

# Greener Pastures of Home: An Ethnographic Study on Everyday Sustainable Practices in Nyanga, Cape Town

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare by submitting this thesis electronically, that the entirety of it is my own unaided work, both in concept and execution, and that apart from the normal guidance from my supervisor, I have received no assistance. Neither the substance nor any part of the thesis has been submitted in the past, is being, or is to be submitted for any other degree at this University or at any other university.

Signed by candidate

Megan Lukas

20 August 2020

## **Abstract**

Most contemporary urban development in cities of the global South is responding to rapid urbanisation caused by prospects of employment opportunities and improved quality of life. Research in the field of sustainability in cities of the global South mainly focuses on economic and social development goals. However, there is an emerging sense that an appreciation of ordinary, everyday practices at the level of the community is important for developing a nuanced understanding of what sustainability might be in Southern cities. There is agreement on the need to pay attention to social and cultural practices in urban sustainability literature; yet relatively little research in the field engages closely with everyday practices at the level of neighbourhoods or communities. This is particularly true in the global South, and especially in low-income urban neighbourhoods, where developmentalist agendas dominate both academic and policy-related research. My thesis addresses this gap through an exploration of a wide range of everyday practices in a low-income, peri-urban area, which happen to have sustainable effects. Analysing ethnographic data collected over nine months in the Cape Town township of Nyanga, I find that the desire of urban residents to create spaces of home and belonging drives behaviour that in fact has positive sustainable outcomes, yet is seldom considered in literature on sustainable cities. I argue that paying attention to how ordinary citizens 'make home', specifically by (i) drawing on memories, (ii) developing livelihoods, and (iii) building social relations can enrich understanding not only of economic and social development but also of the complex ways in which social and environmental sustainability are already intertwined in everyday practice. Facilitating sustainable spaces in cities of the global South, therefore, requires critical engagement with the practices that are already taking place in urban residents' everyday lives.

## Acknowledgements

People often talk about doing a PhD as going through a journey. A journey of getting from one phase to the next, from one chapter to the next, and from one year to the next. Primarily, they talk about it as being a journey of self-discovery or self-development. For me, this PhD was a journey of academic development and friendship.

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As I sit at my Mom's bedside writing this, I realise that there is an apology that I should acknowledge. To my parents, I am sorry for the worry I caused you when I spent time in Nyanga doing my fieldwork. Mom, I wish that you had the strength to read this thesis at the end of your journey to show you that all the worry was worth it. Dad, I hope I have taught you something new about sustainability and an interesting way of life that many in our beautiful city endure.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction



A city renowned for its natural assets and cultural diversity, Cape Town is often referred to as 'Africa's most liveable city' (UN-Habitat, 2014), but is also widely known to be one of the most unequal cities in the world. Cape Town's inequality is felt across an array of areas, including social (for example, access to water, Wilson & Pereira, 2012), spatial (including perpetuation of the apartheid city layout and its consequences, Mcfarlane, 2018), institutional (in terms of constraints in which participatory governance is designed and implemented, Lemanski, 2017), economic (for example, high poverty and unemployment levels, Brown-Luthango, et al., 2017) and environmental (regarding environmentally degraded spaces, for example, Arendse & Patel, 2014). The city is grappling with the challenge of how to prioritize pressing development needs and challenges with making choices that ensure medium and long-term sustainability (UN-Habitat, 2014).

Urban sustainability is about managing the interactions between humans and the environment and addressing social inequalities (The World Bank, 2018). However, sustainability research tends to separate the social and the environmental sciences rather than integrating both disciplines and producing knowledge that is fundamentally needed to address human induced impacts on the environment (Green, 2019).

Furthermore, and specific to this study, very little research addresses the everyday cultural practices of production and consumption of ordinary citizens and social institutions, such as community organisations that may influence sustainability in cities, particularly those in the global South<sup>1</sup> (Flynn, et al., 2008). Moreover, Temper et al. (2018) argue that, thus far, sustainability literature has not paid sufficient attention to the role that social relations in human activity play in transformations to sustainability. I argue that when urban sustainability research lacks empirical evidence of people's everyday lives, knowledge and understanding of human interaction with the natural environment and how to address the associated challenges are misinterpreted. Therefore, there is a need to acquire knowledge about socio-ecological processes and practices that inform urban sustainability goals in the global South.

In this thesis I present ethnographic evidence of the everyday sustainable outcomes from the practices of ordinary people in Nyanga, Cape Town. My focus is on the social practices occurring in Nyanga that have sustainable consequences. My study reveals the enablers and barriers that inform the types of practices that some people perform. It also shows a different kind of sustainability, one that is not exclusively about conserving natural resources, but rather framed around the connections between communities and ecosystems through social practice. The analysis of my findings shows that the socio-spatial dynamics of home, including the imaginaries of home and home-making practices of some people living in Nyanga, shape their sustainable lifestyles and contribute to a sustainable society.

I first discuss urban sustainability through the perspective of the global South in order to contextualise the study and introduce the conceptual framing of this thesis.

### **The City, the South, and Sustainability**

Cities in the global South are commonly faced with challenges associated with natural resource threats, the inequitable distribution of wealth, informality, and poor infrastructure (Parnell & Robinson, 2012). Such challenges are attuned to rapid urbanisation happening in Southern cities. Urban growth rates in sub-Saharan Africa are more rapid than elsewhere in the world, as statistics show that between 2000 and 2005 Africa's average urban growth rate was 3.4 per cent per annum, compared to Asia at 2.6 per cent per annum and Latin

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<sup>1</sup> The global South is a term used to position emerging economies in the world.

America at 1.8 per cent per annum (UN-Habitat, 2009). As a consequence to rapid growth, urban poverty and unemployment are extreme realities, living conditions and urban services and infrastructure are poor, and livelihood is mainly supported by the informal sector (UN-Habitat, 2009).

From a sustainability point of view, the activities of urbanisation pose a distinctive set of environmental problems and generate a range of environmental consequences that have uneven social impacts at different spatial scales (Harvey, 1996). Sustainability emerged as a goal to link conservation and development outcomes for long-term societal benefit of developing nations and is more widely understood as the integration of economic growth, social wellbeing, and ecological stability (Chapin III & Knapp, 2015). In many of the cities that experience rapid growth, a major challenge to those cities is the incapacity to cope with natural disasters and social crises as a result of high levels of poverty and unemployment (UN-Habitat, 2009). Parnell and Walawege (2011) argue that Africa's rapidly expanding urban areas are likely to experience the biggest impact of global environmental change over the next thirty to fifty years because of population growth and weak capacity and infrastructure of nation-states to manage urbanisation and environmental change in cities. More specifically, in Cape Town, the complex intersections between urban history and planning legacies (colonial segregation followed by apartheid), socio-cultural diversities, and socio-spatial differences in vulnerability, resilience, and coping capacity to environmental change will massively impact its poor and marginalised citizens (UN-Habitat, 2014). According to the UN-Habitat's report (2014), the urban poor in Cape Town contribute less to climate change than the wealthy and yet suffer the most, for example when food and energy prices increase. Urban sustainability is, therefore, crucial to practise in Cape Town.

Pieterse (2011b) argues that it is fundamental to understand how societies can shape their own, unique narratives of sustainability to achieve locally defined socio-ecological goals, such as sustainable livelihoods (Pieterse, 2011b). African urbanism is one such approach and is characterised by the ways in which individuals and households create and sustain associational networks within a context of material scarcity and the failure of formal institutions (Harrison & Rubin, 2016). Rao (2010) asserts that in order to survive in an African city, one has to create and invest in certain networks that are not household networks or even same ethnic groups, but rather those that are different kinds of associations and different kinds of cooperation to constantly be in touch with others. Such

networks are pivotal in understanding African urbanism from the everyday practices of ordinary African citizens living in their particular livelihoods as best they can in the context of their uneven geographies of poverty and deprivation (Harrison & Rubin, 2016). Thus, practices orchestrate the everyday differently in the African context. The governance structures of transitions towards urban sustainability should, therefore, consider the everyday and ordinariness that already exists at the community level.

In theory, sustainability is difficult to achieve when there is an uneven distribution of resources and the connections to notions of space and place are underestimated (Horlings, 2015b). Therefore, there is a need for an integrated and transdisciplinary approach to understand how cities function sustainably in the South by exploring the real economy, the real landscapes and neighbourhoods, and the real cultural identity and social practices of urban dwellers (Pieterse, 2011a). Horlings (2015b) adds by arguing that a place-based approach, using local resources, capacities, and distinctiveness of places are necessary to understand sustainability. Thus, a focus on the spatial arrangements and social practices in a diverse, multi-cultural, and deeply unequal city such as Cape Town is important in the sustainability debate.

Looking more critically into the temporal and socio-spatial aspects of urban living through the practices people perform and by exploring sense of place in communities and neighbourhoods can be ways of understanding people's relationships with the environment. The double engagement and strong connections between rural and urban homes still exist for many of the black African population in Cape Town, who constantly navigate economic opportunities, as well as maintain familial relationships and other networks here and there. The cultural values that are instilled in shared community spaces of home include the materialism and symbolism of lived experiences that give identity to a place, and play an important role in the quest for sustainability of a place (Chiu, 2004). The embeddedness of culture in home and lived experience, together with the influence of the physical environment, are, thus, integral in understanding how outcomes of sustainability are incorporated into communities and neighbourhoods of Southern cities.

Shove and Walker (2010, p. 476) argue, "focusing on practices, their trajectories and their interconnections, obliges us to attend to processes of ongoing transformation, feedback and related circuits of reproduction". These dynamic interactions are fundamental to making

home through every day acts of consumption (Collins, 2015). In terms of practice theory, the practices that people perform require knowledge and/or skills, material infrastructure, and meaning and value (Shove, 2012; Strengers, 2012; Horne et al., 2011). I frame this thesis using the theory of practice to better qualify how sustainability is shaped in Nyanga.

### **Research Aim and Rationale**

The aim of this thesis is to examine the everyday social practices that have sustainable outcomes at a community level in an under-resourced township in Cape Town called Nyanga (see Figure 1 below showing the location of Nyanga in the context of South Africa and the city of Cape Town). I formulated my aim as a result of recognising that the everyday lifestyles of some of the people living in Nyanga have sustainable effects and contribute to a sustainable society. My overall research question asked how sustainability is presented in a township area of Cape Town. I framed this study by asking the following questions: i) What kinds of sustainability in the literature are relevant to cities of the global South?, ii) What are the specific ways in which people are living sustainably in Nyanga?, iii) What are the enablers and barriers of sustainability in Nyanga?, and iv) What key messages from the study could inform policy-making?

The fieldwork was framed as an exploration of ordinary people's everyday practices that have sustainable effects to understand their relationships with their environment. My research is shaped around the concept of urban sustainability and highlights the tensions and possibilities between people living their everyday lives and their environments in Nyanga. In this thesis I argue that by critically exploring particular socio-spatial contexts of people's everyday practices, one can better understand sustainability in the township of Nyanga. I argue that the nuanced socio-spatial context of the home space and the imaginaries of home and home-making in Southern cities are shaping particular forms of sustainability. There has been a persistent separation between literature concerned with sustainability at home, and the nature of sustainability in African urban contexts. My theoretical aim has been to bring these bodies of work together using practice theory whilst highlighting the complexities that characterise urban sustainability in a Southern city.

