the meeting and I walked off. [Since] then, that was about four months ago, I’ve never had a meeting again.”

For the current ward councilor, a member of the Democratic Alliance, residents who are oppositional and disruptive are driven by a political agenda, with many valid issues remaining unresolved due to disputes becoming “party political”. He also felt that race was a factor, with some Xhosa residents viewing him, a Coloured man, as favoring Coloured residents.

An event in December 2009 similarly illustrates how political affiliation and race can frame engagements between politicians and members of Vrygrond. Jensen et al (2011: 36) described how the mayor, who came to address a group of largely Xhosa residents living without basic services in informal dwellings on the road reserve in Overcome Heights, faced strong opposition from the group who “evicted” him from Vrygrond. The residents complained that the mayor, a white man belonging to the DA, favored Coloured residents. Political support remains somewhat racially aligned in South Africa, with Coloured residents more likely to support the DA, and Black African residents often supporting the African National Congress. The incident demonstrates how both historical race relations and political affiliation can frame interactions between local politicians and the community (Jensen et al, 2011).

The negative perceptions of the government in Vrygrond are illustrated by another incident described in an article published in a local newspaper (Booyesen, 2014). In the article, a community worker described the flooding of 500 households in Overcome Heights in August 2014. She complained that the municipality’s attempts to improve the informal roads in the area had exacerbated the flooding, due to the level of the road being raised above the level of the surrounding houses, resulting in storm water run-off flooding houses. She described residents as feeling like “forgotten people”, and criticized

the local ward councilor's management of the problem after he reportedly stated that residents would need to wait until summer months before the problem with the road works can be addressed (Booyesen, 2014: 1). Residents felt that they were not receiving adequate assistance, and were being "neglected" by the local government (Booyesen, 2014: 1).



Figure 20: The flooding of an informal road in Overcome Heights in June 2013 (Where Rainbows Meet, 2014).

#### **2.4. Challenges for state-led service delivery**

The context of Vrygrond provides a number of challenges for the government in relation to development and service delivery. Here, I will discuss what I regard to be the two main challenges, namely informality, and violence associated with conflicts between taxi associations. In both cases the issues affect the government's ability to provide services and public facilities, as well as residents' ability to appropriate developmental outcomes.

##### ***Informality***

We saw in the context chapter that Vrygrond has experienced rapid population growth through in-migration. The increase in population density through backyarding and informality has seen residents describe the area as 'overpopulated' and 'overcrowded'. Bulk infrastructure, having been designed largely to meet the needs of the 8 000 beneficiaries of formal housing, is under strain resulting in residents complaining of

infrastructure failure. According to residents, intermittent and long-lasting power outages occur alongside a perceived increase in potholes, and the bursting of sewerage pipes. A common complaint amongst residents was that the municipality was slow to respond when residents report infrastructure failures. One resident felt that in order to get a response it was necessary to physically go to municipal offices to report problems. She explained that technicians were reluctant to go to Vrygrond after having had expensive equipment stolen from a vehicle while attending a call-out. Similarly, the former ward councilor also explained that he would regularly need to arrange for the repair of streetlights due to cable theft – a problem that the current ward councilor continues to face. The current ward councilor explained that in certain areas of Cape Town, such as Vrygrond, streetlights remain on throughout the day as a deterrent against cable theft. He saw this as a more cost-effective approach compared to the constant expenditure on repairing streetlights after cable thefts.

The non-payment of municipal rates and taxes in low-income areas constitutes a considerable cost for many municipalities in South Africa (Wooldridge, 2002). Residents described a number of problems relating to the payment of municipal rates in Vrygrond. Firstly, residents explained that pre-paid electricity boxes fail in such a way that allows residents to continue using electricity without re-loading payments. With electricity constituting a considerable cost for households, many choose not to repair electricity boxes when this occurs.

A story told by a resident illustrated a widespread level of confusion and inconsistency regarding the billing and payment of water in Vrygrond. After having her water supply cut-off, the resident approached a Trustee who explained that residents do not have to pay for water in Vrygrond due to the building contractors allegedly having paid an additional R1 million towards the payment of water rates. A second community leader who had been part of the Sanco group, provided the same explanation, and offered to reconnect her water informally. Wanting to resolve the issue legally, the resident then went to the local municipal office where she was told that she would need to pay off an outstanding amount of R18 000 on her water account. The resident agreed to an arrangement whereby she would pay her water bill each month plus an additional R100 to pay off the outstanding amount. She has since struggled to afford these payments, and has seen the outstanding amount on her account increase to R23 000. She described her frustration at the government's management of the problem:

“It’s not that I don’t want to pay my municipal accounts. I use water, I will die without water. So I have some accountability towards paying. But at least *do something* about the big sum. Every time I see that R23 000, I’m like ‘I’m not going to pay this’. I’m not gonna pay it, until they do something and come and say to me, to the other thousand people in Vrygrond, ‘look, we’ve come to this and that agreement’. And then there’s people that have never received a water account. They’ve never had to pay for water. So why must I pay?”

The current ward councilor explained that the non-payment of water accounts has indeed been a significant problem. He described a similar instance in which a resident had accrued arrears of R195 000 on their water account. In response to the problem, the ward councilor has begun implementing a policy in which houses are being retro-fitted with a device that allows for 330L of free water per day, with arrears being written off on condition that households pay for water usage above their allocation of free water provision. He explained that in spite of this, some households have continued to fail to meet payments.

At times, government legislation and policies seem to struggle to articulate with a context of informality. In my research I came across numerous examples in which residents, often with a sincere desire to act legally and compliantly, have struggled to navigate government policies due to a poor alignment with the realities of life in Vrygrond. One example is in the buying and selling of formal and informal houses. The librarian at the community library was able to benefit from the help of a friend who was a lawyer, to ensure that a legal process was followed when she bought her formal house. For many other residents, however, a lack of knowledge has seen residents purchasing houses without title deeds being formally transferred to the new owner.

A more complex example relates to ECD centers struggling to access a subsidy from the provincial Department of Social Development. Staff from the True North NGO described the challenges faced by a number of existing ECD centers. The subsidy requires that facilities be formally registered with the department, which in turn requires planning and zoning approval. However some of the building regulations, such as the requirement of the provision of one parking bay per teacher, make little sense in an informal context, and are often impossible for principals of ECD centers to comply with. In other examples formal land ownership prevented compliance. The ECD center established by the Trust receives subsidies for less than half of the approximately 250 children at the facilities, due to a section of the center having been built on land owned

by the City of Cape Town. Attempts to lease the land have been unsuccessful reportedly due to a dispute between the Trust and the municipality regarding rates payments. Another center faces a similar problem whereby, despite signing formal agreements and affidavits to lease part of the neighbor's property for an extension of the facility, the lack of a formal subdivision of the property has prevented planning approval, resulting in problems accessing the subsidy.

### ***Taxi violence***

The development of a formal taxi rank in late-2013 on City-owned land in the center of Vrygrond is arguably the most significant state-led development in Vrygrond in recent years. Prior to the development, taxis used an area at the corner of Vrygrond Avenue and Trevor Siljeur Road as an informal taxi rank, and travelled through the settlement, often picking up and dropping residents at their houses. The informal taxi rank caused considerable congestion, leading to complaints from a nearby NGO, who also felt that the activities presented a risk to a nearby crèche. After receiving these complaints, a taxi operator approached the NGO to ask that they write a formal letter to the municipality requesting the provision of infrastructure for a formal taxi rank.

Staff of an NGO located at the community center opposite the site of the formal taxi rank described having attended a public meeting relating to the proposed development. At the meeting they raised safety concerns due to the site's proximity to a crèche operating from the community center. An NGO staff member explained that the City had engaged with the Retreat Taxi Association, the Steenberg Taxi Association, and the more recently established Vrygrond Taxi Association in an effort to mediate an agreement regarding taxi routes.

While some residents were aware that the taxi rank was developed by the City of Cape Town, generally they knew little of the process that led to the development, and none were aware of public meetings being held on the issue. Opinions regarding the suitability of the site varied amongst residents. Trustees explained that they had hoped the municipality would develop the taxi rank on the open space outside the Vrygrond Avenue entrance to the settlement. They felt that a taxi rank should not be located amongst houses, and had hoped to see the sand dune area developed into a public park for recreational use by residents. They explained however that the City owned the land and they had therefore not been involved in the selection of the site. One resident felt that the site had been chosen due to its central location, and also in an effort to reduce

crime in an area of open space that was regarded as being particularly dangerous. He also described having witnessed people attempting to construct informal dwellings on the land, before the intervention of Law Enforcement officials. He explained that prior to the attempted invasion, a vehicle had driven through the settlement motivating residents to invade the land – an act that he interpreted as being driven by taxi operators seeking to put pressure on the municipality in their efforts to secure a formal taxi rank.

Despite the municipality's mediation efforts in the planning of the taxi rank, Vrygrond has since experienced violence between the two taxi associations in March 2014, with at least nine casualties (RSA, 2014). Casualties were identified as both taxi drivers and local gang members, and the violence is regarded as being associated with contested taxi routes, but also with gang and drug-related activities in the area (RSA, 2014). A number of residents explained that race is also a key aspect of the conflict. With predominantly Coloured-owned Retreat taxis having service the Vrygrond settlement for many years, Black owners may have seen the establishment of the Vrygrond taxi rank as a means of increasing access to profits for Black taxi operators. The situation is far from resolved, with a persistent threat of taxi violence, as explained by the current ward councilor:

“Now currently, the rank is there, it's not being operated as we would have liked it to, because it could be a good solution for the community, but the taxi bosses is [sic] running the show. Also we've heard that there's even mercenaries from the Eastern Cape that's hiding in Vrygrond for should there be an onslaught that they're ready. So that's the depth of the taxi violence.”

The violence has resulted in considerable disruption for residents. Some are too fearful to use the taxi rank, while others explained that taxis from Retreat now drop residents at Prince George Drive, with residents having to walk the remaining distance. In addition to the inconvenience, residents felt that this presents a safety risk when walking home at night. The frustrations of residents led to a violent protest on the morning of Tuesday 16 September 2014, triggered by police impounding taxis operating without permits. Many NGOs stayed out of the area due to the violence, with residents burning tyres and throwing rocks at the police, and the police responding with rubber bullets and tear gas. The spokesperson for Muizenberg Police Station, whom I was due to interview that morning, later explained that he felt that there were 'other factors' contributing to the protest, with the implication being that the taxi operators may have motivated residents to protest. The current ward councilor directly stated this interpretation of the reasons for the protest:

“Two Vrygrond taxis was [sic] impounded, and then apparently, according to them they claim that the community now stands up because they’re unhappy that their taxis [have been impounded]. But it’s not the community, it’s fueled by the taxi association. So it is definitely the taxi associations that’s been instigating the violence.”



Figure 21: Clashes between police and residents at a protest regarding the taxi situation (Swartz, 2014).



Figure 22: Police responding to the protest armed with riot gear, rubber bullets and tear gas (Swartz, 2014)

### **3. The Vrygrond Community Development Trust**

The Trust has arguably been the most significant role player in the development of Vrygrond since its formation in 1997, having delivered various services and public facilities to residents. Despite these achievements, Trustees have also experienced considerable opposition from certain members of the community, and in general, support for the Trust does not seem to be widespread amongst residents. The experiences and the challenges that the Trust has encountered in its 17 year existence has seen the organization shift in terms of its main objectives, as well as in its approach to development. This section describes the role that the Trust has played in relation to development in Vrygrond, and explores the ways in which the Trust's approach has changed since its inception, as well as the factors contributing to these changes. It firstly revisits the early years of the Trust to explore in more detail some of the challenges and conflicts relating to the formalization of Vrygrond. It then describes the current objectives and approaches of the Trust, before finally presenting residents' perceptions and criticisms of the Trust.

#### **3.1. The housing development**

In an interview at a municipal building in Cape Town's CBD, a former councilor during the time of the formalization of Vrygrond reflected on the approach that was taken. Having lived in the neighboring suburb of Marina Da Gama since 1988 and later serving as the ward councilor for the area, he came to know the Trustees and various other members of the community well. He described what he saw as an "innovative", "worthwhile" and "laudable" approach to development, in which the municipality sought not just to build houses, but to "build a community, and involve the community from the beginning". The Trust was formed as a key vehicle for this purpose. Community leaders on the Trust would be involved in the planning and design of the development, with the community body consisting of elected members who would act as a means of "getting mandated positions from the community" as well as enabling the municipality to communicate information back to the residents. Furthermore, the municipality transferred ownership of a number of parcels of land within the development to the Trust for the purposes of community development. It was envisaged that the Trust would be able to sell or lease land for the development of "commercial nodes", thereby providing a source of income for the Trust, and a source of jobs for residents. The income generated would then be used by the Trust to provide public facilities and services to residents. Together with the jobs provided within the newly developed

Capricorn Business Park, it was hoped that residents would thus receive not only a formal and structured neighborhood development, but also access to economic opportunities that would uplift the community.

To this effect, a working group was set up in the planning stages of the development, consisting of Trustees, councilors, and professionals such as architects, town planners and engineers. Trustees were able to give input into the design, while also being empowered through learning technical aspects of the development process. The process included Trustees travelling to the suburb of Wesbank to see physical examples of the houses that were to be built.

Once agreements had been reached in working group meetings, Trustees would then inform the community through various public meetings. It was in this stage of the process that significant conflict and opposition arose. A Trustee described how the Sanco group, having previously agreed to consensus decisions made in the working group, would then fiercely oppose the other Trustees and seek to rouse opposition against aspects of the development in public meetings. The former councilor remembered it as a “stormy passage” which became centrally “a contestation for control of the development”. Likewise, the chairman felt that while the majority of Vrygrond residents were “apathetic”, with public meetings generally being poorly attended, the opposition amounted to a small group of ‘dissidents’ who wanted “total control” of the development (Schrire, n.d.). These conflicted meetings eventually saw the Sanco group leaving the Trust, followed by the tragic violence that led to the death of two Trustees, as described in the fourth chapter.

Aside from input into the planning and design process, one of the biggest tasks of Trustees was to facilitate residents in completing housing subsidy application forms. The chairman described the forms as “complex”, and with generally low education levels in the community, some residents being illiterate, and others lacking basic documentation, it was a considerable challenge for the Trust (Schrire, n.d.). Trustees described setting up a Trust office that they saw as functioning in a similar way to a municipal housing office, enabling residents to get assistance in filling out forms. The government used various criteria to determine who would qualify for a subsidy. Residents needed to be South African citizens with an Identity Document who had not received a subsidized house before. Furthermore, they had to be married, be living with a partner, or have one or more children living with them. Income levels would

determine the value of the subsidy granted, with unemployed or low-income residents receiving a formal house, and residents with a more moderate income receiving a serviced plot on which they were to construct their own home. Lists of qualifying residents were displayed at the Trust office, on the piece of land on which the community library is now located.

These criteria meant that many did not qualify. Others who may have qualified, moved into the area after a designated cut-off date, and therefore also did not receive a subsidy. A small minority only received a subsidy for a serviced plot, after providing false information regarding household income on application forms – some believed that stating a higher income would lead to a higher subsidy. These issues became a significant source of conflict in Vrygrond, with similar ‘allocation wars’ arising in many other informal settlements around South Africa (Bøgh, 2012; Benson, 2009). Bøgh (2012: 45) describes how at times the Trust, rather than the government, bore the brunt of the “grievances” and “protests” of residents. While I encountered many residents who understood and were able to explain the qualification criteria for the housing subsidies, I also engaged with some who felt that the Trust were to blame. The most common complaint was that residents who had moved to Vrygrond very recently received houses, while others who had lived in the community for many years did not. When I asked the resident who was part of the Sanco group who he felt was to blame for the problems with the allocation of houses, he replied:

“It was, the government, it was the Trust also I will blame them too. Because why? The land was given over to them, to look after it. Ne? And they was supposed to see that the citizens of Vrygrond must have their first privilege. [...] Because why, the Trust was not formed here, the Trust was formed in the Old Vrygrond - it is through those people that the Trust was being formed. So, the duty of the Trust was, to see that their residents who were here, who elect them, [...] those people were supposed to be in first.”

A Trustee explained that he personally had been accused of selling houses, and indeed remembered people approaching him to offer R10 000 for a house. He explained, however, that such corruption would not have been possible, as each subsidy was like a cheque addressed to a specific recipient. The development was built phase by phase, with the subsidy being paid straight to the building contractors once each of the designated beneficiaries in that phase had signed for their house. He explained that the order in which beneficiaries received houses depended on residents’ location in the informal settlement – an area would be cleared of all residents to enable the

development to occur with residents being temporarily housed elsewhere, before being moved back in after the completion of the houses. The settlement was developed phase by phase, moving anti-clockwise from the Northwest corner to the Northeast corner, thus the Trustee argued that he had no control over the order in which beneficiaries received houses. I found that in interviewees Trustees often provided defenses against accusations of corruption without me asking a question regarding such allegations. It seemed to me that Trustees were well aware of the criticisms and accusations that I would likely encounter in interviews with residents, and therefore sought to provide explanations in defense of the Trust.

Another complaint encountered by Trustees was that the houses were inadequate in terms of size as well as quality. Indeed in my small sample of 49 households in 2009, I found the average size of informal houses in Overcome Heights ( $43,98m^2$ ) to be larger than the average size of formal houses in Vrygrond ( $37,38m^2$ ). Each of the Trustees that I interviewed explained that over half of the subsidy for each beneficiary had to go towards the cost of bulk infrastructure and services, meaning that only R9 000 of the R18 400 subsidy could be used for the construction of the house. Indeed one of the Trustees was similarly dissatisfied with the size of the resulting houses, and argued: “why must we pay for roads and for sewerage service? We had to get that whole 18 500 to see to our house - that was *our* subsidy, not for the government to use.”

Despite these concerns and complaints, the process nevertheless resulted in 1 600 beneficiaries becoming formal homeowners for the first time. For one Trustee, who had the privileged job of taking beneficiaries to their houses and formally handing over the keys, the development was a highly positive experience. The Trustee, who had earlier survived an attempted murder in the conflicts surrounding the development, explained:

“You know, I would say that was a highlight in my life, that make me feel very good, you know. To see the smiles on people’s faces when you give them their key, and say, ‘here’. [...] Then I’d say ‘OK, here, this is your key. Open it.’ Then they open it. ‘Ah!’ The first thing they run to is the water, the flush toilet. ‘Ha! Here’s the toilet.’ You know? ‘And the light!’ You now? So, that was great, it was good to see.”

### **3.2. Current role and approach**

In the intervening years, the Trust has delivered public facilities including the community library, a large crèche, and a primary school. The manner in which it has achieved this is somewhat different from the approach envisioned by the councilors

involved in the establishment of the Trust and the formalization of the settlement. After selling the four sites set aside for places of worship, to a mosque and three churches, the Trust reportedly made the decision not to sell any Trust-owned land to private developers. A Trustee described how this resulted in discontent amongst some Xhosa residents who felt that no traditional African place of worship had been provided for. Various plots of land owned by the Trust have been made available to outside organizations, but not for commercial purposes. Each of the Trustees explained how Trust land is made available solely for the purposes of community development, to organizations using the land for the provision of some form of service or benefit to the community. Trustees described how NGOs seeking to access land in the settlement provide a formal letter of application to the Trust, stating the intended purpose of the land, with Trustees then discussing and agreeing upon whether the land should be made available. Land is commonly provided as a rent-free lease, with a condition that the land is not used for any purpose other than was originally proposed by the NGO.



This approach has meant that the income generation envisioned prior to the formalization has not occurred, and the Trust has come to function through donor funding, predominantly from international donors. A considerable proportion of the funding in the past has come from individuals and charity groups from London, with many having been colleagues or business associates of the chairman's during his time living and working in England (Schrire, n.d.). In addition to direct funding, the Trust has also benefited from built environment professionals offering services free of charge, or at a reduced rate. Capricorn Primary School, for example, was designed free of charge by an architect from a top local architectural firm that designed the *One and Only*, an exclusive hotel in the city's up-market Waterfront district. The architect was also an associate and friend of the chairman (Schrire, n.d.).

Many of the Trustees identified the chairman as having been influential in enabling the various developments delivered by the Trust. Trustees saw the chairman as the means by which they could access funding for projects, and, as one Trustee explained, “without funding we can’t do anything.” The chairman has also engaged with various government departments and officials, including the health Minister when the Trust was seeking to develop a clinic, as well as the Western Cape Education Department during the establishment of Capricorn Primary School. One Trustee explained that in the formation of the Trust, during the early years of the post-apartheid era, the community leaders felt that having a White man as chairman would best enable access to funding and would help “open various doors” for development projects. Another explained that “when the Trust was formed the Trust was very weak” – they saw the chairman as “an intelligent person”, somebody who was “connected”, who had access to resources such as private transport and computers, and who was an “educated” person with “knowledge” about development. The Trustees widely recognize and value the role that the chairman has played in the Trust’s achievements in Vrygrond.

In recent years the Trust has shifted towards a role of maintaining and supporting their existing projects. With monthly salaries for employees at the library, the crèche and the primary school reportedly amounting to R350 000 per month, Trustees see fundraising as a primary task, and regard education as a priority for the organization. During some of the major developments of the Trust, Trustees met as often as weekly to discuss issues relating to the development. Now, however, the Trustees see the organization as having more of a regulatory role in which Trustees may not meet for three or four months at a time. The Trust has not sought to regulate the actions of homeowners, rather allowing recipients of formal houses to use their land as they see fit, and rarely seek to intervene in community disagreements or conflicts. A Trustee who works at the crèche described the organization as “a *quiet* body, just seeing to education for the children”. Similarly, a Trustee who described the Trust as having been formed “as a mouth for the community”, reflected that the organization is now primarily about overseeing the activities on Trust land, raising funds to continue to pay salaries, and making decisions regarding access to land should any NGO approach the Trust.

### 3.3. Perceptions and criticisms

The conflict and opposition that surrounded the Trust during and after formalization, has died down considerably in recent years. Nevertheless support for the Trust is not widespread amongst residents, despite the considerable developmental achievements. Residents acknowledge the value of the public facilities that have been provided, but a level of dissatisfaction seems to remain amongst some residents. Three main negative perceptions or complaints seem to exist.

Firstly, residents contest the Trust's claim to representivity. A young Xhosa man who has lived in Vrygrond since 2006, as well as an elderly Xhosa lady who lived in Vrygrond as early as 1984, explained that many Xhosa residents feel that the Trust does not have an adequate mix of Coloured and Xhosa Trustees. This view has existed since the Sanco group left the Trust in the early years, with the Sanco group reportedly consisting predominantly of Xhosa residents. The Xhosa lady also felt that residents have similar objections against the primary school due to the staff body allegedly consisting of only a single Xhosa member of staff. The Trust website, however, explains that each classroom has a teacher as well as an assistant, with the aim being that all classes have access to both an Afrikaans speaking educator and a Xhosa speaking educator at all times, to enable secondary instruction in the learner's home language (Schrire, n.d.).

Two Coloured residents also complained of a lack of representivity, arguing that since the formation of the Trust there has never been an election to determine new Trustees. One argued, "government, gets reshuffled every four years, you know, *new* people. But this trust stays in control. *Since* I came to Vrygrond this Trust has been in control." The resident felt that new Trustees should be appointed only after engagement with the community through public meetings. The other resident, the former member of the Sanco group, complained that all the Trustees were ANC politicians. He felt there were too few Trustees for such a diverse settlement, and argued that the Trust needed to consist of 30 or more members, with the inclusion of not only politicians, but also representatives from church groups, youth groups, sports groups, and all the various other groups within the community. The former ward councilor also expressed concern that the Trust had chosen not to hold regular re-elections, and felt that this had hindered their claims to representivity in Vrygrond.

The second allegation that I came across was that Trustees had ulterior motives for their involvement with the Trust. While Trustees explained that they do not receive any payment from the Trust, some residents felt that Trustees receive greater access to economic opportunities than other residents. This perception seemed to be the result of residents, living in a persistent state of poverty, observing an improvement in the living conditions of certain Trustees during the course of their involvement. Trustees did view their involvement particularly in the formalization of Vrygrond as a source of learning, as they engaged with and learnt from various professionals. The complaint might perhaps be interpreted as a feeling of a lack of access to the benefits of the Trust.

An example of this is in a conflict that arose relating to admission into the primary school. There was a perception that children who had attended the Trust's crèche were more likely to be granted admission into the primary school. A member of staff at an NGO suggested that while this may well have been the case in the first couple of years of the school, she felt that admission into the school was unbiased; a view that was supported by a staff member at another NGO. The staff member, together with the Trustees, explained that parents had either not handed in applications for their children, or had done so after the closing date for applications. Nevertheless, the frustrations regarding a perceived lack of access to the school led to a protest in the street outside the primary school.