The objectives of my research were:

1. To explore, through ethnographic fieldwork, the everyday social practices in the township of Nyanga with respect to their sustainable effects.
2. To understand the spatial and temporal contexts of everyday practices in Nyanga.
3. To analyse observed everyday lived practices in Nyanga in order to understand how they contribute to broader urban sustainability.

These lines of enquiry are rooted in a theoretical approach of social practice, ordered across space and time, to be the central unit of analysis (Shove & Walker, 2010). I will discuss the theory of practice in more detail in the next chapter. The theoretical rationale of this thesis is to contribute to existing knowledge about Southern urban sustainability literature using practice theory. My findings reveal that by exploring and understanding the everyday lived experiences and practices of Southern urban dwellers, the concept of home can be a fundamental conceptual tool to garner richer data in urban sustainability research.

The empirical rationale for using a South African township area in the study reflects an honest account of a diversity of people and the socio-economic injustices that affect them. Nyanga was a useful site for this study, as it is a township on the periphery of Cape Town, where some local people are living sustainable lifestyles despite their socio-economic challenges and limited access to the natural environment of Cape Town. The human-nature nexus that exists there has always interested me and warranted further investigation. I wondered how sustainability transpires in the township, because, although not always overt to some, it does exist and often in creative ways.

Making sense of urban sustainability at the community level requires a grounded, nuanced, and holistic approach that takes into account social dimensions of the everyday. As Pieterse et al. (2018) argue, the focus on the transformation towards sustainable cities should be on unlocking the everyday Southern possibilities to do so. In my research I used such an approach to study the everyday lives of people in Nyanga that manifest sustainable effects. I did this using ethnography.

Ethnography was a useful qualitative research methodology to achieve my aim. It involved direct engagement with community members on site. By immersing myself into the daily life of Nyanga, I was able to gain first-hand insight into people's everyday practices by listening to their stories. Moreover, through my observing and interviewing of participants, and my

participation in the greening projects in which they were involved, I collected rich data that informed my ethnographic analysis.

In the following section I describe the geographic space of Nyanga and contextualise its history. I then provide some background to the urban sustainability challenges in South Africa that stem from the country's apartheid history.



Figure 1: Map of Cape Town indicating the location of Nyanga (CoCT, 2015; Becker, et al., 2014)

## **The Location<sup>2</sup>**

### *Nyanga*

*The Murder capital, divine space for criminals,  
A place where Jesus sleeps, and Satan recruits,  
Churches are lifeless, while taverns flourish,  
Drug lords are praised, young girls get raped, and fatherless babies are raised.*

*Thugs hip and hop to siren sounds, while police chase shadows at night,  
Gastric juices break down positive thoughts, and poverty steals dreams,  
Brain self-destruct, gory thoughts construct,  
And gun powder rapidly spreads, while the light at the end of the tunnel slowly disappears.*

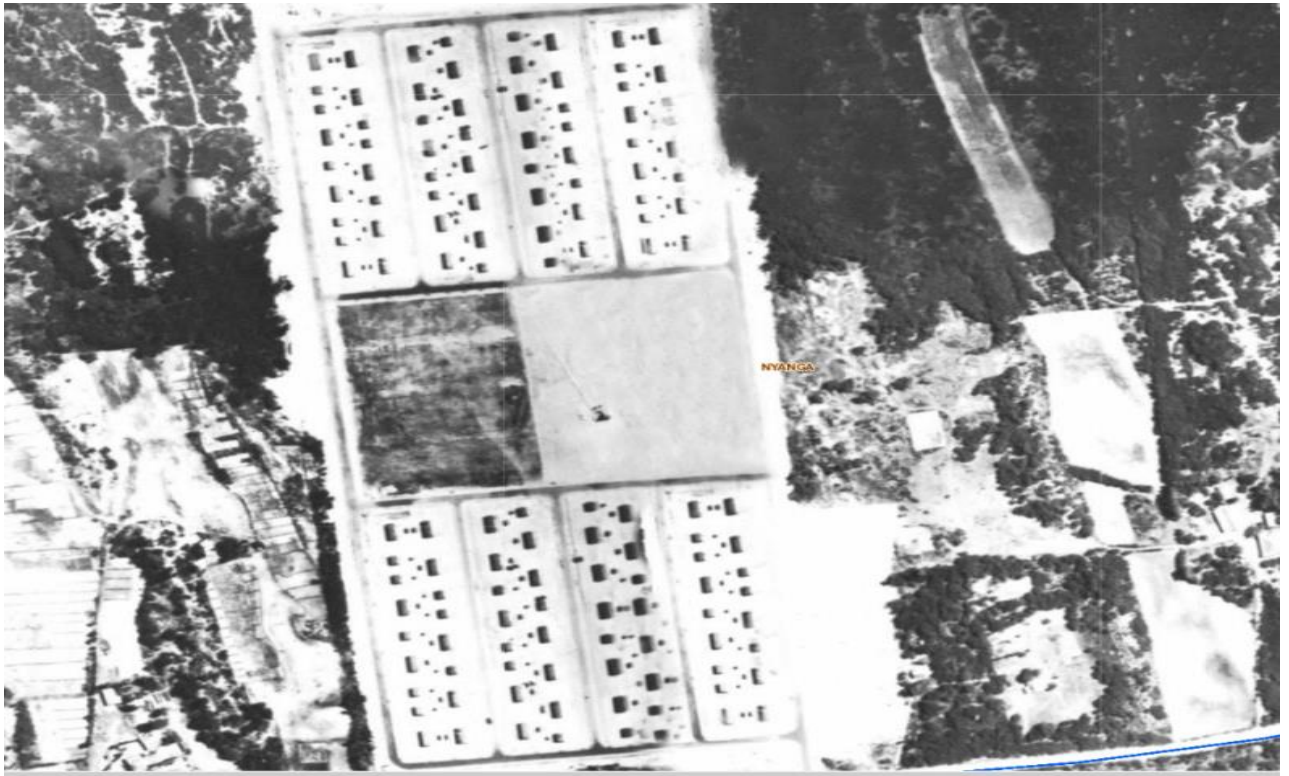
*Government croons a still tune, in numbers learners dropout of school,  
Backyard dwellers homes exist in their dreams,  
Because urbanisation like acid rain, when it lands crops die,  
So are our dreams.*

- **Ndikho Kwinana**, Nyanga East (published in City Vision, 1 June 2017)

Nyanga is the second oldest black African township in Cape Town after Langa. It was established in 1946 (Fast, 1995) as a result of addressing the overcrowded conditions in Langa, caused by the influx of (mainly) black African men who came to Cape Town to find employment (Field, 2007). Figure 2 below shows the aerial image of the development of Nyanga in 1945, Figure 3 shows the extent of the growth of the township over an eight year period, and the aerial image of 2015 in Figure 4 that follows shows the extent of the township in a more recent year.

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<sup>2</sup> The location means the study area of my thesis, and it is the translation of “ilokishini”, which is the Xhosa translation of township.



**Figure 2: Nyanga (1945) showing the development of rows of hostels on either side of a field in a wild setting that is surrounded by sand dunes and vegetation (CoCT, 2015).**



**Figure 3: Nyanga (1953) showing the expansion and encroachment of the township into the natural landscape and the increase of dwellings within the original rows of hostels (CoCT, 2015).**



**Figure 4: Nyanga (2015) in the middle of the N2 and three other townships - Gugulethu, Philippi and Crossroads (CoCT, 2015).**

Nyanga is located within the Cape Flats, which connects the False Bay coastline to the townships, and is characterised by a sandy landscape of sparsely vegetated dunes, the severe south-easterly winds (predominantly in summer), and periodic flooding (predominantly in winter) (Awotona, et al., 1995). See a map of Nyanga according to the 2011 Census data in Figure 5 below.

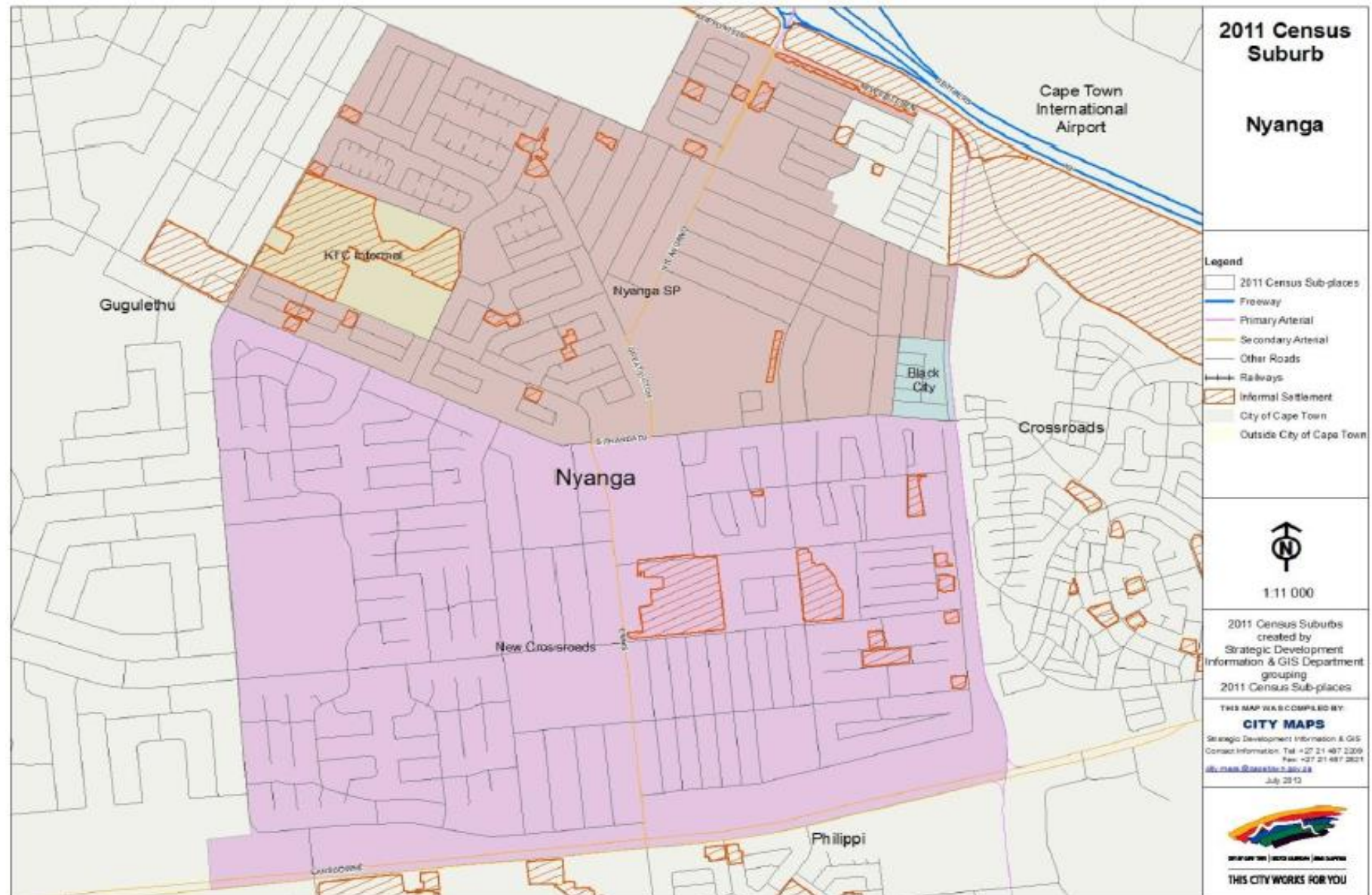
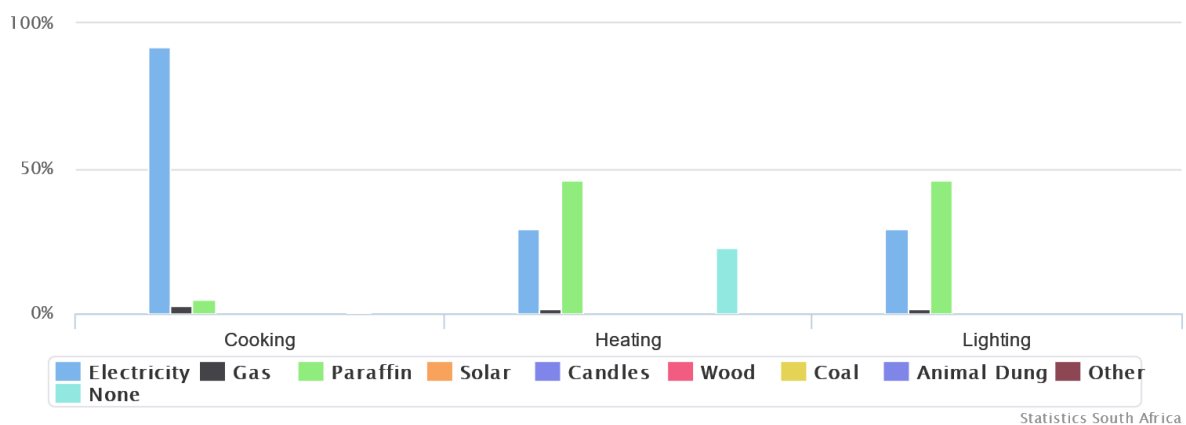