Finally, there was somewhat more widespread criticism of the lack of community engagement and participation in the Trust's processes. I encountered such criticisms from opponents of the Trust, but also from within the Trust itself. Trustees described debates between themselves and the chairman regarding the issue of public participation. The chairman argued that the Trust's approach should be one of focusing on securing the delivery of much-needed services to the community. He felt that once residents saw the positive outcomes of the Trust's actions, they would not oppose the Trust or their approach. Trustees described the chairman as being against public participation due to the problems that public meetings had caused in the past, with the ongoing presence of the small group of 'dissidents' who would take any opportunity to oppose the Trust and disrupt their processes. Similarly, the former ward councilor perceived that the change of approach from the Trust was "defensive", in response to the significant opposition that they had faced in the past. While two of the Trustees that I spoke to opposed this view, the third shared the chairman's views regarding the best approach for the Trust to take:

"In the past we *did have* community meetings, and most of that meetings was so unsuccessful because of that *same* group [...] That's why, we sometimes just did it. We realized, not to have [public meetings], because we're also a Trust, we're not an elected organization - we *don't* need to have community meetings. But we must just see that as our Trust Deed says, we must deliver to them."

One Trustee felt that the chairman's views had been influenced by having been threatened with a gun at a public meeting held one evening in Vrygrond. She felt strongly however, that in spite of such opposition, the Trust had a duty to consult and engage with the wider community: "It's not supposed to be like that. We are supposed to have it [public participation], whether the people are going to gun you down or not. For me it is, we are serving the people." Another Trustee was similarly critical of the Trust's approach. When I asked her about her opinion of public participation, she replied:

"Now, it should be so. We've never ever had a AGM. Never ever. We don't liaise with the community. If something is done it's just done and the community must just live with it. And that is why a lot of community members are not happy with the Trust, because nobody's being told what's going to happen. Lots of people don't know what these buildings are, standing here. And they would like to know because, before, this was a community, and the community wants to know, '*what's happening, who's this, who's that?*' Now in [the chairman's] mind it shouldn't be so."

The former Sanco member shared similar sentiments, and argued strongly throughout the interview that the Trust had a duty to consult with the community whom they were meant to be representing and serving. He lamented that while Vrygrond had been developed, it had been developed "without the knowledge of the people". He continued: "it's like, in the government now today, they say 'the people shall govern', ne? Now if you said the people shall govern, then anything that you do, you have to consult this community." For him, the Trust shares a democratic duty to the residents of Vrygrond, in the same way that a government has a responsibility to represent its citizens.

These frustrations have led the former Sanco member to seek to establish a 'Vrygrond Civic Association'. He believed that such a group, taking a position of greater participation and engagement with community members over issues concerning residents, would enable the community to overcome many of the hardships facing Vrygrond. He argued however, that the Trust was opposing the establishment of such a group.

Interestingly, a Trustee had similar but contrasting views of what was needed in Vrygrond. She felt that through the establishment of a 'Community Forum', Vrygrond residents would be empowered to begin to overcome problems such as crime and unemployment. When I asked the Trustee if she felt that this was a role that the Trust itself could fulfill, she replied:

"We don't have that much power. We don't have that much power that the forum will have. It's just by luck that [the chairman] knows people, or he's not afraid to pick up the phone or send an email. [...] Otherwise we don't have that much power, because it's the *community* that must talk. And the forum is the one that does it. The forum talks for the community."

'The forum talks for the community'. Her words signified something of the journey through which the Trust has travelled. Ironically, her own colleague had described the Trust as having been formed as "a mouth for the community". Yet, seventeen years later, after having endured tremendous opposition including the tragic death of two colleagues, the Trust has changed to the extent that new forms of community engagement are being called for. Despite an experience that has demonstrated many of the problems associated with participatory processes, and having seen the Trust develop valuable public facilities, she maintains the belief that through collaborating and engaging as a community, Vrygrond's problems can be solved.

#### **4. Non-Governmental Organizations**

Since the formalization of Vrygrond, there has been a considerable increase in the number of Non-Governmental Organizations operating in the settlement. A Trustee indicated that there were 18 NGOs currently operating, while the founder of one of the NGOs suggested that the number could be as high as 35. The ward councilor provided a third figure, stating that there are 44 NGOs. Through the presence of these NGOs, a wide variety of services and programmes are offered to residents, including education and child care for pre-school children, training and support for principals and teachers at existing ECD centers, educational support for high school learners, a training programme for high school leavers, home-based care for the elderly and for residents with HIV/AIDs, computer literacy programmes, urban agriculture, feeding schemes, skills development for income generation, and various others.

NGOs have established a number of buildings in Vrygrond where staff offices are located, and from where services and projects are run. The community center has become an important facility housing a number of NGOs, and includes an ECD center, a

food garden, a computer room, and a classroom from which the Communiversity NGO runs training programmes. While the community center was built by the iThafeni NGO through international donor funding, the ownership of the facility has since been transferred to the Trust, who lease out premises to NGOs. A small rental fee is charged, with income going towards maintenance costs on the building, facilitated by a group consisting of representatives from each NGO using the center. Another building currently being constructed is the Sozo Foundation Educentre, which will provide an educational support facility dedicated to high school learners. The facility is currently being built on Trust land to the East of the primary school, and is also funded predominantly through international donor funding.

Staff from the two NGOs that I engaged with, namely the Sozo Foundation and True North, both perceived a context of inadequate state-led service provision. NGOs enter the area after identifying a perceived need, and seek to provide services that meet these needs. One NGO staff member felt that NGOs were operating as a “voice for the community that has been marginalized” by state service delivery failure. In the house refurbishment program that she facilitates, she seeks to demonstrate to residents that “even though people and government is not really doing their role, [...] there is someone out there that does really care about you, that sees what you are going through”.

#### **4.1 Challenges**

NGOs in Vrygrond seem to face two main challenges. Firstly, NGOs spoke of a desire to increase the reach and the impact of their programmes and services. They used a rhetoric of ‘building trust’ and growing relationally through establishing and strengthening relationships with residents. NGOs seek to expand the reach of their services through word of mouth, making use of the social networks of existing beneficiaries. Engaging with residents, my own perception was that many residents do not have a widespread knowledge of the services being offered, or how residents might access them.

Additionally, both NGOs described facing some level of skepticism and mistrust from residents in the establishment of their NGO. One described having encountered what he considers a “normal level of skepticism” for a community that has seen numerous NGOs establish themselves before failing to deliver on promises. In engaging with residents, I came across examples of mistrust of local NGOs. One resident argued that NGOs are present because they see an ‘opportunity’ to benefit financially through establishing an

NGO. Another described an NGO that purchased a formal house and ran a soup kitchen for five months, before ceasing the programme to construct a double-storey building housing a church and a crèche – a decision that the resident interpreted to be driven by a pursuit of profit. This wariness of NGOs is reflected in Jensen et al's (2011) findings regarding the nature of social capital in Vrygrond, with very few residents drawing on formal structures of support, such as government officials, politicians, or NGOs.

The second challenge described by NGOs was that of securing funding for projects. The CEO of the Sozo Foundation explained how he sees most NGOs coming to be established: "In my experience most organizations start off with somebody having a dream, and not really having the money to do that. But they don't allow that to stop their dream." Indeed a notable proportion of the day-to-day activities of local NGOs seems to consist of fundraising activities, with projects and services depending on regular and consistent funding in order to be sustained. While some NGOs have been able to secure funding from various government departments, with an example being the subsidy for ECD centers from the Department of Social Development, much of the funding does seem to come from local and international corporate and non-corporate donors.

#### **4.2 Criticisms**

Aside from a low level of awareness and some skepticism and mistrust, the residents that I spoke to did not have any direct criticisms of the NGOs in the area. Trustees, however, described three areas of concern. Firstly, they felt that the services offered by NGOs were at times not widely accessible to residents, due to certain restrictions or selection criteria. One Trustee used an example of an NGO charging a R20 fee for the printing of a CV, a financial barrier that prevented access to the service for many unemployed residents. She also described a resident's complaint that the medical support offered by a church-based NGO was only available to residents who attended the church. She felt that such policies provided unnecessary barriers that contributed to the skepticism that some residents have for NGOs.

Another Trustee argued that the services offered do not adequately empower residents. She felt that the large number of NGOs operating in Vrygrond means that residents who hope to establish their own services and programmes are unable to compete. She also interpreted the problem as being influenced by race relations, as she felt that White people owning NGOs were reluctant to empower non-White residents to themselves

become an owner of an enterprise. She complained that due to their presence, “there’s no space for the *people of Vrygrond* to develop”.

Finally, Trustees identified the lack of integration and collaboration amongst NGOs as a problem. They felt that despite all being present in the community to bring about positive change, NGOs were unwilling to work together to achieve this, and were seeking to ‘build their own empire’. Both NGOs acknowledged that there is not a high level of communication and collaboration between different NGOs in Vrygrond. They felt that while at times this may be driven by NGOs feeling as though they are competing for the same sources of funding, they also felt that there were some fair and practical reasons. Staff members of True North explained that at times NGOs offer very different services and have differing area of expertise. The CEO of the Sozo Foundation similarly explained that collaboration might be beneficial when there is a level of commonality between NGOs over a particular issue or concern, however much of the time NGOs operate in an “intense and time-consuming environment”, and as such do not have time to attend meetings that do not have a specific reason or purpose. He felt that while it is disappointing if an NGO is unwilling to work with other NGOs, each should primarily be judged according to the positive change that they are bringing about in a community. Two examples do exist, however, of some steps being taken towards greater integration between NGOs. A Trustee has initiated a bi-annual meeting of all Vrygrond NGOs, and she hopes to see these meetings occur more frequently in the future. In another example, an NGO is developing a ‘research directory’ of all the services and programmes being offered by NGOs in Vrygrond, which will be made available to all NGOs.

Despite the various challenges and criticisms that do exist, there does seem to be a notable proportion of residents who see NGOs as a positive presence in Vrygrond. A former resident suggested that young people in particular see NGOs as offering “a doorway to freedom”, while another felt that NGOs were helping to meet the needs of residents. I also came across a number of residents who described having personally benefited greatly from the presence of NGOs in Vrygrond. One resident had learnt a number of different income generating skills including brick-making, sewing, fabric painting, and beadwork. She described the NGO that taught her brick-making as ‘her gift’, as their assistance allowed her to establish a business in which she sold bricks to Vrygrond residents for a number of years, for extensions to houses and for the construction of backyard dwellings. She was able to point out walls in her house, as well as in neighboring houses, that had been built with bricks that she had made. Another

resident similarly described having developed skills in building, plumbing, carpentry and electrics through an NGO prior to the formalization of Vrygrond – skills which helped him secure employment in years to come. Finally, many NGOs seek to employ local people wherever possible, and perhaps the strongest support for the presence of NGOs in Vrygrond came from those who were benefiting directly through employment.

## **5. Conclusion**

In this chapter I have described the experiences of the three key actors or groups of actors driving development in Vrygrond: the Government, the Trust, and NGOs. Each has been involved in the provision of various improvements in the settlement, from the development of physical assets such as houses, schools, and infrastructure, to various services such as childcare, educational support, and skills development. Vrygrond has proven to be a challenging context for developmental work in many ways.

The government has achieved widespread access to basic services such as electricity, water and sanitation, as well as having provided housing subsidies that enabled the provision of housing to qualifying residents. Despite this, residents are critical of the government, while NGOs feel as though they are providing services in a context of inadequate state service provision. In-migration has placed existing infrastructure under strain, with residents complaining of infrastructure failures as well as a poor response from municipal officials. A context of informality presents challenges for government departments as well as for residents, with non-payment of municipal rates constituting a cost for the municipality, and residents struggling to comply with government legislation and policies due to the realities of their context. Various forms of illegality and criminality also constitute a challenge for the state, with the development of a taxi rank having been shrouded in taxi violence and disruptions for residents. While there has at times been evidence of public participation in the government's development processes, residents that I engaged with were largely unaware of such processes and none had attended any public meetings.

The Trust was formed with the intention of functioning as a representative community body, and was tasked with overseeing the delivery of formal housing, as well as the development of parcels of land to the benefit of the community. Through the course of the housing development and in the following years, the Trust endured significant opposition from a group of residents within the community, which saw the organization shift from its original approach of public participation, community engagement, and

mediation. A number of public facilities have been delivered to residents, and are benefiting some Vrygrond residents. However support for the Trust does not seem to be widespread, with residents criticizing the lack of community engagement, and contesting the organization's claims to representivity.

Finally, a number of NGOs operating in Vrygrond provide a range of services to residents. Many NGOs obtained land from the Trust, and operate through donor funding. NGOs described encountering some level of wariness and skepticism from residents, which they seek to overcome through an approach of building trust and growing relationally. While many residents do value the presence of NGOs in the communities, various criticisms exist including the perception that NGOs use residents to secure funding, and that the services offered are inaccessible to some residents.

# Chapter 6: Interpretation



## **Chapter 6: Interpretation**

### **1. Introduction**

In this chapter I relate the findings of the case study to the research problem. While the previous chapter sought primarily to describe the nature of development in Vrygrond since 1997, I now turn towards interpreting the case, developing causal links between the nature of the context, the strategies adopted for development, and the physical and social outcomes of development interventions. To do this, I draw upon the three planning frameworks described in the literature review, each varying in the nature and extent of public participation within planning processes. I seek to develop a two-way conversation between the case and the theory, asking how the theory might explain the experiences of Vrygrond, and how the ongoing development of the settlement might provide insight, illustration and clarification for the three planning theories. A key finding of the dissertation so far has been that the current state planning system is playing a minor role in the development of Vrygrond, with the ward councilor, the Trust, and local NGOs being far more prominent actors. Thus, an important question that I ask in the chapter is how planning theory might be used to enable urban planners to be more effective in contributing to positive change in Vrygrond. In terms of the structure of the chapter, I apply each planning theory in turn, namely technocratic planning, communicative and collaborative planning, and co-production, identifying and evaluating the assumptions underlying each approach. I argue that the case supports existing criticisms of technocratic and communicative/collaborative planning, and that co-production, while being likely to encounter certain obstacles relating to the nature of the context, would provide numerous benefits to a disempowered community that is lacking access to public facilities.

### **2. Technocratic planning**

In this section I firstly explore the two main assumptions underlying technocratic planning, that professional planners are able to objectively advance the 'public good', and that planners have the expertise to comprehensively plan for complex urban environments, in relation to the context of Vrygrond. I then argue that technocratic planning has persisted in South Africa's planning system despite reforms that have sought to ensure participation and flexibility. Finally, I describe the ways in which technocratic planning has produced various forms of structural violence for residents living in a context of informality.

## **2.1. Assumptions underlying technocratic planning**

*Assumption 1: Planners are able to objectively determine the 'public good'*

Technocratic planning assumes that planning is a technical rather than a political process, and that the professional expertise of the planner allows him or her to objectively determine courses of action that will advance the public good. In Vrygrond, there are numerous examples of instances in which the notion of a 'singular public' simply does not hold. Perhaps the strongest example is in the formalization of Vrygrond: one would expect that if any course of action were to be in the interest of a community, the delivery of formal houses, infrastructure and services would be. Yet the history of the settlement reveals that some resisted the formalization, for reasons such as a desire to maintain a position of power in the community and a desire to continue agricultural land uses that would not be possible in a formal settlement. Furthermore, for many residents who did not qualify for a housing subsidy, formalization would see them needing to either relocate to a new area, or to assume a more marginal position in the community as a backyard dweller, paying rent to formal homeowners. In this way, it is clear that even a seemingly uncontested decision such as the delivery of formal houses, can serve the interests of some, while marginalizing others. The resistance to the formalization of Crossroads in Cape Town in 1998, described by Watson (2003), mirrors the experiences of the contested development of Vrygrond. A second example is in emergence of various disputed land-uses such as the operation of scrapyards and small-scale livestock farms. With zoning restrictions not being widely enforced in Vrygrond, residents have been able to benefit from increased household incomes through leasing backyard dwellings and operating informal home-based businesses, however certain informal land-uses have become a source of disagreement between residents with conflicting interests.

*Assumption 2: Planners have the expertise to comprehensively plan for complex urban environments*

The second assumption, that scientific knowledge, models and techniques have the capacity to comprehensively plan for complex urban environments, also seems problematic in the context of Vrygrond. We have seen that problems with the accuracy of official databases have contributed to the inadequate provision of public facilities in Vrygrond. The population of Vrygrond is likely to be more than twice the figure of 18499 recorded in the 2011 census, with residents of informal and backyard dwellings perhaps being under-represented in the data. Vrygrond has only one primary school, built by the Trust using international donor funding, despite guidelines in an official

document of the Western Cape provincial government (Western Cape, 2012) that would call for the provision of numerous primary and secondary schools in a settlement of 50000 or more. Secondly, Vrygrond is serviced by a police station located some distance away in Muizenberg, and does not have a dedicated SAPS facility despite residents' complaints of widespread crime. We have seen that fear of retribution from perpetrators as well as a lack of faith and trust in state policing means that residents are at times reluctant to report crime events. The provincial government uses official crime statistics to make decisions regarding the provision of police stations, and therefore crime in settlements such as Vrygrond may well be under-represented in official data due to crime going unreported. The case has shown that 'official' databases are clearly not infallible, and arguably need to be verified through more detailed knowledge of local dynamics and contextual factors.

## **2.2. Participation and technocracy in South Africa's planning system**

Critiques of technocratic planning saw the emergence of various competing and divergent planning theories in the global North, yet in the global South, the approach remains entrenched and persistent in the state planning systems of many countries (Watson, 2009). In opposition to Innes' (1995) claim of an emerging "new paradigm" of communicative/collaborative planning, Huxley and Yiftachel (2000: 335) similarly argued that "if a planning paradigm does exist, it is probably in the taken-for-granted status of various kinds of technical rationality that still inform most daily practice." With urban contexts of the South having undergone rapid change in recent decades, many planning systems align poorly with the realities of urban contexts. Such planning systems are at best ineffective and at worst, directly discriminatory against the poor, due to modernist ideals that disproportionately serve the interests of capitalist developers over the needs of poorer residents (Watson, 2009).

While South Africa's planning system has undergone various reforms in post-apartheid years that have sought to bring about a more flexible and participatory form of planning, technocratic and top-down planning continues to be the dominant approach. Rigid master-plans have been replaced with more flexible strategic spatial plans, in the form of municipal SDFs produced as part of the Integrated Development Planning process. Developmental control remains a key tool, albeit with zoning schemes that allow for some greater flexibility in land use, such as mixed-use zones and the aforementioned incremental housing (SR2) residential zoning (City of Cape Town, 2013). Public participation has been promoted within the IDP process, however the mechanisms for

participation have come under criticism (Oldfield, 2008; Paradza et al, 2010; Watson, 2009). Public participation is most commonly enabled through making planning documents publically available for comment, however many citizens may lack the capacity to engage with such material. Oldfield (2008: 489) argues that case study research has found public participation in the IDP process to be “superficial” and “limited”. By ‘formalizing’ and ‘normalizing’ participation into ‘official’ channels, the everyday forms of community organizing and engagement in poorer communities become marginal (Oldfield, 2008). Participation in service delivery has been influenced by a political imperative for efficient and rapid delivery, resulting in participation more closely resembling ‘customer consultation’; residents have little influence on actual decision-making processes underlying service delivery (Oldfield, 2008). The case of Vrygrond provides an interesting example of this form of participation in service delivery, in which the ward councilor engaged with households primarily to ensure the efficient implementation of a desired sanitation intervention. The councilor used public participation to persuade residents of the benefits of the provision of portable flush toilets to each household, certainly a laudable intervention in many ways, and regarded the process successful in that it helped prevent the occurrence of public protests relating to portable flush toilets as a sanitation solution in Overcome Heights, which occurred in many other settlements in Cape Town. Public participation therefore served to enable the efficient implementation of a certain form of service delivery, rather than serving to guide the decision-making regarding appropriate sanitation services.

South Africa’s Developmental Local Government approach envisions ward councilors acting as a source of local knowledge that might ensure that public policies meet local needs. Paradza et al (2010) has found criticism of the public representation role of ward councilors to be widespread in various regions of the country. Ward councilors frequently lack the capacity to fulfill their role, and are limited in the extent to which they are able to influence decision-making, due to centralized decision-making structures (Paradza et al, 2010). The problems relating to developmental local government and existing formal participatory processes mean that planning policy documents are produced with an incomplete understanding of local realities. This may well have contributed to the ineffectiveness of planning policy documents in guiding and contributing to local community development in Vrygrond, with key actors such as the ward councilor and NGOs viewing planning policies as more obstructive than constructive.

### **2.3. Technocratic planning as a source of structural violence for the poor**

In other countries planning has served to further marginalize the poor, particularly those living in contexts of informality, for private land ownership is not a reality (Watson, 2009). While South Africa's Constitution affords greater rights to residents of informal settlements than in many other countries, we have seen that various forms of informality in Vrygrond have nevertheless contributed to residents facing problems of compliance with formal policies and processes. The case study has described instances in which residents seeking to comply with laws and policies have struggled to do so as a direct consequence of the realities of their informal context. Examples include principals of ECD centers being unable to access state subsidies due to an inability to secure planning and zoning approval, as well as residents struggling to legally buy and sell formal and informal houses. One resident explained that the vast majority of residents in Vrygrond have extended their small formal houses without obtaining planning permission, and for her, a fear of non-compliance exists as a source of insecurity. She described how she is "trying to get out of the 'hokkie' [small informal dwelling], into where the children can each have their room, where I can have my own private bathroom [...] But now at the end of the day, what do I do, what do we do if the inspector comes around? [...] Does the inspector have the right to come and throw your house off?" The lack of alignment between official laws and policies can therefore be seen as a source of direct and indirect structural violence for residents living in informal contexts.

In this way, a technocratic approach to planning can be seen to serve residents of formal suburbs more favorably than those for whom informality is a reality that prevents compliance with formal policies, with direct and indirect negative consequences for residents. I argue that even in a context like South Africa where the planning system has undergone various reforms towards a more participatory and strategic form of planning, an approach that remains strongly technocratic is likely to struggle to address the needs of local residents in a low-income settlement such as Vrygrond, and therefore a new approach is needed if planning is to play a stronger role in producing development that meets the needs of the poor.

### **3. Communicative and collaborative planning**

#### **3.1. Assumptions underlying communicative and collaborative planning**

In communicative and collaborative approaches to planning, planners engage directly with those who are affected by a planning decision, determining future courses of action collectively through a co-operative search for truth involving discourse, argumentation and debate. In this section I explore four underlying assumptions in relation to the context of Vrygrond: that Communicative discourse can be fully inclusive; that Power differences can be 'neutralized' during communicative discourse; that differences between participants "occur only at the level of speech or ideas" (Watson, 2011: 135); and that Social change can be achieved through communicative action without the need for strategic action.

*Assumption 1: Communicative discourse can be fully inclusive, with no affected parties being excluded*

Communicative action requires that all affected parties are included in discourse (Flyvbjerg, 1998). This assumes that all parties will be able and willing to participate in communicative discourse. In Vrygrond, however, participation in local development processes seems to have been limited, both historically as well as in more recent years. The chairman described residents as being largely "apathetic" during the formalization of Vrygrond, with low attendance at public meetings relating to the development (Schrire, n.d.). While some residents may well be apathetic, I would argue that the reasons that residents have for not participating go deeper than a simple 'disinterest' in local development. Firstly, residents have entrenched memories of the violent conflict that characterized the formalization of Vrygrond. In a number of interviews residents explained that they do not wish to involve themselves in 'local politics' – while many felt that they did not have a great deal of knowledge regarding the process that led to the formalization of Vrygrond, they were aware that the process was steeped in conflict and disputes that saw two murders, as well as people going to prison. Participation is therefore seen as risky and potentially harmful in Vrygrond, and affected parties may well be unwilling to engage in a communicative process.

A second important factor contributing to limited participation is the widespread belief that such processes are unlikely to result in physical outcomes such as the delivery of desired services and facilities. Residents as well as NGOs share a rhetoric of 'broken promises' regarding state-led service delivery, with many seeing participation in public meetings as largely futile. Indeed the increasing housing backlog in Cape Town is an apt

illustration of the limited capacity of the state. Robins et al (2008: 1079) view “deliberative spaces” that lack the capacity for service delivery as being “empty”, and argue that in such instances deliberation may be primarily “palliative”, providing the state with “a way of deflecting social energy from protest.” The authors argue, “It is wishful thinking to imagine that people struggling to survive would ‘participate’ simply for the love and virtue of participating” (Robins et al, 2008: 1078). Residents participate as a means to an end rather than as an end in itself, and therefore in contexts such as Vrygrond where the state has consistently struggled to provide services and facilities beyond the level of basic needs, residents may well be unwilling to engage in communicative discourse.