Figure 5: Map of Nyanga (CoCT, 2013, based on 2011 census data)

During my thesis journey, Nyanga became known to me as the forgotten township. Firstly, the township was unknown to some people with whom I spoke about my study; and secondly, I saw and knew about the lack of resources provided by the City of Cape Town (CoCT)<sup>3</sup> to uplift and conserve the environment and heritage in the township. My work experience at the CoCT allowed me to see first-hand the political influence towards capital projects assigned to specific areas, largely from the politicians and municipal officials, but also as a result of community resistance when voices were unheard. According to South Africa’s last census, which was in 2011, the amount of households in Nyanga were 15 993 and formal dwellings accounted for 67.3 per cent of the total amount of dwellings in the area (StatsSA, 2011). These statistics mean that 32,7 per cent of dwellings in Nyanga characterised informal structures, such as shacks, which many of these households had to endure.

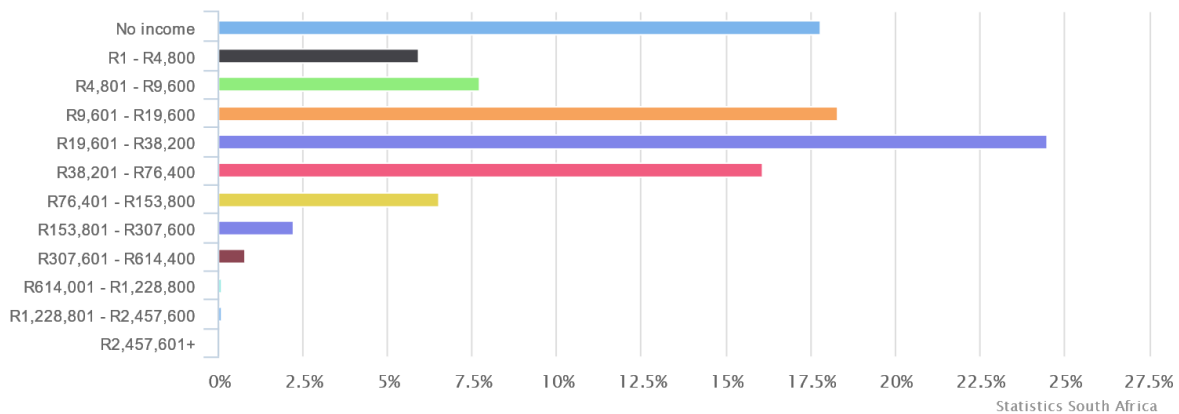
In 2016, when I conducted my field work, I saw a housing development abandoned as a result of political interference and tension between community members and the ward councillor of Nyanga. Shells of houses stood unfinished and neglected among rows of shacks and backyard dwellings<sup>4</sup> because of unresolved politics. A knock-on effect of the lack of formal housing in Nyanga is the reliance on paraffin as a source of energy, particularly for heating and lighting (See Figure 6 below), as a result of no electrification in informal dwellings. The large percentage of paraffin being used in Nyanga could also be due to economic factors of the low employment rate in the township (See Figure 7) and the high expense of electricity in the country.



**Figure 6: Household energy sources in Nyanga (StatsSA, 2011)**

<sup>3</sup> The local authority/municipality of Cape Town.

<sup>4</sup> Backyard dwellings are defined by informal structures that occupy surplus space, shared with a formally developed housing unit within a formal and fully serviced housing area, and operate as an informal rental market that is uniquely South African (Turok & Borel-Saladin, 2014).



**Figure 7: Average household annual income in Nyanga (StatsSA, 2011)**

Political interference and influence in capital projects within the CoCT can also relate to budget allocation. In a telephone conversation with the Subcouncil manager of Nyanga,<sup>5</sup> I was told that projects are allocated budget per ward and subcouncil, projects are unspecified when budget is given to a department that covers multiple wards or subcouncils, and the use of budget is based on priority. Such a process of budget allocation means that the notion of priority can differ between wards and can be influenced by the identification of the need of a project by officials, manpower availability within the departments to implement a project, and community pressure based on the voices of the community. In addition, when funding for a specific project is donated from an external source, the funding is not always guaranteed. The example given to me was the planned project to upgrade the Nyanga taxi rank, which would include incorporating the library into the design and formalising some of the informal trading areas. This upgrade was planned to commence in the 2019/2020 financial year and funded by a Dutch organisation, but the funding is no longer available and the project has been put on hold.

The economic issues associated with Nyanga are compounded by the township holding the title of being the “Murder Capital” of South Africa, according to the latest crime statistics (CrimeStatsSA, 2017). The label is described in the poem above, which was written by a local resident and describes how Nyanga is perceived by some people. Such perception resonates with research on African societies that describes violence dominating social life, as described by Pieterse (2011a, p. 14), “‘the everyday’, i.e. mundane normalcy, is profoundly scarred by structural and symbolic violence, which in turn reproduces an acute level of social violence

<sup>5</sup> Telephone interview with Ardela van Niekerk, Subcouncil Manager: 4, Area 3, on 9 April 2019.

that overdetermines familial and domestic relations”. One of the few studies that have been done on/in Nyanga describes it as a township which has seemingly been “studied little and admired even less” (Fast, 1995, p. 3). The reasons are primarily associated with the township’s high crime rate and development of youth gangs (Fast, 1995). There is, however, another side to the township that encompasses people’s everyday practices that have sustainable outcomes. There is very little published knowledge about sustainability in Nyanga, thus making it a place that should be acknowledged to better understand how the township’s social dynamics interact with its urban and natural landscape.

Despite the socio-economic challenges in Nyanga, local residents and community organisations are “spreading the story of how the forgotten structure could manifest a new kind of beauty” (Aalto & Ernstson, 2016, p. 313). Everyday sustainability is manifest and portrayed in various activities that enliven the landscape with gardens, community parks, and the hustle and bustle of informal trading.

Nyanga is an area of ambiguity representing a mix of an old and more traditional culture and one that is modern. This cultural mix is indicative through food, fashion, and modes of transport. Its diversity ranges from conservative and traditional to trendy and tailored outfits; from buying food from informal traders selling fruit and vegetables, cooked mielies,<sup>6</sup> and braaied<sup>7</sup> offal and chicken feet, to buying food from spaza shops<sup>8</sup> (see Figure 8 below) and nearby shopping malls; and from walking or riding in taxis and buses, to driving expensive cars.

Spaza shops are prolific and sell basics such as milk, bread, cool drinks, and sweets. One has to travel to Philippi or Gugulethu, neighbouring townships shown in the 2015 aerial image (Figure 4), for a mall-like experience. For recreation, children play together or alone along the sides of roads with anything they can find, from tyres to crates, bottle tops and sticks, and soft toys to action figures. There are four play parks that provide play equipment for children in an enclosed area. They are small, and two of them completely tarred. There is a soccer field used for club soccer and a community centre that offers after-school activities for those children who enjoy them. For adults there are a few shebeens,<sup>9</sup> but not many.

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<sup>6</sup> A local term for maize/corn cooked on an open fire.

<sup>7</sup> A South African method of cooking meat on a grill over a fire.

<sup>8</sup> Informal home-based and pavement shops.

<sup>9</sup> An informal establishment that sells alcohol.

Socialising mainly happens around the food traders or at people's houses. Public open space is rare and is often used for dumping (see Figure 9 below) and anti-social behaviour, such as gang violence.



**Figure 8: Spaza shop along Miller Road, Nyanga (9 May 2017)**



**Figure 9: Dumping on municipal public open space (5 July 2017)**

Dwellings in Nyanga vary significantly in structure, quality, cost, and history. There are old and newly built houses that are owned and chosen by the home owners, who noticeably spend money on them (see Figure 10 below). In comparison, the houses built under the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which started post-1994, are given to people whose names are on a waiting list, and are often of poor quality and difficult to maintain (see Figure 11 below). The old house hostels are spacious and of good quality, but they are either privately owned by a third-party company, or they are owned by the municipality. The newer hostels that have been built as flats (see Figure 8) are poorly managed and often require maintenance from the municipality, which is the landlord of each block. Informal housing, introduced above, comprises shacks, which have many structural issues affecting their quality. Apart from the hostel blocks, there are few high-rise buildings in Nyanga.

A thriving informal economy operates in the informal trading stands that line some of the streets, as well as in some people's homes. At various street corners old and used shipping containers occupy public space as premises for small businesses, such as hair salons, play areas for arcade games, and take-away food shops selling amagwinya.<sup>10</sup> The transport hub of Nyanga at the bus terminus houses both the minibus taxi offices and the informal market sector that sells anything from cleaning products to furniture. Enmeshed into daily life, the informal and formal operate to meet the needs of the socio-economic and cultural diversity in Nyanga.

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<sup>10</sup> Small unsweetened deep-fried dough often stuffed with curried mince or polony (processed meat)



**Figure 10: Old houses (19 July 2017)**



**Figure 11: RDP houses in the foreground and new hostel flats in the background (19 July 2017)**

With the context of my study area in mind, I now turn to the significance of examining sustainability in a township, such as Nyanga, where a rich history of environmental and social injustices has determined its viability today.

### **Urban Sustainability Challenges in South Africa**

In the South African context, the natural environment was racially divided during the country's apartheid era, when environmental issues were seen predominantly as white issues and confined to wildlife protection (Ramphela & McDowell, 1991). Apartheid spatial planning, starting with the Group Areas Act of the 1950s that separated those classified as so called White, Coloured, African Black/Bantu, and Indian, not only influenced people, but also urban nature (Aalto & Ernstson, 2016). The meaning of the environment, however, has changed during post-apartheid South Africa where it is seen more as a social, political, and economic issue, and has an effect on all citizens of the country (Ramphela & McDowell, 1991).

Cape Town's urban periphery and the city itself today are like the two oceans surrounding Cape Town's coastline: they converge but do not meet. They portray a dichotomous image, where green spaces on the periphery are still poorly maintained compared to those in the city and suburbs. In many township areas, formal recreational areas and green spaces are rare, poorly maintained, and often avoided for fear of crime (Cocks, et al., 2016). A seemingly low appreciation of green spaces is reflected in the image as a result of cuts in the municipality's maintenance budgets of these urban regions, for example (Chiesura, 2004). Pereira argues that sustainable development has failed to be implemented in South Africa because the judiciary and policy makers have failed to recognise that sustainable development is linked to equality, despite scholars stressing its transformative potential (Pereira, 2014). In South African cities, sustainability depends on the sensitivity of environmental expertise and the imagination, memory, cultural stories, and willing attitude of an active civil society.

The concept of urban periphery refers to the politicised residential conditions of poverty, administrative inequality, illegality, mobilisation, and urbanisation (Holston, 2008). It suggests a complex notion of inequality among the city's residents and symbolizes the development of residential neighbourhoods beyond the modern city centre where people live far from places of employment (Holston, 2008). South Africa's urban peripheries are

characterised by informality (in terms of forms of income generation and forms of housing), over-crowdedness, and unhealthy living conditions. As an unwanted legacy of apartheid, the townships on the urban periphery portray a stark environmental contrast with lush leafy suburban areas (which were previously classified as white only areas). Ramphela (1991, p. 5) describes this setting:

The squalor and sterility of the black segments of the urban areas are shocking. The only 'flower species' is the ubiquitous multi-coloured plastic litter, blown around by the wind from the heaps of garbage rotting in the streets.

However, another more recent representation of South African townships is described by Alcock (2015, p. 1):

*eKasi*, the *lokasie*, the township, once a swear word, a place to be feared, an apartheid ghetto, and yet today an amazingly transformed place. It's a vibrant eclectic mix of mansions, shacks, spaza shops, premium taverns, hawkers, taxis and hot wheels. To say I am a *kasi* boy or girl has a sense of urban cool, said with swagger; you're a survivor, a trendsetter, one of the mass majority of Mzansi, South Africa with its majority urban and peri-urban populations. That is not to say there isn't extreme poverty, suffering and dissatisfaction particularly on the peripheries, the huge shack settlements, but to paint the place as a slum, as a sad place, is a massive mistake. In this *kasi* there are vibrant businesses, energetic people, a tight networked social community, abundant hope and a glimpse of what our future is like.

This contemporary description of a peri-urban setting highlights the change in perception of the geographical and social space. It illustrates cultural and socio-economic diversity and portrays senses of community and belonging. The townships on the urban periphery are home to many people where social relations and networks are important in everyday living.

Therefore, the concept of home in peri-urban spaces warrants attention and exploration in urban research. More specifically to my study, the socio-ecological processes that inform

sustainability in such spaces are vital to interrogate and understand if the larger goal of producing a sustainable city is to be achieved.

### **Mapping the Journey Home**

This thesis is structured in seven chapters. This introductory chapter is the first chapter, which by now should have contextualised the study. Chapter Two is the literature review, which examines the trends and debates that have contributed to the discussion about socio-ecological processes in urban sustainability research. The main sections that feature in the review of the literature include an overview of practice theory followed by a discussion on sustainability, the themes relevant to forms of sustainability in Southern cities: environmental justice, environmental citizenship, environmentalism of the poor, pro-environmental behaviour, and household sustainability. I end the review by narrowing down my argument with a discussion about the concept of home.

In Chapter Three I present the methodology I used to carry out the study, which was ethnography. I describe in more depth the reasons for choosing this qualitative research method, what it entailed, and the limitations and constraints that I encountered along the way. The specific tools I used to gather my data included: observation, participation, interviews, a workshop, a diary, and photographs. I describe the particular field sites that I frequented to gather my data and present photographs to enrich such descriptions. My presentation of photographs extends throughout this thesis, as the visual tool of photography enlivens the text and provides the reader with a clearer image of the descriptions. I include in this chapter the process I used to analyse my data.

Chapter Four is the first of three analysis chapters and discusses memory as an enabler of sustainability. Memory is a major theme that resonates with the people in Nyanga who practice gardening. People's memories of home were either of their birth places, predominantly in the Eastern Cape, or they were associated with their childhood. I identified memories of home through the stories of individuals who recall gardens and farms they once knew, as well as my personal experience of a remembrance ritual. This chapter argues that people's memories of home are remembered through the act of gardening and thus shape sustainability in Nyanga. By practising gardening, people imbued a sense of belonging and reclaimed their identity in an unfamiliar urban setting.

Chapter Five looks into the sustainable livelihood practices in which people are involved to generate an income. Practices such as recycling, trading meat, and working in a community park are made possible through networking, innovation, and opportunity, which ultimately portray the hustle of everyday life in Nyanga. I argue in this chapter that making home in the township motivates innovative sustainable livelihood practices.

In Chapter Six, I examine the role that social relations play within the township that shape sustainability activities, such as the development of a community park and gardening. My argument in this chapter is that the contestations, predominantly relating to crime, and communality among community members determine how and why such activities are practised.

My final chapter, Chapter Seven, concludes this thesis. It brings together my arguments in the three analysis chapters and relates them to the concept of urban sustainability, discussed in Chapter Two. This chapter reveals that all three themes and their arguments relate to the notions of imagining home and home-making. It reinforces the idea of the temporality and spatiality of home as being critical to understanding more fully urban sustainability in a Southern city. It makes the case that the nuance of home can determine people's relations with each other and their environment, which can ultimately enrich urban sustainability research.

Furthermore, by relating the concept of home to urban sustainability research and my empirical evidence in Chapter Five, I ascertained that livelihood is a significant conceptual tool for research about home. Thus, by bringing together disconnected literatures, my study has devised a conceptual understanding of sustainability in a Southern city. Moreover, the concluding chapter considers how this ethnographic study in Nyanga can provide lessons for other township contexts. It also discusses noteworthy threads that have come through the analysis of my findings that include the implications of intergenerational practice and the role of women and home in sustainability that are both interesting analytical lines for future research. Finally, Chapter 7 offers the value of the study in relation to understanding people's everyday lives in complex and often multicultural cities of the global South.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

A nuanced conceptualisation of sustainability in a township setting in the global South is necessary to open up ways of thinking about the majority world's everyday practices in such a context. In many cities of the global South, governments are faced with the challenge of simply providing their populations with basic services, such as water, electricity, and housing, let alone addressing the efficiency or environmental quality of the systems that do so (Currie & Musango, 2017). Governance structures, such as environmental organisations, that might advocate for sustainability in Southern cities provide ways of interpreting it, but it is necessary to explore and understand what ordinary people are practising in their everyday lives to fully achieve sustainable cities. As Pieterse and Simone (2017) argue, cities must be explored through the everyday stories of the nuances of urban dwellers' lives. Thus, this chapter aims to review what is being debated about the ways in which ordinary urban citizens are or can be living sustainably.

In this thesis, I am interested in the assumption that the everyday consists of a complex layering of sustainable and unsustainable practices (Dowling & Power, 2011), which have different interpretations in different contexts. From a perspective of the global South, Currie and Musango (2017) argue that given the rapid urban growth expected in Africa, and the importance of providing basic services in an equitable and environmentally efficient manner, information on natural resource flows and the ways in which people interact with them is vital for effective decision making and implementation strategies. I argue that such information can be enriched by knowing about and understanding the practices and experiences of the ordinary urban dweller's daily life.

Jones and Murphy (2010) argue that in order to understand the complexities and the larger scales of sustainability, it is necessary to first closely explore and understand the micro-social activities and practices carried out and performed by people living and creating their everyday lives. They argue that by focusing on the routine, every day, and ordinary actions of individuals, "critical insights into the social, cultural, political, and/or material factors that shape contemporary social, economic, and environmental geographies" can be sought (Jones & Murphy, 2010, p. 376). Similarly, and aligned to Middlemiss and Gillard's (2015) study,

sustainability is often defined by macro-level indicators rather than the more nuanced image of lived experiences revealed in qualitative work. Furthermore, Masterson et al. (2019, p.561) argue, “participating in place-making work... seems to help people discover and enact the intertwinedness of social and ecological processes”. To take this notion of place further, Bulkeley and Gregson (2009) argue that when practice is used as a framing tool, the home as a domestic space has received much attention when viewed as a site for sustainability.

In the chapters that follow, I argue that particular place-based practices of home-making and imaginaries of home have sustainable effects that are seldom considered in the dominant literature on sustainable cities. In this chapter, I critically review some of the major themes in research on how urban citizens act in sustainable ways. Firstly, I acknowledge the role of practice theory in shaping this body of work. Subsequently, I examine the concept of sustainability itself, exploring its utility and limitations. I then review work on ‘environmental justice’ and ‘environmental citizenship’ before moving on to a discussion about the idea of ‘environmentalism of the poor’ and how it has helped to develop these debates in the global South. I then include work on ‘pro-environmental behaviour’ before I argue, drawing on work that links households, homes, and sustainability, that careful attention to domestic spaces and practices of home-making can enrich these understandings of how ordinary urban citizens engage in sustainability.

## **Practice Theory**

Practice theory asserts a close connection between natural and human worlds (Rouse, 2007) and explains the socio-spatial dynamics of processes, such as economic change, livelihoods, and governance (Jones & Murphy, 2010). It does so by exploring the dynamic and shifting relationships between people and things, and ‘having’ and ‘doing’ in practical routines of ordinary everyday life (Horne, et al., 2011). Hawkins and Race (2011, p. 113) assert that practices should be understood as “complex associations of materials, technologies, norms, and bodily habits that are sustained and modified through repeated performance or enactment”. Similarly, Mylan (2015) argues that practice theory offers a richer understanding of consumers and consumption, which goes beyond the economic (consumers as buyers) and socio-psychological (attitudes of consumers that drive their behaviour) views, by also accommodating practical and cultural aspects of use. As Shove

(2010) argues, understanding social transformation is about understanding how practices evolve and how systems and developments of practice form and fragment.

Particular to my study, it is important to understand how material and even imaginaries of things and places perform and extend through practice in shaping sustainability. Such understanding is not only about acquiring sustainable materials, but rather understanding the demand for them in terms of their use and meaning that underpin sustainability. Sustainability should be approached as a transformational process in which practices (and needs) co-evolve with new products and infrastructures (Mylan, 2015).

According to Evans et al. (2012, p. 2), theories of practice concentrate on:

the things that people do, and view unsustainable patterns of consumption as embedded in the social ordering of practices. In doing so, conceptual attention is paid to: habits (in the sense of self-actuating dispositions) and routines (as sequences of action); the dynamics of everyday life; social relations; material culture; socio-technical systems; cultural conventions; and shared understandings of cultural and technical competence.