*Assumption 2: Power differences can be ‘neutralized’ during communicative discourse, and so power relations will not be deterministic*

Perhaps the most problematic assumption underlying communicative and collaborative approaches to planning is that power differences between participants can be ‘neutralized’ for the duration of discourse, such that only ‘the force of the better argument’ prevails (Flyvbjerg, 1998). Critics have questioned whether this is possible, and have argued that without a more detailed conception of power, power relations are likely to be deterministic in deliberative processes, hindering planning’s transformative goals. Flyvbjerg (1998) provides a particularly strong argument in favor of a Foucaultian conception of power as relational and therefore inalienable. For Foucault, power arises and is enacted only in the relationships between actors. The Habermasian desire to neutralize power for the duration of dialogue is therefore seen as an impossibility by theorists with a Foucaultian conception of power. I would argue that a view of power as relational and inalienable explains the nature of conflict in Vrygrond far better than Habermas’ understanding of power as something that can be ‘left at the door’ during communicative discourse. In Vrygrond, power dynamics seem to be closely intertwined with identity. Many of the conflicts that exist in Vrygrond have a racial element, and are influenced by historical race relations. Examples include criticisms that the Trust consists of a disproportionate number of Coloured members, that NGOs preserve positions of power for White employees and disempower non-White residents, and that the ward councilor reserves preferential treatment for residents of his own race. Another source of power is in one’s history in relation to the settlement. Long-time residents of Vrygrond, with historical and familial ties to the area, at times seem to feel that they have more legitimate claims to the settlement than those who have arrived more recently. An example is in the assertion of a Trustee that, while a particular

resident has occupied state-owned land just beyond the boundary of Vrygrond to establish a small-scale livestock farm, the Trust would resist his eviction should it occur, because the resident was a member of the Old Vrygrond community and has practiced livestock farming for many years. Such a view contributes to the more marginal position of foreign nationals in the community, with the majority having lived in Vrygrond for a considerably shorter period of time. With power being so closely related to the identity of residents, neutralizing power relations during communicative discourse is a considerable challenge, and is likely to be impossible. Rather, power dynamics associated with race and ethnicity should be considered a 'stubborn reality', to use Yiftachel's (2006) term, of the post-apartheid South African context.

Even if power can be neutralized for the purposes of dialogue to reach a consensus, the implementation of outcomes of communicative action occurs in a pluralist political context in which power exists as an important factor impacting on the implementation of interventions. This means that a consensus reached inside the meeting room may struggle for legitimacy outside a meeting room, where power is rife and strategic action is the norm. In Vrygrond, some of the most powerful people in the community are those who are engaged in criminality. Gang bosses and drug lords occupy a physical space in the community, and express their considerable power spatially through acts of violence. With participation commonly taking the form of formal and rational dialogue, influenced by virtuous notions of democracy and citizenship, actors operating in modes of criminality and illegality are not directly included in discourse. They nevertheless remain powerful actors determining whether the agreements reached in deliberative processes can be translated into a physical outcome in the community.

*Assumption 3: Differences between participants 'occur only at the level of speech or ideas'*  
Watson (2011: 135) identifies an assumption underlying communicative planning that "differences between actors occur only at the level of speech or ideas and can be overcome through argumentation". This relates to the requirement of Habermas' discourse ethics that participants are able and willing to "empathize with each other's validity claims" (Flyvbjerg, 1998: 188). In Vrygrond, we have frequently seen that differences on grounds such as race, ethnicity, and political affiliation can result in participants being reluctant to accept the legitimacy of the claims of those from another group. Contestation within participatory processes relates to the content under debate, but is also bound up in group conflicts and power dynamics. Residents care about *what* is being discussed, but also *who* is discussing it. Thus, the assumption of 'universal

citizenship' (Watson, 2011: 135) in which all participants act as individual rights-bearing citizens, may be untenable in a global South context such as Vrygrond. The description of the chairman of the Trust's early efforts to establish a community organization consisting of representatives from the two conflicting groups of community leaders, illustrates this challenge. He describes a number of meetings between the RDP Forum members and the Sanco group, held by the Quaker Peace mediation group, in which "The discussion was never about the nature of the housing development or its progress. It was always about the individuals involved." (Schrire, n.d.). Thus, the reality seems far from Habermas' 'ideal speech situation' in which the content of the debate is emphasized over the identities and relationships amongst participants.

Furthermore, participants may be willing to engage with each other, but may encounter 'conflicting rationalities', in which significantly differing worldviews act as a barrier to engagement (Watson, 2003). The problems relating to the lack of articulation between government policies and the prevailing context of informality is an example from the case that illustrates the clash of rationalities between a state, seeking to govern populations, and poor communities seeking to survive in 'harsh' urban environments in the global South (Watson, 2003: 401). The relationship between the chairman and the Trustees, and indeed with the broader community, reflects some degree of cultural difference that may at times have been an obstacle. For the chairman, the Trust's primary objective is to provide much needed facilities to the community, while at times residents on the Trust and in the wider community expected a stronger civic or governmental role from the organization.

*Assumption 4: Social change can be achieved through communicative action, without the need for strategic action*

A final assertion of Habermasian communicative planning is that participants should engage openly and transparently, and should desist from 'strategic action' (Flyvbjerg, 1998). According to Outhwaite (1996: 20), Habermas views "the latently strategic action of those who enter a discourse with an ulterior purpose" as "deviant and pathological". He thus proposes a form of engagement in which individual interests are set aside in favor of the common good, established through cooperative discourse (Purcell, 2009). This assertion assumes that communicative discourse has the capacity to produce social change; however, as I have argued above, an inadequate conception of power means that existing power relations are likely to be deterministic, and a communicative rationality may be unable to produce social change. Purcell (2009) argues that groups

that occupy a marginal position in unequal societies rely on strategic action as a political tool with which to uplift themselves (Purcell, 2009). Desisting from strategic action therefore sees disempowered groups resigned to their own marginalization. In Vrygrond, residents seem to draw from a heritage of community activism in which strategic action is central. Prior to the formalization of Vrygrond, community leaders mobilized the community to protest against the proposed development of Capricorn Business Park. Residents were in fact in favor of the proposed development, hoping that it would increase access to jobs, but used a formal objection as a means of leveraging access to formal housing (Schrire, n.d.). In the emergence of Overcome Heights, backyard dwellers in Vrygrond reportedly relocated to the road reserve as a means of increasing their visibility to the state, with the hopes of increasing access to formal housing and services. Finally, in the lead up to the development of the Vrygrond taxi rank, taxi operators seemed to employ various strategies to put pressure on the state to deliver the facility, including asking an NGO, for whom the location of the informal taxi rank was problematic, to write a letter to the municipality requesting the provision of a formal taxi rank in a more suitable location. Clearly strategic action and protest constitute an important aspect of the citizenship practiced in Vrygrond, and have been viable means of securing the delivery of services from the state. Communicative planning requires a more passive and compliant form of citizenship that may negate the existing active form of citizenship through community activism that, while being predominantly oppositional, may better serve residents in securing services from the state.

These assumptions mean that, in the context of Vrygrond, communicative and collaborative approaches to planning are likely to be inadequate to deal with a community that is characterized by various power relations, social and cultural difference that at times produces division and tension, and a history of conflict and violence. Furthermore, the imposition of a certain form of compliant, individualistic, rationalistic and civic-minded citizenship may align poorly with the existing citizenship that is influenced by a heritage of community activism in which opposition and protest play an important role. This existing form of community activism has proven successful in securing access to services in the past, but also presents challenges to key actors driving development in Vrygrond, who encounter residents that are at times mistrusting and critical of development interventions. Here, communicative planning theory may provide some valuable insight into the context of Vrygrond, by drawing attention to 'communication distortions' (Habermas, 1981) and 'misinformation' (Forester, 1989).

Many of the conflicts arise from incomplete understandings or competing interpretations of the nature of development interventions, as well as of the objectives and motives of key actors. While seeking to achieve a universal and complete level of understanding amongst participants is likely to be unfeasible, communicative planning theory's emphasis on communicative acts does help identify misinformation and misunderstanding as problems hindering development efforts in Vrygrond.

#### **4. Co-production**

The strengths of co-production align well with areas of need in Vrygrond, and therefore could be a valuable approach. In this section I firstly describe these strengths, before asking the question of whether the establishment of the Vrygrond Community Development Trust could be considered a co-production approach. I then relate two underlying assumptions, that Residents will be willing and able to engage in co-production, and that the institutional arrangements needed for co-production will be possible, to the case of Vrygrond. Lastly, I present crime and rapid in-migration as two areas that need to be explored in more detail in relation to co-production.

##### **4.1. The strengths of co-production**

Mitlin's (2008: 339) positioning of co-production as a route to greater "political influence" and increased access to resources and services, makes the approach particularly relevant to Vrygrond. Much of the discontent that exists amongst Vrygrond residents arises from a perceived powerlessness in the face of persistent and pervasive negative forces of poverty, unemployment, a lack of access to good quality public facilities, and widespread crime and violence. In various ways and extents, residents complained that service providers in Vrygrond, be it local politicians, municipal officials, the police, Trustees or NGOs, were limited in their willingness and ability to meet the considerable local needs in the settlement. Residents acknowledged and accepted the various benefits provided through development interventions, but seemed to share a common frustration with the inability to overcome a state of poverty and disempowerment. Thus residents suffer a physical lack of facilities such as schools, clinics and police stations, but also a symbolic marginalization in society. If co-production can indeed provide a means by which local communities can increase access to services while strengthening their organizational and political base, as Mitlin (2008) proposes, then the approach could be well-placed to address the feelings of disempowerment and marginalization that seem to exist amongst Vrygrond residents,

as well as the limited capacity of the state for service delivery, as demonstrated by the City of Cape Town's growing housing backlog.

The promotion of local autonomy and "norms of self-rule" (Roy, 2009b: 160) presents another considerable potential benefit in the context of Vrygrond, in enabling a more constructive and productive engagement with the state. Rather than negating and marginalizing the already existing forms of active citizenship and community activism in a community, as is the case in South Africa's system of developmental local government in which public participation is narrowed into 'official' and 'formal' channels (Oldfield, 2008), co-production fosters local autonomy and opens up new means of engaging with the state (Mitlin, 2008). In Vrygrond, residents do not seem to participate widely in 'official' channels, but the history of the settlement presents various examples of residents engaging strategically with local authorities to secure access to land and services. Many low-income settlements in South Africa are able to draw from a rich heritage of community activism, having actively resisted and opposed the state in various ways during the apartheid years. Robins et al (2008: 1071) argue that such political strategies employed by the poor are often overlooked in "the wishful literature on civil society", where "the normative so overshadows the empirical that it comes to eclipse any sustained account of the 'uncivil' tendencies within 'civil society'" (Robins et al, 2008: 1071). While this oppositional form of citizenship is more problematic for the state than the form of citizenship envisioned in Western liberal democracies and promoted globally through the 'good governance' agenda, I would argue that it nevertheless exists as a form of (somewhat latent) social capital that is not adequately utilized. Furthermore, one often hears the idea that the South African government's post-apartheid policies of mass state-led service delivery have created a passive and complacent citizenry; a view supported by both the current and former ward councilors. While such a view may or may not hold truth, co-production presents a means of harnessing and directing social capital and community activism towards cooperative and productive engagements with the state.

The opening up of new spaces of governance in which local communities have greater autonomy may also enable a more inclusive form of participation for foreign nationals. Jensen et al (2011) have shown that foreign nationals have almost no engagement with government officials, relying strongly on informal social networks including religious groups. Community-led forms of governance and participation may have greater potential to include foreign nationals than formal state-led approaches, particularly if

there are foreign nationals living in the settlement without legal immigration permits, for whom engaging with the state might be considered too much of a risk.

#### **4.2. The Vrygrond Community Development Trust: An example of co-production?**

The formalization of Vrygrond through the establishment of the Trust involved certain elements of a co-production approach. The development occurred through a partnership between the state and the community, with the state providing the funding through the Housing Subsidy Scheme. Residents who were Trustees were involved in the planning and design of the development, collaborating with built environment professionals, local politicians and government officials in a 'working group', in which decisions regarding the development were made. During the planning stages, Trustees travelled to the suburb of Wesbank to see physical examples of the houses that were to be built, much like SDIs use of 'learning exchanges' and physical models. During the construction itself, many of the laborers employed were Vrygrond residents.