Practice theory is, thus, used in a multitude of scenarios to determine how the everyday actions of people create, reproduce, or transform structural forms, such as production systems, institutions, communities, livelihood patterns, networks, markets, and power structures within and in relation to particular geographic contexts (Jones & Murphy, 2010). The practice itself (what people do, how they do it, and what the practice does) becomes the focus of analysis, shifting attention away from moments of individual decision making. From this view, potential for changing patterns of consumption does not depend on educating or persuading individuals to make different decisions, but on transforming the nature of the practices themselves (Mylan, 2015). A focus on practices can also help to identify inadvertent or improvisational activities of people and determine their implications for individuals, communities, economies, and environments (Jones & Murphy, 2010). Therefore, practice theory provides a useful framework to explore how ordinary people enact sustainability in their everyday lives.

Practice depends on the existence and specific interconnectedness of the following elements: material, competence, and meaning (Shove, 2012). Strengers (2012) elaborates on these elements and argues that practice depends on common understandings about what the practice means and how it is valued, practical knowledge about how to carry out and perform a practice, and material infrastructure that makes the practice possible, sensible, and desirable. Similarly, Horne et al. (2011) argue that characteristics of practice include mental activities or competencies of understanding, skills, and desire and not of the individual who enacts them. Adloff and Neckel (2019, p.1017) include imagination as a feature of practice, as “practices are more than just accompanied by imaginations; they would be impossible without them”. Those characteristics of practice, as well as those that require innovation or particular spaces, guide human action rather than the other way around (Horne, et al., 2011). Examples of such elements in the practice of gardening include the knowledge (skills) of how to plant specific vegetation that is water-wise and familiar from childhood (meaning and imaginary) in a specific space (infrastructure) and using particular tools and soil (infrastructure) to implement the gardening. All elements of gardening are interconnected to make the practice possible.

Furthermore, Spaargaren (2003) and Shove and Walker (2010) refer to the social practices approach to assert that consumer behaviour is enabled, constrained, and contextualised by systems of provision within the realm of daily life, such as food or cooking. In this thesis, the types of consumer behaviour and daily practices of people living in Nyanga can be determined by the availability of resources and infrastructure, and also the meanings they attach to such practices.

In terms of less sustainable patterns of daily life, Shove et al. (2009, p. 1) argue that the fast pace of city life and hyper-consumerism that comes with an instant gratification society are considered as “too much, “too fast” lifestyles. They assert:

Material civilisation in affluent, wealth-oriented consumer societies has been spinning out of control, and the pace of life is becoming too fast for personal well-being and environmental sustainability (Shove, et al., 2009, p. 1).

Imaginations of sustainability are embedded in current practices (Adloff & Neckel, 2019), those that are influenced by the characteristics of modern city life described above. Yet

understanding the present everyday practices and how they are shaped by past practices is as important as knowing how practices should be designed and implemented in the future in order to achieve sustainable cities. Adloff and Neckel (2019, p. 1016) argue, “practices aiming at sustainability are structured by the outcomes of earlier practices and by their interdependencies with material infrastructures and the earth system”. Therefore, the temporality of practices in cities plays a role in determining their sustainability.

To take the idea of temporality further, Jones and Murphy (2010, p. 371) argue that the focus on practices can “provide a grounded theoretical lens for understanding how a diverse range of processes and phenomena (e.g., learning, networks, governance, development, livelihood strategies) occur, evolve, and/or become transformed over time and in space” within and in relation to particular geographic contexts and spatial and temporal scales. Horne et al. (2011) explain that practices can be structured by past experiences and future visions; therefore, temporality is a key feature of practice theory. Moreover, many practices and interactions with material infrastructures create temporal order, as they extend into space and time (Adloff & Neckel, 2019), for example, when things age, we and our memories and identities age with them. As I will show in later chapters, memory and identity are important in shaping everyday sustainability in Nyanga.

Moreover, practice theory emphasises the importance of the micro-scale in providing a more nuanced understanding of everyday practices. I therefore argue that by focusing on the everyday practices of people living in specific Southern urban contexts that have sustainable effects, one can better understand how to implement and cater for sustainability in such contexts. Shove and Walker (2010) point out that the problems relating to the governance of unmanageable processes that represent the emergence, reproduction, and disappearance of more and less sustainable patterns of daily life can prevail when the knowledge and understanding of existing practices in specific contexts are unknown. Thus, the more that is known about practices that have (un)sustainable outcomes in particular contexts, the more likely such practices can be managed.

In the urban African context, Rao (2010) asserts that in order to survive in a African city, one has to create and invest in certain networks that are not those of the household networks or even ethnicity, but are different kinds of associations and cooperation, such as the stokvel

system.<sup>11</sup> Such networks are pivotal in understanding African urbanism from the everyday practices of ordinary African citizens, particularly given the realities of shaping livelihoods in the context of poverty and deprivation (Harrison & Rubin, 2016). The concept of 'environmentalism of the poor' is useful in developing an understanding of this context, as I discuss later.

Parnell and Walawege (2011) argue that Africa's rapidly expanding urban areas are likely to experience the biggest impact of global environmental change over the next thirty to fifty years because of population growth, as well as weak capacity and infrastructure of nations to manage urbanisation and environmental change in cities. Therefore, as Pieterse (2011a, p. 14) asserts:

We urgently need to move towards a more dispassionate approach to the real city, the real economy and the real social practices and identities of the majority of urbanites who are building our cities if we want to make sense of them, and we need to do this in terms of a much more layered theoretical framework that can foreground the specificity of spatial practices in our diverse cities and towns.

Practice theory provides a lens to sharpen our view on how cities of the global South function. In diverse cities, such as those in Africa, understanding the layers of diversity and culture, as well as scale, demonstrated through practice is required to fully capture how such cities function sustainably.

As Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003, p. 914) argue, "urbanised nature is a crucial material and symbolic good that is embedded in and engenders urban social conflicts and struggles along class, gender and cultural cleavages over its use and control". The diversity of culture and growth of Southern urban populations play a significant role in the sustainability of natural resources, particularly at the everyday and ordinary individual and community levels, and such a role is something that we know little about. Thus, if we want to know and predict the different paths towards sustainability, we must understand what enables and constrains practices that inform sustainability and which practices are currently being

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<sup>11</sup> South Africa's informal version of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations where members of a group contribute an agreed periodic amount to a central 'collective savings vehicle' known as the central pot. See <https://www.gsb.uct.ac.za/stokvels> for further reading.

performed and in which contexts. In the next section I tease out some of the complexities and debates of the concept of 'sustainability'.

## **Sustainability**

Many interpretations of urban sustainability have been formed as a response to new environmental challenges, one of the most topical being global climate change (Ermolaeva, 2017). Examples of addressing such challenges often involve large scale objectives of urban economic developmental growth that include decarbonisation of material production and the management of consumption and its impacts, such as waste, energy, water, and transportation (Chang, et al., 2018). From a socio-ecological perspective, environmental management and social justice issues have traditionally been addressed using economic activities to satisfy international sustainability goals (Hodson & Marvin, 2017). Yet, as Hodson and Marvin (2017) argue, the capacity of cities to develop responses to such issues is often limited by a combination of economic austerity and reductions in municipal budgets. Furthermore, with differing ideals of progress towards sustainability in current times, environmentalist engagements with technological solutions to environmental concerns have changed and diversified, such as in the renewable energy sector (Davison, 2011). However, sustainability is made visible to the ordinary citizen through the practices it enables, normally involving material things and, as a concept, incorporates the balancing of social, economic, and ecological processes.

In recent times, some scholars have argued that a focus on sustainability has failed to “meaningfully change the human behaviour that created the Anthropocene”<sup>12</sup> (Benson & Craig, 2014, p. 778). Scholars acknowledge that within sustainability literature a sense of “placelessness” exists with regards to how geographical context and socio-cultural meanings vary, which has an effect on what sustainability might mean for ordinary citizens (Gibson et al. 2011, p. 20). In addition, scholars argue that sustainability research fails to focus on the socio-environmental relations and injustices of urbanisation (Heynen, et al., 2006). Although Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003), for example, insisted almost two decades ago that urban socio-ecological processes are inherently social and material, “yet embedded in discursively scripted and culturally imagined understandings”, Temper et al. (2018) point out that to

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<sup>12</sup> The Anthropocene is a geological era defined by Benson and Craig (2014) as collective human behaviour rather than by natural environmental fluctuations or meteorite impacts.

date, sustainability literature still does not pay sufficient attention to the social in transformations to sustainability.

Urbanisation is a process of constant social and ecological change that produces particular urban environments (Swyngedouw & Kaika, 2003), and the creation of sustainable cities is not simply a technocratic planning and urban design practice, but is part of a wider set of socio-ecological processes of regulation (Whitehead, 2003). There is agreement among scholars on the need to appreciate the entanglement of the social and ecological to theorise practices of urban sustainability. However, a more conceptual challenge to sustainability theory is that the study of human-nature relationships remains divided between the social and natural sciences, as well as between theoretical and empirical approaches. Some scholars, therefore, argue that the challenge is compounded by the compartmentalised disciplinary approach of scientists and researchers, and professionals and policy-makers, who interpret problem-specific actions rather than using an integrated framework and holistic approach (Barr, 2008; Lawrence, 2011). As Horlings (2015b) argues, the concept applies not only to environmental challenges, such as pollution, the availability of natural resources, and species protection, but also more broadly to human and social development, including human rights, good governance, and solidarity. These are concepts that I will discuss further in the next section of this chapter.

Granderson (2014, p. 61) adds to the argument about concerns to research, such as “agency and structure to place, space and scale, as well as the material, symbolic and every day”, which require the appropriate conceptual and methodological tools for examining and interpreting the realities and meanings of urban sustainability. Moreover, Lane and Gorman-Murray (2011, p. 220) refer to the “missing scale” in current environmental policy debates around urban sustainability, alluding to the household level or home space as the focus area necessary to address sustainability issues. Household sustainability and the concept of home are important themes in the literature that I will bring into the review towards the end of this chapter.

Drawing on these interdisciplinary concepts might foster greater understanding of the practices that contribute to sustainability (Chapin III & Knapp, 2015). The disconnect between political and ecological values and both the micro-scale of the everyday and macro-scale political, cultural, and physical landscapes of cities, Schlosberg and Coles (2016, p. 167)

argue, has resulted in “new groups and movements with a different much more embodied and applied idea of appropriate and necessary political action”. They argue that the ordinary citizen is increasingly focusing on building new collective organisations, such as NGOs on a broader scale and Street Committees on a neighbourhood level, and through everyday practices of material sustainability, such as recycling and vegetable gardening, rather than accepting unsustainable practices of institutions and political action (Schlosberg & Coles, 2016).

The important question, then, is how are citizens engaging with the socio-ecological challenges that affect their communities in order to contribute to sustainability? Giddings et al. (2005) argue that when there is an emphasis on people as consumers rather than as citizens, an image of exclusion and polarisation is portrayed, which restricts effective and meaningful civic engagement. Moreover, within the South African urban context, different sectors of society (historically, and still today, demarcated by race and gradually by socio-economic status) will carry different meanings and interpretations of sustainability and how their daily practices might influence it (Patel, 2005). Such differences lead the discussion into the next section about the concept of ‘environmental justice’.

### **Environmental Justice**

Environmental justice is an important aspect of urban sustainability. In fact, environmental justice and sustainability studies suggest that urban justice and sustainable development are not only compatible but interdependent (Fujita, 2009). Agyeman and colleagues point out that the concept of environmental justice emerged as part of the civil rights movement in the United States of America (USA) with links to race and poverty, and the environment (Agyeman, et al., 2016; Agyeman, et al., 2003a). The movement has also linked justice with a range of socio-ecological issues, including “environmental goods and bads, consumption, service provision, climate change, resource extraction, intergenerational justice, access to ‘white spaces’, and sustainability” (Agyeman, et al., 2016, p. 328). In South Africa, the environmental justice advocacy emerged in the early 1990s with the predominant environmental concerns being wilderness and nature conservation based on colonial and post-colonial ideology (Martinez-Alier, 2002, cited in Walker, 2009). In more recent times, environmental justice has broadened its boundaries and focus to engage a wide range of environmental and social equity issues, such as climate change, transit justice, community

development and land-use planning, food security, and access to parks, green space, and other amenities (Walker, 2009).

Harvey (2000) suggests that the definition of environmental issues often involves some kind of bias, with those that affect the poor, the marginalised, and the working classes repeatedly being ignored and those that affect the rich and the elite few tending to be highlighted. Other scholars make reference to such a dichotomy as, “‘full-stomach’ environmentalism of the North as well as the ‘empty-belly’ environmentalism of the South” (Guha & Martinez-Alier, 2013, p. xxi). The unequal distribution of the issues of pollution and access to environmental resources, the right to be involved in decision-making, and the recognition of people’s alternative views and understandings of development are among the dimensions of environmental justice that Temper et al. (2018) discuss. Such inequality is a reality in cities of the global South, where economic and social injustices exist in the form of unequal distribution of ecological space and services (Dobson, 2003; Karlsson, 2012).

Since the conception of sustainable cities was formed on a model of global economic organisation, as Hodson and Marvin (2017) argue, systemic inequalities and increased concerns about the state of the city and social justice are a reality. They assert, “the sustainable city appears to be weakening as the dominant policy or research discourse of the future of the urban environments” (Hodson & Marvin, 2017, p. 9). In other words, political agendas have focused on economic growth rather than on environmental legislation resulting in resource depletion and pollution that burdens the worlds’ poor and minority communities. Instead, the economy should be regarded as being indistinguishable from people’s livelihoods and not simply as the production, consumption, and possession of commodities (Giddings, et al., 2005).

According to Fujita (2009), power relations in the form of political will provide solutions to turning injustice and unsustainability around. Furthermore, government action may be instrumental in providing financial and other resources to communities that may be able to use them with sustainable results (Eady, 2003). Thus, there is reason to advocate for the concepts of inequality and power relations to be central to a dialogue on environmental justice and sustainable development (Blowers, 2003). An additional aspect of power relations in the environmental justice literature is the idea of people practising their environmental rights as victims rather than practising responsibility towards the

environment as individual or collective citizens (Middlemiss, 2010b). In other words, concerned citizens engage in activism through protest marches against water pollution, for example, rather than actively taking matters into their own hands by clearing litter from rivers, for example, for the benefit of the community and environment.

In cities of the global North, governments, organisations, and businesses are recognised as advocates and enablers of environmental justice to the development of sustainable communities (Agyeman, et al., 2003b). From a Southern perspective, however, rapid urbanisation has played a major role in the social and environmental injustices seen today. Some cities have experienced rapid socio-spatial transformation, with visible consequences, such as segregation of people, urban structures left decrepit, and large public spaces left physically and environmentally under resourced and degraded (Inzulza-Contardo & Cruz-Gambardella, 2014).

Yet some Southern cities have transformed in a positive way. For example, Holsten (2008, p. 156) illustrates the socio-spatial transformation in Sao Paulo's urban periphery as a "drama of extraordinary change" where "spaces have become redefined, superimposed, and layered in new spatial arrangements and adjusted to new social circumstances". Grandin et al. (2018, p. 1) express such transformation as a "reorientation of development pathways towards social justice and sustainable development", which involves fundamental change in institutions, human behaviours and values, and in technologies. However, they acknowledge that such transformation is "inherently political, leading to unequal outcomes and struggles over different transformation pathways" (Grandin, et al., 2018, p. 1). The global trend towards achieving sustainable cities is seemingly about political gains and economic development through technological solutions, and subsequent polarisation of social and environmental resources.

Further debates about environmental justice relate to its compatibility with sustainability. Scholars who argue that sustainability is about acknowledging the interdependency of social justice, economic well-being, and environmental stewardship advocate for the importance of the social dimension, as an unjust society is unlikely to be environmentally or economically sustainable (Agyeman, et al., 2003b). The objective of environmental justice, according to Dobson (2003), is fair distribution of environmental risks, such as landfill sites, across or within an area or region. Therefore, if environmental sustainability assumes the

reduction of waste that ends up in landfills, environmental justice instead is not about the reduction of waste but rather about distributing existing waste more fairly between poor and wealthy areas (Dobson, 2003). Similarly, if an affluent area in a city has parks and community gardens, such amenities should be equally available and accessible in the marginalised areas of townships, for example. In this case, environmental justice is not about the ecological benefits of natural public open spaces, but rather about the fair distribution of these spaces for the benefit of all citizens.

Sustainability from a social or societal point of view is concerned with ensuring an equal society within and between generations. Sustainability is about considering current human developmental needs and those in the future, but environmental justice prioritises the needs of people who currently exist (Agyeman, et al., 2003a). Ultimately, the concept of sustainability can be seen as a pursuit for improving and sustaining quality of life (Horlings, 2015a). Enhancing quality of life in accordance with individuals' attitudes, choices, and values negates the understanding that practices, and the demand they create or require, are constantly changing, often in unpredictable and unexpected ways (Shove, 2003). As discussed in the Practice Theory section of this chapter, such change occurs when the elements of practice (material infrastructure, meanings, and/or knowledge) change. Civic activities can play a role in adapting to, coping with, and transforming in response to environmental challenges and change (Masterson, et al., 2019) through practices of activism and protest relating to a place of value, for example. Thus, place attachment can demonstrate, describe, and predict how practices of stewardship for the sake of sustainability can play out.

Some scholars argue that environmental sustainability practices, such as those that reduce waste, are enacted when there is social justice in the form of access to resources, fairness, and civil rights, for example. I would argue that if South African communities had to rely on environmental justice movements that strive for sustainability to be a reality in poor areas, then sustainability practices would be aspirational rather than implementable. In such contexts, everyday sustainability practices are not outcomes of environmental justice movements or the defending of human rights, and do not necessarily result from power shifts between the wealthy and the poor. Nor are people practising sustainability by identifying as victims of their socio-ecological injustices. Rather, their sustainability

practices are in some large measure about attachment to place, a sense of dignity, and stewardship, as I propose and discuss in later chapters.

Schlosberg (2007, cited in Agyeman, et al., 2016, p. 327) argues that environmental justice should encompass more than just the unequal distributions of environmental impacts and responsibilities, and should include, among other things, “inclusion or exclusion in participation and procedure, and the provision and protection of the basic capabilities or needs of everyday life”. When people understand that a city is an agglomeration of “rhythms; flowing goods, people and services constantly moving and being moved in complex networks of exchange and power” (Ulia Dantas e Sa, 2010, p. 206), they are able to acknowledge that the social networks that are emerging and fit in to the complexity of some urban areas are benefitting their communities and the cities in which they live. Describing a city as a complex system means considering the empirical connections within the system, “examining them up close to find out how they relate to one another within a particular context, and working out what effects these interactions have” (Swilling & Annecke, 2012, p. 14). Ultimately, the complexity of cities is largely about the social relations and networks they encompass.

Thus, in order for social and environmental justice and sustainability to occur, all stakeholders in their various networks, including the relations between local community members, must be involved in the decision and policy making processes (Agyeman, et al, 2003b). Similarly, Fujita (2009) argues that in order to achieve sustainability, new styles and systems of participatory governance and civic engagement across all spatial scales, particularly at the local scale, are necessary. This participatory approach leads into the concept of ‘environmental citizenship’, which I discuss next.

### **Environmental Citizenship**

One aspect of the social dimension of sustainability is the need to develop methods of inclusive decision making that “actively engage the relevant interests and communities in thinking through and deciding upon the kind of future they want to try and create” (Robinson, 2004, p. 380). The practices promoted by various forms of environmental governance in recent times carry new forms of social and environmental ethics and associated responsibilities that influence the way in which individuals understand their own identity in relation to both society and nature (Lane & Gorman-Murray, 2011). No longer

willing to take part in unsustainable practices and institutions, and not satisfied with purely individualistic ways of living responsibly, some individuals focus on building new collective organisations around everyday practices of material sustainability (Schlosberg & Coles, 2016). In such cases, citizens are encouraged to contribute to the social good of sustainability (Scerri, 2011). For example, by taking responsibility for a collective problem, such as a polluted public open space, a group of people could unite to clean up the space and make it a safer environment for the entire neighbourhood.

Similar to principles of environmental justice, these new materialist movements illustrate a growing resistance to participating in the flows of power that reproduce practices that damage ecosystems or contribute to climate change. In embodying new forms of power, and being part of more sustainable flows of food, energy, and other everyday needs, these movements simultaneously express forms of resistance and empowerment (Hobson, 2013), which constitute practices of environmental citizenship. Kennedy (2011) argues that acting with others allows for a major impact on political and social change and makes sustainable living more inspiring, more rewarding, and easier. Through education and outreach programmes, individuals' sense of environmental citizenship can develop further, leading them to take on more sustainable practices by forming relationships in their neighbourhood based on common environmental values and practices within an informal social structure (Kennedy, 2011).

Community-based organisations, such as schools, places of worship, social groups, clubs, and other community groups, can mobilise citizens to take on more sustainable behaviours by playing a part in persuading individuals to reduce their impacts on the environment and on other people (Middlemiss, 2010a). This kind of action can be identified as a framework for environmental citizenship to understand how involvement in informal social networks influences citizenship activity, including household level sustainable daily practices (Kennedy, 2011) and methods of sustainable trade amongst local citizens (both of which will be discussed later on in this chapter). In other words, by forming or participating in an informal social network that educates people about, influences, and practices sustainable living, one can be part of the social transformation that results from the work of such networks.

Through social connections within communities, active citizens and grassroots organisations have more potential to adopt alternative technologies and create pressure for sustainability transitions in the everyday lives of urban dwellers (Grandin, et al., 2018). Social urban stewardship manifests from connectedness between people and place (Hiss, 1990), as it gives people a sense of responsibility. An ethic of respect for places and associated resources can foster stewardship, which is often strengthened through social ties with other people that have similar cultural roots (Chapin III & Knapp, 2015). Svensden (2009) suggests that urban stewardship is an approach that may encourage the type of local community cohesion that is crucial for defending Southern cities against periods of economic hardship, increasing crime rates, environmental ruin, and neighbourhood segregation and xenophobia.