By applying a co-production framework, however, we can see that a number of key differences exist, which provide some insight into factors that may have contributed to the opposition faced by Trustees during and after the development. Firstly, while community leaders were instrumental in securing access to housing, the state devised and initiated the specific approach of establishing a Trust to oversee the delivery of houses as well as the ongoing development of parcels of land in the settlement. The state therefore had some control over various aspects of the project, as well as providing all of the funding. Furthermore, the project did not achieve the direct involvement of the wider community, rather relying on the Trust to act as a small representative group, liaising with the state and feeding information back to residents at public meetings. While SDI seeks to partner with organized groups of residents and established community organizations, in Vrygrond such a group needed to be formed, and consisted of a fragile alliance between two groups of opposing community leaders, mediated by the chairman. While co-production sees a more widespread involvement of residents in various strategies and activities with commitment being reinforced through mechanisms such as saving schemes, the Vrygrond development therefore involved only a small group residents tasked with representing a diverse community. Where co-production involves a broad involvement of organized and committed residents of a community, the Vrygrond development came to be characterized by conflicts and power struggles between specific community leaders. These issues limited the extent to which

the formalization of Vrygrond could increase the political influence of the community, while the small number of residents directly involved in the process reduced the extent to which the design of the development could benefit from detailed local knowledge.

Another key difference is that, while co-production involves voluntary participation for residents, while in Vrygrond, the qualification criteria of the Housing Subsidy Scheme determined which residents would qualify as beneficiaries. Furthermore, employment in the construction of houses was offered to some but not all residents. These inequalities in access to housing and to employment became a further source of considerable conflict, with certain residents feeling excluded from accessing the benefits of the development.

Finally, while co-production presents the opportunity for residents to access greater political influence and to practice a constructive and active form of citizenship, the Trust has increasingly reframed its role since the development towards that of a charity or NGO focusing on community development projects. The turn towards a non-participatory, project-centered approach was no doubt a realistic and rational response to the appalling violent opposition that the Trust has experienced in the past, and has seen the achievement of outstanding development projects such as Capricorn Primary School, but has also maintained the role of residents as one of passive recipients of services and developments. Thus the political empowerment promised by Mitlin's (2008) co-production has not been realized. The Trust has in many ways become like a localized sphere of government in Vrygrond, with residents expecting the same democratic processes and accountability of the Trust, as would be expected of government. Opposition for the Trust may also be seen as a clash of expectations, with Trustees seeing themselves as a charity or NGO, and some residents seeing the Trust as a more typical representative community organization, framing their expectations of the responsibilities and processes of the Trust accordingly.

### **4.3. Assumptions underlying co-production**

The co-production approach presents a form of state-citizen engagement over local planning and development issues that promises much in terms of favorable outcomes. The approach seems well suited to some of the specific contextual challenges that exist in Vrygrond. In this final section of the chapter I turn towards evaluating the feasibility of employing co-production in the development of Vrygrond, identifying and testing

some assumptions underlying the approach. I argue that the case of Vrygrond raises some important challenges for co-production that have as yet received limited attention in the literature.

*Assumption 1: Residents will be willing and able to “engage collectively and individually ... to improve their material and political conditions” (Watson, 2014: 9)*

This assumption involves two aspects; firstly that residents will be willing to provide various inputs into service delivery, and secondly, that residents will be willing to work collectively to do so. I deal with each in turn below.

In a context in which national policies have entrenched an expectation of the state as being the provider of services and facilities, the willingness of residents to contribute time, labor, or funds to service provision should not be assumed. Robins et al (2009: 1077-1078) have criticized the assertion that poor communities should be required to ‘participate’ with the state to secure services, when “middle-class people have the luxury of exit, the empowered consumer-citizens who can purchase what the state fails to deliver to them.” In this view, the requirement that poor people should not just participate, but should in fact make physical contributions to service delivery, may seem unfair.

The central project of Robins et al (2008), however, is to ground notions of citizenship and civil society in the actual everyday practices of the poor, rather than on normative theories that have emerged from Western liberal societies. The authors emphasize that the everyday political practices of the poor respond to immediate needs of survival, rather than virtuous notions of citizenship. Therefore communities draw on a form of “tactical bricolage” in which contradictory strategies of “clientelism”, “rights-based citizenship claims”, compliance and protest are used simultaneously and opportunistically (Watson, 2014: 9). Similarly, Watson (2003; 2006: 38) warns that “the materially and culturally determined survival strategies of a rapidly growing urban poor” constitute a legitimate rationality that may clash with the notions of ‘proper’ urban environments and ‘proper’ citizens held by the government. The authors, along with Oldfield (2008) and Thorn and Oldfield (2011), share a project of reconstituting notions of citizenship in poor communities in terms of the immediate needs of securing access to services, facilities and resources. Co-production, which has a “starting assumption that the poor know best how to live in poverty” (Watson, 2014: 9), is a

needs-based strategy that is pragmatic and practical, and is able to increase access to services in a context where the state is failing to deliver. If residents accept that state-led service delivery is not imminent, then co-production may well be accepted as a viable approach whereby immediate needs can be met.

It is worth noting that, in contrast to some informal settlements, Vrygrond has widespread access to basic services, albeit with some problems of reliability. The needs faced by residents relate more to a lack of economic opportunities, as well as a shortage of facilities such as schools, clinics, and police stations. While co-production has been used successfully as a means of accessing services and infrastructure, and could certainly contribute to some of the infrastructural problems facing residents as well as bringing social and political benefits, problems of economic growth and access to facilities are larger in scale and may be more challenging for co-production.

Regarding the willingness of residents in a community to work collectively in co-production strategies, issues of power, conflict, and difference are significant. We have seen that Mitlin's (2008) co-production involves a consideration of power relations between the state and communities, with the political empowerment of marginalized communities being a key aspect, however power and conflict within communities has not yet been considered (Watson, 2014). The case of Vrygrond demonstrates how significant conflict within a community can be in relation to development efforts. The murder of two community leaders during the formalization of Vrygrond remain entrenched in the collective memory of the community, and result in many residents being unwilling to be involved in existing forms of public participation. Political affiliation, as well as racial and ethnic difference, have at times hindered development efforts. While opposition of the Trust has died down, it is still not widely accepted as a body that is representative of all Vrygrond residents, and the organization has itself moved away from this objective. As such, there is not currently a large, unified, and organized group or organization that an NGO such as SDI could partner with for the purposes of co-production.

Certain elements of co-production may help reduce conflict. For example the approach has a lesser reliance on individual leaders and representative, rather seeking the inclusion of larger groups of residents, and also involves an approach of "learning by doing" with "less reliance on talk and debate" (Watson, 2014: 11; McFarlane, 2011). However the existence of difference and division in the community, as well as power

struggles between groups of community leaders, may hinder the willingness of residents to work collectively.

*Assumption 2: The institutional arrangements needed for co-production will not prevent implementation*

Co-production relies on various institutional arrangements in order to achieve a partnership between the state and communities for service provision. With co-production potentially resulting in various shifts in power, existing authorities may be unwilling to engage in approaches that might reduce their power base. Mitlin (2008: 351) explains that “an autonomous organizing capacity can be seen as a threat by those in power, in part because it adds to the ability of local grassroots organizations to secure outcomes that favor the poor, sometimes with costs for political elites.” Governments may however be willing to engage in co-production in the context of a recognized lack of capacity for state-led service delivery (Watson, 2014). The City of Cape Town (2014c) has publically acknowledged the current lack of capacity to keep pace with the growth in Cape Town’s population through in-migration, with the housing backlog growing despite a large-scale housing program in the municipality. This may increase the likelihood of the municipality accepting co-production as a means of promoting greater access to housing and services. Furthermore, co-production was included in the national government’s Reconstruction and Development Programme, with the People’s Housing Process enabling communities to construct their own dwellings using state-subsidized building materials (Mitlin, 2008). A legal precedent does therefore exist, and further policies supporting co-production are possible.

It is important to remember that the state is non-unitary, and consists of various individual state actors whose actions and decision-making collectively constitute that which we consider ‘governance’. In their reflection on a contested land occupation in the informal settlement of Zille Raine Heights, Cape Town, Thorn and Oldfield (2011) demonstrate that state actors can be experienced inconsistently and contradictorily by local communities. Thus co-production requires that the various state actors that collectively constitute the state willingly cooperate with a co-production approach. In South Africa, the government consists of separate local, provincial and national spheres. While local government may agree to the approach, provincial or national policies or laws relating to the delivery of housing, services and infrastructure may determine the extent to which co-production strategies are possible. Thus, widespread adoption of co-

production in government urban planning systems would likely require considerable further reform at a national level (Watson, 2014). Locally, Siame (2013) has demonstrated that ward councilors can be influential in determining the scope for co-production, with the ward councilor acting as a 'gatekeeper' to development in the case of Langrug, Stellenbosch. Co-production therefore requires that local state actors are willing to accommodate development approaches that fall outside of existing 'official' state-led systems and policies.

#### **4.4. Further considerations for co-production**

The Vrygrond case study highlights two additional issues that present a challenge to a co-production approach. Firstly, we have seen that crime and violence is pervasive in the settlement, and affects the everyday lives of residents. Criminals including gangsters and drug dealers occupy a physical presence in Vrygrond, and are in many ways part of the community, living alongside and exerting control over other residents. Criminal actors and groups are excluded from official governance spaces, but nevertheless impact on the governance context of the settlement. For many residents, local gang bosses and taxi bosses constitute some of the most powerful people in the community. The taxi violence is an example of how local development and the delivery of public facilities can be negatively influenced by criminal activities. Abella-Colak and Guarneros-Meza (2014) present the findings of research into local governance in Medellin, Colombia, and demonstrate that criminal groups in the low-income areas of the city have been able to benefit from local participatory governance processes, impacting on the nature of governance and the possibilities for participation. Criminal groups used various tactics such as the intimidation of residents participating in local community organizing and participatory budgeting to gain access to state resources. While organized crime in Medellin is likely to be even more entrenched and widespread than in Vrygrond, the case nevertheless demonstrates that crime must be considered when designing and instituting participatory forms of governance. It is possible that local criminal groups could use similar strategies in an effort to use co-production activities to secure resources and to increase their power in the community.

Lastly, the case of Vrygrond raises the question of how co-production strategies might be influenced by rapid population growth and demographic change. Co-production involves an institutional arrangement that is based upon agreements between specific community groups and state actors that are constantly renegotiated and reconstituted over time (Mitlin, 2008; Siame, 2013). It remains to be seen whether such negotiated

agreements can be resilient to large-scale social and demographic changes in a community. In-migration might see shifts in the power dynamics in a committee that may impact on institutional arrangements and the willingness of groups to engage in co-production. Vrygrond has grown from a population of approximately 8 000 at the time of the formalization (1999-2002) to an estimate of 50 000 in 2014. In that time the population has changed from being predominantly Coloured prior to development, to a diverse mix of Coloured, Xhosa, and foreign residents. My perception is that Vrygrond acts as a gateway settlement for many foreign nationals, who settle in Vrygrond as a way of minimizing expenditure on rent, and move to other areas within a few years. These temporary residents live alongside families who have deep historical ties to Vrygrond. Residents who see Vrygrond as their long-term home would be more likely to make investments into the physical context of the settlement through co-production, and so the presence of more short-term residents may limit the scope for large-scale and highly inclusive co-production strategies.

## **5. Conclusion**

State urban planning is not playing a prominent role in the development of Vrygrond, with development largely occurring through the (sometimes distinct) efforts of actors such as the ward councilor, the Trust, and various local NGOs. I have argued that the efficacy of planning policies is limited due to an approach that is largely technocratic, due to problems relating to existing participatory mechanisms in local governance. In light of the lack of alignment between policies and the realities on the ground, a more participatory approach to planning is needed if planning is to contribute significantly to development in the largely informal settlement of Vrygrond.