In support of this view of urban stewardship, Folke et al. (2011) argue that any efforts to create sustainability transformations should involve strategies for “reconnecting to the biosphere,” which entails a view of humans and nature as “an integral whole within which a healthy planet is the premise for economic and social development” (Folke et al., 2011, cited in Olsson et al., 2014, p. 1). Human and environmental interactions, as Gandy (2006) suggests in his notion of New Urbanism,<sup>13</sup> can be re-established through natural features, such as public parks, botanical gardens, and tree-lined boulevards. A complementary approach is to capitalize on the attachment that people feel to particular places or attributes, such as biodiversity and public open space, as a motivation for environmental citizenship (Chapin III & Knapp, 2015). In contrast, the setting of my study area was spatially designed according to apartheid planning, and reconnecting to the biosphere through such natural features was not part of the spatial plan. Urban stewardship evident in the township, therefore, manifests in different ways, which I describe in my analysis chapters.

An example of active citizenship in re-establishing a connection to the natural environment in a different Southern urban setting is evident in Sao Paulo, where a civic organisation accomplished improvement in a particular neighbourhood by developing a community park as a result of mobilisation of its residents (Holston, 2008). Ultimately, an environmental

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<sup>13</sup> Gandy (2006) refers to “New Urbanism” in urban design processes that are influenced by sustainability and nature-based formations. He explains, “Urban design becomes an extension of beauty in nature whether reflected in the geometric arrangement of space or the embellishment of urban life through gardens, fountains, and other meticulous appropriations of nature within the fabric of the city” (Gandy, 2006).

justice element was demonstrated here, showing that spaces of re-imagination, where, as Temper et al. (2018) suggest, alternative ways of thinking and doing are “disputed and reshaped in a dynamic and multi-scalar learning process”. Holston (2008, p. 239) describes the transformation:

...[W]here there was once a huge and unhealthy garbage dump, we got it filled in. Today it is a park with its own name, *Spring Park*. We hope that through one more struggle we are going to make, to get recreational facilities for it.

Agyeman & Evans (2006) argue that in most societies, particularly those in the global South, many citizens are effectively removed or treated as outcasts from citizenship by virtue of race, ethnicity, class, gender, or age. Their argument relates to the rights element of environmental justice, which shows deeper implications for socially excluded groups, who cannot access natural resources, for example. Whitehead (2007) argues that although existing forms of citizenship are framed almost exclusively around the rights of human subjects and the responsibilities of humans towards other humans, the notion of sustainability suggests a greater awareness of the rights and responsibilities which flow between humans and non-humans. Environmental rights of this kind are often now included in the written constitutions of some nation-states (Dobson, 2003), including in the South African Constitution (Act 108 1996), which enshrines the right “to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being and to have the environment protected through reasonable legislative measures”.

In South Africa, the local government administrative structures were agents in executing the racist policies of the apartheid system by enforcing segregation, instigating forced removals, and destroying informal settlements. Therefore, many people still mistrust local government and do not participate in formal government processes. However, South Africans do have experience of forming community-based grassroots movements in the fight against apartheid, where the mobilisation of thousands of people demanding freedom and equal rights for all South Africans created community action. Therefore, it would seem that social change has to be organised, mobilised, and indeed, planned (Williams, 2004) by the citizens who desire human-nature connection in their communities through social interventions. According to Adloff and Neckel (2019, p. 1020), cities of the global South are proposing their

own ideas of “collective autonomy, subsistence, dignity, and a good life in harmony with nature” rather than conforming to ideas of sustainable development in the global North.

As an example of such ideas from a Southern perspective is the social intervention that involves a collective of residents in Sao Paulo, as mentioned above, that includes projects of self-help and mutual assistance to improve conditions of life that the government has failed to manage, and demonstrated to the government its own absence and negligence as a service provider of essential needs for the well-being of its citizens (Holston, 2008). This development of a community park on a waste dump is an example of a platform created for people with different ideas by people who come together in their “webs of interconnection” for sharing of knowledge and ideas with a common goal (Bridge & Watson, 2001, p. 7). Similarly, Gutberlet’s (2012) work describes social enterprises, where communities and NGOs work together, as collective action that makes a tangible difference in the quality of the environment and people’s livelihoods by physically working in the recycling industry. Inclusive waste management creates a sustainable transformation in enhancing the immediate physical environment, but is also an effective approach to generate employment for the urban poor and thus benefit the local economy.

This idea of social intervention relates to the concept of African urbanism where the everyday practices of citizens form social networks as survival mechanisms in socially unequal and degraded environments. Creating a livelihood through practices that have sustainable outcomes in an urban environment, as shown by Gutberlet (2012), provides a sense of purpose for those people trying to improve the quality of their lives that simultaneously produces environmentally sustainable effects. Such a case shows the innovative, imaginative, and alternative methods of people’s practices that are happening among a range of role-players and within social networks in the global South. This type of social innovation is symptomatic of cities, which Bridge and Watson (2003, p. 17) describe as symbolic and imaginative spaces, where:

[T]he imagination and the city are mutually constitutive and interwoven in countless ways and the membrane between specific sites of the city and memory and the imaginary is a porous one.

The innovative practices that emanate from memory and the imagination guide human action, as practice theory highlights. Thus, the social innovation characteristic of Southern

cities is more than who the individuals are and what they practice, but rather the imaginative spaces that shape their practices.

An example of an African city where a type of sustainable practice is taking place through social innovation and networking is in Dakar. Citizens assert their rights to the city by means of sustainable livelihood practices through “the power of dirt”, which refers to the city’s waste management industry. Within the social networks of the waste management practices, they affirm their relationships among a range of role-players, including the nation-state, the space of the urban environment, and to each other (Fredericks, 2013, p. 440). However, this form of environmental citizenship is more politically motivated than environmentally influenced. It leans more towards attaining rights to citizenship, but with consequent environmentally sustainable effects. This example demonstrates that environmental citizenship can be highly politicised instead of pragmatically implemented.

Looking at other explorations of environmental citizenship, some scholars fear that the severity of environmental problems might instigate the establishment of new rules and regulations that could move society towards an intensified set of hierarchies and controls, therefore, portraying the theory as authoritarian, and a betrayal of the ethical opportunities that allow for diverse and popular participation in environmental issues (Clark & Stevenson, 2003). I argue that political coercion to adopt sustainability practice is a short-term quick-fix idea to encourage sustainable ways of living, with an element of superficial meaning if political entities continue to support aspects of global capitalism that undermines the natural environment.

In addition, in the South African context, where the NGO sector is abundant and citizens are historically capable of collectively demanding for a better quality of life, there is a view, albeit a relatively dated but still valid one, of failure of sustainability initiatives to, firstly, create and maintain relationships between each other to have a collective and cohesive impact on communities, and secondly, link sustainability to survival for the most vulnerable in South African society (O’Riordan, 1998). O’Riordan (1998, p. 103) talks about the paradox playing out in the South African context where there is the scope for success for “loosely connected initiatives” that enable effective involvement of a variety of stakeholders, but without collective cohesion of initiatives there is a “lack of vision for a sustainable future”. In other words, in order for sustainability to be fully achieved in the South African context, the

different NGOs that strive for and promote sustainability should work in unison towards a common goal and vision for a more robust impact on society and the environment.

A further challenge of practising environmental citizenship is for social organisations to continue to influence sustainable ways of living so that they become the norm of daily life (Hitchings, et al, 2015). However, access and availability of resources and infrastructure to enable opportunities to live sustainably can be a challenge. This challenge relates to what many poor populations endure and will be discussed next.

### **Environmentalism of the Poor**

The environmentalism of the poor relates to practices and concerns in situations where the natural environment provides a livelihood for indigenous and rural poor populations (Martinez-Alier, 2014). Guha and Martinez-Alier (2013) argue that the environmentalism of the poor originates in social conflicts over access to and control over natural resources, such as conflicts between indigenous and poor communities and industry, or between rural and urban populations over water and energy. The social conflicts often have an environmental cause, with the poor trying to retain control over natural resources that are threatened by a national government agenda or by the capitalist market system (Guha & Martinez-Alier, 2013). In other words, when the environment is under threat but valued by indigenous people who rely on it for their daily livelihood and spiritual practices and rituals, such people defend the environment through physical conflict or protest. Value of and attachment to place foster practices of stewardship and social and ecological knowledge of place (Masterson, et al., 2019), all of which can lead to imaginaries of sustainable ways of living.

In the context of Nyanga, the majority of township dwellers have migrated from rural areas in the Eastern Cape where there is an abundance of natural assets that support livelihoods, such as agricultural and livestock farming. However, in the township to which people migrated, much of the natural landscape, such as trees and sand dunes, were cleared with the development of the township (as illustrated in the previous chapter). As I will demonstrate in my analysis chapters, some people living in this low economic area rely on and protect existing natural assets, such as community gardens, for spiritual and livelihood practices. Yet livelihood practices that have environmental effects happen in Nyanga as a result of broader socio-economic challenges, for example unemployment. Thus, there is a

different kind of association with the natural environment, one that is linked to sustainable livelihoods, and relates to African urbanism and quality of life.

African urbanism is represented in the ways in which individuals and households create relational networks within a city context of scarce resources (Harrison & Rubin, 2016). For Pieterse (2011, cited in Harrison and Rubin, 2016, p. 486), it is a concept that should be understood in the:

specificity of everyday practices of ordinary Africans as they stitch together livelihoods, aspirations, socialities, aesthetics and space amidst conditions of widespread poverty and deprivation.

It is a concept that revolves around the commitment, will, and citizenship of the population, which are important in the development of a sustainable city. Agyeman et al. (2003a) talk about sustainability as a need to ensure a better quality of life for all people, equitably, and living within the limits of natural resources at present and into the future (Agyeman, et al., 2003, cited in Whitehead, 2007). Interpretations of quality of life at a local level can be referred to as “individual concerns focused around employment, crime, and local environmental quality” (Barr, 2008, p. 95). I would argue that such interpretations of quality of life are highly indicative of the types of daily issues that people living in a township setting endure and aspire to improve.

For most developing countries, Whitehead (2007) argues that systemic poverty, which forces people to exploit their environment in order to survive, is the primary threat to sustainability. As a consequence, the primary challenge for sustainability in developing countries is to improve quality of life within the limits of the natural environment. A counter-argument is that people in urban settings, who have very few resources to begin with, are forced to use them sustainably, despite institutional challenges. For example, areas within a city may lack a recycling facility, which highlights the unevenness of resources with which some people from the same city have to cope; yet the people who inhabit these areas still recycle and sometimes in unique and innovative ways. In fact, Paling and Winter (2011) argue that sustainable household practices are taking place that are enabled by poverty. Rather than taking recyclable material to a recycling facility, people re-use material in other ways and, thus, save money.

Scholars have suggested that environmentalism in Southern cities highlights poverty as both the key concern of and contributor to environmental degradation, as opposed to environmentalism in the Global North, where the focus is on conservation of the natural environment (Lawhon, 2013). In many Southern cities it is common for 30–60 per cent of the urban population to live in informal settlements, which are stressful environments (Zapata-Campos & Zapata, 2013). Such settlements are commonly characterised by overcrowding and unsafe spaces, as well as by government neglect and the consequent unavailability of public services, such as street cleaning and waste collection (Zapata-Campos & Zapata, 2013). The overcrowding and neglect commonly result in the illegal dumping of waste in stormwater systems or public open spaces.