Communicative and collaborative planning theory presents a participatory approach that emphasizes the communicative acts of planners, and serves to highlight many areas where misinformation, a lack of communication, and incomplete understandings have contribute to conflicts and disputes in Vrygrond. As an approach to planning however, various assumptions regarding the nature of urban populations and citizenship do not hold in global South contexts such as Vrygrond. In a context of lack of state-led delivery of much needed facilities and a rhetoric of 'broken promises', residents may be unwilling to engage in discourse due to a lack of faith in the ability of such processes to deliver outcomes. Power relations and conflicts in Vrygrond, often intertwined with identity, may be too entrenched to be 'neutralized' for the purpose of discourse. Differences in terms of race, ethnicity, political affiliation, and also historical ties to the settlement,

impact on the extent to which residents are willing to engage collectively and to accept the validity claims of other residents. Strategic action has played an important role in enabling access to housing and services, and therefore the elimination of strategic action in communicative discourse may in some ways be ill-advised.

I have argued, therefore, that co-production presents a more suitable form of participatory planning in the context of Vrygrond. The approach is well placed to increase access to much needed facilities, as well as providing a route to increased political influence. The creation of new forms of community-led governance and local autonomy means that the heritage of community activism, which at times clashes with the forms of citizenship promoted by government and NGOs, might be harnessed and channeled towards more constructive means of engaging with the state. Co-production does however suffer from a limited engagement with power, conflict, and difference within communities; issues that will likely constitute a barrier to the initiation of co-production strategies. The state's recognition of a limited capacity to keep pace with housing and service provision may increase the likelihood of residents and state actors to consider co-production as a viable approach. Finally, I have emphasized rapid population growth and crime as two important factors that have not yet been adequately considered in the co-production literature. Crime and violence is a particularly significant issue, with fear of crime and a collective memory of violence in the history of the Trust lowering social capital and hindering participation, while the impact of the physical presence of criminal groups on governance dynamics needs greater attention.



# Chapter 7: Recommendations and Conclusions



## Chapter 7: Recommendations and Conclusions

### 1. Introduction

This dissertation has sought to respond to a call to 'theorize from the South', grounding planning theory in descriptive and explanatory theories of urban environments in the global South. Planning is viewed as being increasingly relevant to cities of the South that are experiencing high rates of urbanization, growing informal settlements, and an increasing disparity between urban elites and poorer communities (Watson, 2009). If urban planning is to contribute towards promoting socially just and equitable cities, as I believe it should, then new approaches to planning that specifically address the marginalization of poor communities need to be found. Many planning systems in the global South continue to reflect traditional technocratic approaches to planning that emerged from the North, and have become increasingly disengaged from the rapidly changing urban environments to which they seek to respond (Watson, 2009). Mainstream planning theories have not been a strong source of insight for urban planners in the global South, due to prevailing theories having underlying assumptions based on Northern conditions that often do not hold in the South.

Planning theorists have turned towards case research in cities of the South in an effort to develop planning theories that respond directly to the prevailing urban conditions through new forms of citizen-state engagement. To this endeavor, I offer the case of Vrygrond as a source of insight for planning theory. Vrygrond has undergone notable developments to the urban environment in the midst of considerable conflict and growing socio-economic problems. The case study is largely descriptive, seeking to describe the developmental context of Vrygrond, as well as the manner in which development has occurred in light of contextual factors. By documenting a specific case in the global South, I have been able to apply and respond to theoretical propositions from the literature regarding public participation and citizen-state engagement in the development of low-income communities.

In the next section of this chapter I describe the findings of the research in relation to the main research question. I then provide recommendations arising from the case study, firstly in relation to theory, followed by practical recommendations that are specific to the Vrygrond context, and finally presenting areas for further research. I end the dissertation with a reflection on the contribution that the case of Vrygrond might make in relation to knowledge accumulation in the area of citizen-state engagement and local planning and development.

## **2. Research findings and conclusions**

### **2.1. Main findings**

The dissertation has addressed the following main research question:

*How have services, infrastructure, public facilities and amenities been secured in Vrygrond since 1997, and what lessons can be learnt for urban planners practicing in the global South?*

Development is occurring largely in the absence of any meaningful contribution from the planning profession. Services have been secured through the actions of other state actors, as well as through the Vrygrond Community Development Trust, the numerous NGOs operating in the settlement, and through the everyday strategies adopted by residents themselves in response to the challenges of their immediate environment. The municipal planning policies struggle to articulate with the local realities of the largely informal context in Vrygrond, at times resulting in negative impacts for residents. Problems relating to the participatory mechanisms associated with South Africa's system of Developmental Local Government, as well as the Integrated Development Planning process (Oldfield, 2008), result in state planning being predominantly technocratic and therefore ill-equipped to meet the needs of low-income communities such as Vrygrond. A more participatory approach to planning is needed if planning is to contribute to developing and uplifting low-income communities.

The challenges faced in the development processes employed by state actors, the Trust, and local NGOs demonstrate that communicative and collaborative approaches to planning are ill-suited to the context of Vrygrond. These approaches are based on assumptions regarding the nature of urban societies and citizenship that do not hold in

such global South contexts. I have therefore explored co-production as a potentially more suitable form of citizen-state engagement. Co-production has the potential not only to increase access to services and facilities, but also to empower local communities through building greater political influence (Mitlin, 2008); two areas of significant need in the settlement. The Vrygrond community practices a form of citizenship that is active and often oppositional. While this is problematic for communicative and collaborative planning which assumes a more compliant and civic minded form of citizenship, co-production may be able to better utilize what is a considerable heritage of community activism, opening up new spaces for residents to engage with the state in a manner that is oppositional but also constructive. The recognized lack of capacity of the state to keep pace with housing and service delivery, and the immediate physical needs faced by residents, mean that both the state and the community may well be willing to explore co-production as a viable approach. The divisions and conflicts that exist within the community present a barrier to co-production, and various institutional arrangements are needed in order to create a more suitable social context. Possible institutional arrangements are described later in this concluding chapter, in the section on policy recommendations.

## **2.2. Theoretical propositions**

As described in the method chapter, the case study research method is effective in enabling knowledge accumulation relating to complex social phenomena (Yin, 2009). Findings are not generalizable to other cases, but can be used to develop theoretical propositions that can be applied and tested in contrasting cases.

The nature of citizen-state engagement in low-income non-White communities in South Africa is likely to be influenced by a history of resisting and opposing the apartheid state. Vrygrond is regarded as having been the oldest informal settlement in the Western Cape, and the community persisted despite the efforts of the state to eradicate the informal settlement and relocated residents in other areas. A heritage of anti-apartheid struggle may well impact on the nature of citizenship and on engagements with the state. While this oppositional form of citizenship may differ in some ways from the citizenship envisioned and promoted by Western liberal democracies, I argue that it should be seen as a source of social capital, particularly in relation to wealthier communities who rarely need to engage the state. Poorer communities at times seem to struggle to align with 'formal' channels for public participation, but are often able to frequently engage the state through other community-led means when necessary.

Rather than seeing such communities as lacking social capital, being apathetic, or being 'unruly' citizens, I suggest that we need to seek approaches that might better harness the history of active citizenship and community activism. Co-production could be one such approach.

Furthermore, this history of community activism shapes residents' expectations of local community organizations. In line with many informal settlements that I have encountered in Cape Town, the Vrygrond community seems to have a history in which community leaders, civic organizations, and community organizing activities are prominent. I suggest that the opposition that the Trust has experienced is due to the organization practicing a form of local governance that was strongly project-focused and did not entail the civic functionality that residents may well expect from local community bodies. I suggest the expectations of residents regarding forms of local governance need to be considered by organizations seeking to implement co-production strategies.

Roy conceptualizes informality as a "generalized mode of metropolitan urbanization" (Roy, 2005: 147). She demonstrates cases in India in which the state governs informally, operating outside of official state policies and processes in order to achieve certain objectives, often serving the interests of capital rather than the needs of the poor. In Vrygrond, the local municipality has seemingly opted not to enforce zoning restrictions, with the majority of residential properties being unlikely to comply with the restrictions associated with a Conventional Single Residential (SR1) zoning. The local ward councilor is certainly aware of non-compliance, but has not sought to enforce the policy. This has largely benefited the residents in enabling formal households to supplement income through the leasing of backyard dwellings and the operation of informal businesses. While the envisioned income generation through the private development of Trust owned land has not materialized, areas of concentrated informal economic activity have emerged in areas of high pedestrian traffic, providing a source of income, but also various services and products for residents. I see the non-enforcement of the zoning scheme as an example of informality in the processes of the state that has had largely favorable results for the poor.

### **3. Policy recommendations**

The focus of the dissertation has been predominantly on understanding the nature of development in Vrygrond in relation to theory. There are nevertheless a number of practical recommendations that I would make based on the findings of the case study. Recommendations include the introduction of institutional arrangements that might better support forms of co-production, the promotion of networks between Vrygrond and other similar settlements, the identification of areas of need in terms of public facilities and infrastructure, and possible amendments to the Cape Flats District Plan and the Zoning Scheme.

#### ***Institutional arrangements***

The introduction of co-production strategies to a community requires a level of organization and social stability. Organizations such as SDI commonly partner with existing community organizations and organized groups of residents. In the current context, however, the social context is not ideal due to conflict and opposition relating to the Vrygrond Community Development Trust, as well as divisions and at times some tension relating to racial, ethnic, and political differences. I describe possible adaptations to the institutional context that might promote the conditions needed for co-production.

Having been established as a representative body for the formalization and ongoing community development of Vrygrond, the Trust has moved away from a representative role towards a focus on developing and maintaining community facilities such as the impressive Capricorn Primary School, and managing access to land owned by the Trust. I view this change, in which a non-participatory and project management-centered approach has been adopted, as a realistic and pragmatic response to the significant opposition and disruption that the Trust has encountered. Much of the opposition and criticism of the Trust relates to differences in expectations of the appropriate objectives and approaches of the organization; some residents, including some of the Trustees, expect a stronger civic and governmental role from the Trust, with more democratic and participatory approaches. I feel that the Trust needs to internally clarify its vision, objectives and desired approaches, and to focus on communicating the vision of the Trust to residents in the wider community.

With the Trust having shifted away from seeking to represent the community, and with the ward councilor being responsible for a wider area including Sea Winds to the North, residents face something of a 'democratic deficit' (Purcell, 2009) due to a lack of assistance and representation regarding local issues. Residents rely on informal social networks, rarely drawing on local politicians, government officials or NGOs for assistance (Jensen et al, 2011). Residents share a collective memory of conflict and violence in the history of the Trust, which limits residents' willingness to 'participate', and fear of crime also erodes social capital. Rather than seeking to institute a formally designated 'representative' body, which has proven difficult to achieve in the diverse and somewhat conflictual context of Vrygrond, I propose the promotion of various informal community membership groups, which could form around existing social networks, religious groups, occupations (street traders, shopkeepers), or localized areas. These groups could enable the introduction of small-scale saving schemes, which are likely to be more suitable than large-scale community wide schemes. A further possibility is to establish an open community forum in which representatives from various community groups could raise and discuss issues. While this should not be seen as a means of establishing community 'consensus', it could enable community organizing over co-production activities. Such an institutional arrangement would potentially build social capital and create new spaces for more inclusive participation, with less emphasis on specific individuals or organizations. Co-production through partnerships with organizations such as SDI would then be more possible.

### ***Local networks***

Establishing networks between community groups in Vrygrond and in other 'post-RDP' or 'informalising' settlements is a valuable means of sharing knowledge and insight into specific contextual challenges faced by communities. If a partnership with an organization such as SDI can be established, then such networks could serve to build faith in the viability of co-production strategies as a means of addressing local needs. Such networks would also lend authority and legitimacy to local community groups, fostering a more powerful position from which to make demands of the state.

### ***Public facilities and infrastructural need***

The provision of public facilities is one of the greatest areas of need in Vrygrond, due to a lack of state-led provision in the face of a rapidly growing local population. Priorities include the provision of a high school, a second primary school, and a police station, while investment into quality functional open space is also needed. As proposed by the

Cape Flats District Plan and two interviewees, the provision of a municipal library with public access to computers and the internet would be a benefit to residents. I propose, however, that this should occur through the state investing in and upgrading the existing Trust-led community library. While facilities such as schools and police stations require considerable input from the state, the SDI ritual of self-enumeration could provide a stronger base from which the community can demand the provision of public facilities. The population is significantly under-represented in the 2011 census data, and this may have contributed to the inadequate provision of facilities. The creation of functional public open space for recreation could be achieved through co-production, which would enable local residents to ensure maintenance and upkeep. This might also be a project that the Trust could pursue. Finally, co-production could also be a viable means by which to upgrade the informal roads in Overcome Heights and to establish functional storm-water drains to prevent a reoccurrence of the flooding described in the fifth chapter, in which the state-led upgrading of roads led to storm-water run-off flooding adjacent homes.

#### ***Possible amendments to planning policy documents***

The spatial proposals contained in the Cape Flats District Plan, described in the fourth chapter, include two spatial interventions that may be of benefit. The development of the vacant land between Vrygrond and the M5, including the provision of inclusive housing and mixed-use development, could provide a source of income for the state as well as a source of housing for informal and backyard dwellers in Vrygrond. Secondly, the proposed 'Princessvlei Parkway' road from Baden Powell Drive to the M5 would increase the accessibility of Vrygrond, however limitations to development on adjacent land due to the presence of a buffer zone around Coastal Park landfill site means that the road would serve solely as a connector route. I would therefore suggest that there are greater priorities for public expenditure, particularly relating to the provision of public facilities. The proposed 'Zandvlei Expressway' road on the road reserve would require resettlement of residents in Overcome Heights, and therefore may need to be amended to exclude that segment of the road. The district plan also proposes the development of a local area plan for Vrygrond and Lavender Hill; an intervention that could be valuable in coordinating the various actors driving development in the area. The SDI ritual of community mapping by households in the settlement could contribute to local area planning, ensuring that local needs are well represented and responded to in the plan.

The zoning scheme does not currently align well with the informal nature of land-use in Vrygrond. The restrictions associated with the Conventional Single Residential (SR1) zoning are not currently being enforced, and indeed would be largely detrimental to the livelihoods of many residents relying on home-based informal economic activities and backyard rentals. While the Incremental Housing (SR2) zoning is a valuable inclusion in the zoning scheme, providing greater flexibility for households in informal settlements, I feel that a more appropriate residential zoning should be developed for settlements in which backyard dwellings and informal economic activity are widespread, if regulatory planning is to play any significant positive role for residents in contexts like Vrygrond.

#### **4. Areas for future research**

- The settlement of Vrygrond has received growing attention from researchers however further research on certain key issues could contribute to local knowledge. Qualitative studies have been conducted on fire risk (Davies, 2009), resilience to fire events (Wicht, 2010), and on violence (Bøgh, 2012), while Jensen et al (2011) provide a valuable quantitative study on violence and xenophobia, drawing from a large representative sample of 517 households. Further research into issues such as social capital, social cohesion, power relations, and participation in local governance, would develop a greater understanding of the social context of Vrygrond, which would in turn inform the appropriate adoption of co-production strategies. In particular, large-scale quantitative studies could assist in developing a stronger understanding of exact population figures, as well as on economic indicators such as household income, the local informal economy, and unemployment.
- Comparative case research in other post-RDP 'informalising' settlements in South Africa would be valuable in helping to build an understanding of the challenges faced in such contexts. The RDP and BNG programs have produced many settlements that face similar problems including rapid population growth and densification through the proliferation of informal and backyard dwellings, a lack of local economic development, limited provision of public facilities and functional open space, and often high levels of crime including gangsterism and drug dealing.

- Comparative case research in settlements in which co-production strategies are being utilized. Academics including Mitlin (2008), Watson (2014), and Roy (2009) have provided valuable contributions to a growing area of interest in the literature, however a number of issues need further attention, including the influence of unequal power relations, conflict and difference within communities on the success of co-production. Additionally, the case of Vrygrond draws attention to unanswered questions including the resilience of co-production to rapid population growth and demographic change, and the impact of physically present criminal groups on local governance dynamics and the capacity for co-production.

## **5. A reflection on the case study**

This dissertation presented me with an opportunity to return to a settlement that I first studied in 2009 as part of an Honours Dissertation. I felt that the history of the settlement, while not widely known, could be a valuable source of knowledge and insight for those with an interest in local community development. Specifically, I felt that it was particularly relevant to debates in planning theory relating to appropriate forms of public participation and citizen-state engagement in the local planning and development of low-income settlements in the global South. The case demonstrates some of the challenges associated with case study research, in which the researcher seeks to develop an understanding of complex social environments. The development of Vrygrond since 1997 is a detailed and intricate narrative that is difficult to succinctly present and summarize in an academic report. I have tried to do justice to these complexities, while directing the report towards addressing the specific research problem and research questions.

I feel that the value of the case study lies in its ability to illustrate some of the emerging theories regarding planning in the global South. It has shown that unequal power relations are often entrenched and cannot be easily eradicated; that difference is deep and may result in a conflict of rationalities (Watson, 2006); and that citizenship in poor communities may differ from that which is envisioned and promoted by the 'good governance' agenda, while nevertheless constituting a legitimate, rational and strategic response to challenging urban environments (Robins et al, 2008; Watson, 2006, 2014).

The case study demonstrates the importance of planning theories being well grounded in descriptive and explanatory theory, and responding to specific contextual conditions. No single planning theory provided a seamless fit with the context of Vrygrond; each contained problematic assumptions or questions that have yet to be answered. The experiences of the Trust demonstrate the significant problems that can arise in seeking to build consensus through communicative discourse and mediation, while also illustrating the problems of a non-participatory approach to development that has enabled commendable developmental gains, but has done so while entrenching a role of residents as passive recipients of development. The existing state planning system maintains elements of a technocratic approach that see it struggle to articulate with a context of informality. Clearly some form of participation is necessary in urban planning - an activity that is inherently political and always contestable. Co-production is emerging as a promising approach to development in low-income settlements in the global South. While some changes need to occur in the institutional context of Vrygrond in order to foster a social context that is more suitable to the adoption of co-production, I would argue that the approach is currently best placed to address the specific needs in Vrygrond. Co-production is an important and valuable contribution to planning theory and should be investigated further through comparative case research, particularly in areas where the approach has been used in the midst of problems such as unequal power relations, and the physical presence of criminal groups.

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## EBE Faculty: Assessment of Ethics in Research Projects (Rev2)

Any person planning to undertake research in the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment at the University of Cape Town is required to complete this form before collecting or analysing data. When completed it should be submitted to the supervisor (where applicable) and from there to the Head of Department. If any of the questions below have been answered YES, and the applicant is NOT a fourth year student, the Head should forward this form for approval by the Faculty EIR committee: submit to Ms Zulpha Geyer ([Zulpha.Geyer@uct.ac.za](mailto:Zulpha.Geyer@uct.ac.za); Chem Eng Building, Ph 021 650 4791). **NB: A copy of this signed form must be included with the thesis/dissertation/report when it is submitted for examination**

*This form must only be completed once the most recent revision EBE EIR Handbook has been read.*

Name of Principal Researcher/Student: Craig Davies      Department: Architecture, Planning and Geomatics

Preferred email address of the applicant: [craigndavies@gmail.com](mailto:craigndavies@gmail.com)

**If a Student:** Degree: Masters in City and Regional Planning      Supervisor: Prof Vanessa Watson

If a Research Contract indicate source of funding/sponsorship:

Research Project Title: Development of informal settlements through community organisations: A case study of Vrygrond

### Overview of ethics issues in your research project:

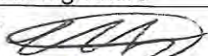
<b>Question 1: Is there a possibility that your research could cause harm to a third party (i.e. a person not involved in your project)?</b>	YES	NO
<b>Question 2: Is your research making use of human subjects as sources of data?</b> If your answer is YES, please complete Addendum 2.	YES	NO
<b>Question 3: Does your research involve the participation of or provision of services to communities?</b> If your answer is YES, please complete Addendum 3.	YES	NO
<b>Question 4: If your research is sponsored, is there any potential for conflicts of interest?</b> If your answer is YES, please complete Addendum 4.	YES	NO

If you have answered YES to any of the above questions, please append a copy of your research proposal, as well as any interview schedules or questionnaires (Addendum 1) and please complete further addenda as appropriate. Ensure that you refer to the EIR Handbook to assist you in completing the documentation requirements for this form.

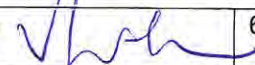

### I hereby undertake to carry out my research in such a way that

- there is no apparent legal objection to the nature or the method of research; and
- the research will not compromise staff or students or the other responsibilities of the University;
- the stated objective will be achieved, and the findings will have a high degree of validity;
- limitations and alternative interpretations will be considered;
- the findings could be subject to peer review and publicly available; and
- I will comply with the conventions of copyright and avoid any practice that would constitute plagiarism.

### Signed by:

	Full name and signature	Date
Principal Researcher/Student:	Craig Neil Davies 	6/6/2014

### This application is approved by:

Supervisor (if applicable):	Vanessa Watson 	6/6/2014
HOD (or delegated nominee): <i>Final authority for all assessments with NO to all questions and for all undergraduate research.</i>		
Chair : Faculty EIR Committee For applicants other than undergraduate students who have answered YES to any of the above questions.	G.Sithole 	22/7/2014

- Please see reviewer comments

**FACULTY OF ENGINEERING AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

**FEEDBACK ON THE ASSESSMENT OF ETHICS IN RESEARCH PROJECTS**

This form has been prepared to provide applicants with feedback on their Ethics Clearance applications submitted to the Faculty of Engineering and The Built Environment. For further correspondence regarding this assessment please contact Zulpha Geyer (**Zulpha.Geyer@uct.ac.za**)

<b>NAME OF APPLICANT : Craig Davies</b>	
<b>CYCLE DATE:</b>	
<b>COMPLETED APPLICATION FORM</b>	This is a complete application , which includes a questionnaire , background etc.
<b>DETAILS OF METHODS USED</b>	This is adequately covered in the attached proposal
<b>STATEMENT EXPLAINING HOW DATA OR SENSITIVE INFORMATION WILL BE SAFELY USED</b>	The ethical issue arising from the research have been considered in the proposal. The treatment of private data after the completion of the research could have received greater attention.
<b>COPY OF QUESTIONNAIRE</b>	Comprehensive questionnaire included
<b>CONSENT FORM</b>	<b>Included</b>
<b>PERMISSION (STUDENT INTERVIEW)</b>	<b>Eg: Not required</b>
<b>FURTHER COMMENTS</b>	This is a low risk project, while some of the information collected could be of a sensitive nature.
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Accepted



**SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE, PLANNING AND GEOMATICS**  
 University of Cape Town  
 Private Bag x3, Rondebosch 7701  
 Centlivres Building  
 Email: [Janine.Meyer@uct.ac.za](mailto:Janine.Meyer@uct.ac.za) Tel: 27 21 6502359

June 2012

**STATEMENT TO BE READ OUT TO AN INTERVIEWEE BY A STUDENT ABOUT TO UNDERTAKE AN INTERVIEW FOR THE PURPOSES OF A MASTERS DISSERTATION, AS A REQUEST FOR PERMISSION FOR THE NAME AND/OR IDENTITY OF THE INTERVIEWEE TO BE REVEALED IN THE DISSERTATION**

*For example: Your thesis would contain a statement such as: Mr Smith (Head of Spatial Planning at the Municipality of Cape Town), or even: Head of Spatial Planning at the Municipality of Cape Town, as this person would be easily identifiable. Amend the form as necessary.*

A copy of the form can be given to the respondent if they request it.

MY NAME IS CRAIG DAVIES. AND I AM STUDYING CITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN.

I AM DOING RESEARCH ON DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS THROUGH COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS. A CASE STUDY OF VRYGROND. AS PART OF MY MASTERS DISSERTATION AND I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS TO HELP ME WITH MY RESEARCH.

I WOULD LIKE TO USE YOUR NAME, DESIGNATION AND POSSIBLY DIRECT QUOTES IN MY DISSERTATION AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION. PLEASE INDICATE YES OR NO BELOW TO GIVE OR WITHOLD YOUR PERMISSION FOR ME TO DO THIS.

YES I GIVE PERMISSION FOR YOU TO USE MY NAME / DESIGNATION / WORDS IN YOUR DISSERTATION

NO I DO NOT GIVE PERMISSION FOR YOU TO USE MY NAME / DESIGNATION /WORDS IN YOUR DISSERTATION

IF YOU WANT TO END THE INTERVIEW AT ANY POINT YOU ARE FREE TO DO SO.

MY SUPERVISOR IS PROF VANESSA WATSON.... AND HIS/HER CONTACT DETAILS ARE:  
[Vanessa.watson@uct.ac.za](mailto:Vanessa.watson@uct.ac.za)  
 Tel: 021-6502387

-----  
 Signature and designation (interviewee)

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 Signature of student

*This form is to be completed with your name and topic and submitted with your ethics form*