Together with economic inequality, and demographic and cultural changes, the domination of capitalist economies within cities such as Sao Paulo, has impacted on the ways in which the citizens use their public spaces and amenities (Inzulza-Contardo & Cruz-Gambardella, 2014). Moreover, the expansion of consumer-driven lifestyles in Southern cities has further negative impact on the natural environment (Anantharaman, 2017). In practice, to address inequality, a more balanced, inclusive, and holistic human-nature environment is required in order to satisfy sustainability standards, a public sense of place and community, and well-being. Swilling and Annecke (2012) argue that sustainable resource use is a precondition for poverty eradication and suggest that it can encourage innovation and new value chains that can stimulate future sustainable growth.

### ***Informality and Livelihood***

Sustainable resource use in the informal economy of most Southern cities is a type of economic activity that is based on social relations. It involves the “cognitive, interpersonal, habitual and conventional, civic and communal sources of economic behaviour, innovation and evolution” (Amin, 2000, p. 128). However, Swyngedouw and Kaika (2003, p. 575) argue that “in the proliferating ‘informal’ urban economies of many cities, environmental conditions are truly unsustainable in terms of maintaining human life”. The cities they refer to are Southern cities, where informal trading markets are the dominant form of income exchange. Thieme (2017, p. 6) describes informality in the South as:

all forms of urban practice from infrastructures that are centrally unplanned but locally cobbled together into makeshift arrangements

of provisioning, to the diversification of income opportunities being a matter of everyday common sense and risk mitigation.

Informality is a way of life for many Southern urban dwellers<sup>14</sup> where people are “accommodating social practices to the limits that surround them” (Dobson, 2007, p. 57). It is a way of life that many urban migrants tend to adopt to fulfil their aspirations of opening small-scale enterprises or increasing agricultural cultivation in their villages of origin through the profits they have made in cities (Englund, 2002). Schlosberg and Coles (2016) discuss the significance of the proliferation of community groups that incorporate crafting and making into their daily lives. They explain that in these informal movements, there is “the recognition of, and immersion in, the material relationships we have with the resources we use, and the transformation of means of production that have been both alienating and unsustainable” (Schlosberg & Coles, 2016, p. 164). They further suggest:

Becoming or supporting crafters using local labour and sustainable materials, or bringing the handmade back into everyday life, are simultaneously acts of individual resistance and institutional reconstruction... These practices embody a move to reclaim the processes of material life and the flows of capital, materials and power (Schlosberg & Coles, 2016, p. 164).

To elaborate on the sustainability of informal livelihood practices in Southern cities, Anantharaman (2014, p. 174) critiques negative views of sustainability in the South (for example, the criticism by Swyngedouw and Kaika (2003) above about informal livelihood practices in Southern cities being unsustainable). She asks:

How does ecological citizenship understand the livelihood practices of the poor whose actions produce the very same positive environmental outcomes that are produced by the voluntary and ‘virtuous’ actions of the well-off? (Anantharaman, 2014, p. 182).

Anantharaman (2014) alludes to the assumption that the livelihood practices of many people in the global South are environmentally unsustainable. However, her research into

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<sup>14</sup> UN-HABITAT data suggest that more than 60% of urban residents in Africa obtain employment and incomes from the informal sector. In other words, informality is the norm (Pieterse, 2011b).

sustainable waste management in Bangalore has shown that the livelihood practices of the poor can have an equally environmentally sustainable effect to the practices of the affluent. Aligned with Anantharaman's (2014) argument, Paling and Winter (2011) argue that rising modern consumption practices, such as increased use of technology and all forms of mobility, contradict the practices of the lower classes that are often environmentally sustainable (Paling & Winter, 2011). Rather, the perceived less modern practices of poorer people are not only sustainable, but are often more inclusive and do more to achieve sustainable lifestyles and a better quality of life.

For example, the unsettling, stressful, and unequal urban lifestyles of migrants who have maintained strong connections to home are arguably a cause for environmental action and efforts to protect nature (Bhatti & Church, 2004). Bhatti and Church's (2004) argument suggests that the stresses of daily urban life can encourage environmentally sustainable behaviour. Gardening by migrants who re-create gardens that evoke memories of their place of origin incorporating, for example, horticultural practices, practices of preparing and consuming food, traditional spiritual and healing practices, and neighbourly reciprocity, may represent a continuation of a former way of life, and ease the migrant household's transition to a new country or place (Taylor & Lovell, 2013). Such practices relate to the temporal order of practice and the creation of memory and identity referred to earlier in this chapter.

In South Africa, food gardens are a means to address urban poverty through food security schemes and enhancing livelihoods (Battersby & Marshak, 2013) for people living in marginalised areas.<sup>15</sup> Orsini et al. (2013) argue that urban agriculture represents a significant opportunity for increasing food production, improving individual health, stimulating the local economy, encouraging social cohesion, and ultimately, providing a sustainable environment. In addition to such social benefits, Battersby and Marshak (2013) argue that there is an environmental benefit from using waste water and solid waste in urban agriculture projects that can address some of the waste management challenges of developing cities. Moreover, Martinez-Alier (2014) argues that wealthier people of the North have generally lost the idea of the environment as their source of livelihood, and the

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<sup>15</sup> Food insecurity, including malnutrition, in Cape Town is severe and caused not by limited availability of food but by difficulty in accessing it (Battersby, 2011).

poor and largely rural populations of the South are more connected to the environment, and thus have a more intimate understanding of what is at stake in its management.

Consumption derived from practices of urban agriculture can be related to the concept of ethical consumption, not in the form of doing the right thing or acting ethically, but rather as ordinary, everyday consumption with the effect that is ethical (Gregson & Ferdous, 2015). Therefore, informal markets allow for ethical and sustainable consumption in that people produce and consume what they need, which in turn generates a sustainable and ethical livelihood. However, this type of sustainable production and consumption that is common to the global South has been overlooked, suggest Gregson and Ferdous (2015), as the debates about ethical consumption have largely been related to the imaginaries of the North. In forthcoming chapters I show how everyday practices with sustainable effects are typical in Nyanga.

Despite the multitude of benefits of urban agriculture in cities, ecological space is constrained in densely populated urban areas, such as informal settlements. Space in general is a limited resource due to contestations over land use priorities in contexts of politically motivated economic development, such as housing and commercial developments. Barthel et al. (2015) assert that without spaces in cities for gardens and urban agriculture, memories of how to produce food have nowhere to be re-imagined and reinvented. So, even though there are examples of sustainable livelihood practices happening in the global South, environmental justice still prevails as a crucial factor to help overcome societal environmental inequalities of resource distribution.

Moreover, the significance of the informal food market sector has been neglected in research and policy documents within South Africa (Battersby, 2011), despite its proliferation in urban areas and people's dependence on it. As a result of migration and resettlement of much of the black South African population, such dependence is shown in people's relationship of food with home and is evident in the black townships of South Africa (Crush & Tawodzera, 2017). Therefore, Battersby (2011) proposes that the informal food market sector's significant contribution to sustainability in urban areas warrants more attention and understanding in order to resolve the contestations between land use and development proposals.

Thieme (2017, p. 2) notes that informality is about “making a living through urban uncertainties” and refers to it as “the hustle”. Informal marketing in South African townships is a consumer-oriented form of trade and, therefore, is demand driven and provides food security and employment (Karaan & Myburgh, 1992). It emerged as a result of the Influx control policy in the apartheid era when people migrated from rural areas to cities and faced difficulty in finding employment (Lee, 2005). Consequently, consumers living in townships did not have easy and frequent access to major supermarkets, which led to large amounts of their income and time being spent on travelling to and from shopping centres or the Central Business District (CBD) (Karaan & Myburgh, 1992).

Essentially, informal food markets create socially just, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable food systems (Franklin, et al., 2011). Informal food markets not only contribute to the local economy, they have also been found to provide a sense of unity and belonging based on shared interests and cultural and social values (Karaan & Myburgh, 1992) by connecting people to each other. In contrast to this sense of unity, Soper (2008) argues that in today’s fast paced societies, food is often fast food, eaten on the run, and consumed in solitary and preoccupied moments. However, from a Southern perspective, Orsini et al. (2013) assert that urban farming not only provides a necessary source of income to people, but also plays the role of connecting the city to rural landscapes. In other words, the processes of production and consumption of urban agriculture are an important social aspect in people’s lives, where people can engage with each other and to people from distant homes. Food is a reminder of home (Blunt & Dowling, 2006) when farms producing vegetables and rearing cattle and sheep in homelands<sup>16</sup> are replicated in the newly formed homes in townships. Food gardens in the yards of urban residents and livestock that roam the streets of urban neighbourhoods are often symbolic of the connections to places of upbringing and homeland.

Recycling is another form of livelihood practice within the informal sector in Southern cities, such as the example in Sao Paulo previously mentioned. Informal waste recycling is said to be carried out by “poor and marginalised social groups” who resort to “scavenging/waste picking” for income generation and is widespread throughout urban areas of the global

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<sup>16</sup> Homeland is a term used by Blunt and Dowling (2006), who describe it as a place of national sovereignty and is a landscape of historical memory. Homeland was a term used in the apartheid era and referred to the rural areas from which black migrant workers came (Alcock, 2015).

South (Wilson, et al., 2006, p. 798). Wilson et al. (2006) mention reports showing that up to 2% of the population in Asian and Latin American cities depend on waste picking to earn their livelihood. A study in South Africa's capital, Pretoria, found that there is a negative perception of street waste pickers because of the work they do, which is considered to be "dirty" (Schenck & Blaauw, 2011, p. 412). Similarly, Fredericks (2013, p. 439) refers to the stigma associated with waste collection as "lowly" and "dirty work" in Dakar.

However, Schenck and Blaauw (2011, p. 412) argue that:

[T]hese people have found a way of supporting themselves, and at the same time (either consciously or unconsciously), they make an important contribution to environmental sustainability by reducing the amount of waste that goes to landfills and by providing material for recycling processes.

In Dakar, waste collection was once an abhorrent profession, but is now considered by many Dakaris to be "dignified" and even "noble" (Fredericks, 2013, p. 454). Waste management contributes to the ordering of the city, which is, Fredericks (2013) argues, a central component of producing a modern city. Such research, however, does not acknowledge the environmentally sustainable behaviour associated with such work, but rather its political meanings.

Anantharaman (2014, p. 177) describes the daily practice of "waste work" within the middle class and working-class home in Indian cities. She refers to this work as "thrifty habits" (p. 177) that include the sorting and selling of recyclables, such as newspapers, plastic and glass bottles, to scrap dealers for small amounts of money or for other goods such as plastic buckets or utensils (Anantharaman, 2014). Other thrifty habits practised include the repairing of goods several times before throwing them away and reusing old clothes to make cleaning cloths (Anantharaman, 2014). Anantharaman distinguishes between the intentions of people in the middle class and the working class towards such waste work: For the working class such practices or behaviour are a form of recycling that is done in the home to either make money or save money. However, for the middle class, she acknowledges that the act of recycling is often implemented for the status associated with behaving for the good of the environment.

## ***Opportunity***

It is, therefore, important to acknowledge that recycling is a source of livelihood in cities of the global South and is also an everyday practice that has sustainable consequences. The informal livelihood practices in Southern cities, as Thieme (2017, p. 2) describes:

emerge through diverse forms of making do, distribution and accumulation that turn devalued or invisible practices into meaningful though perhaps unconventional social and economic experiments.

For Thieme (2017), by producing the hustle economy, innovative opportunities emerge from everyday experiences of uncertainty within urban landscapes, where senses of belonging and purpose are created through the important social networks that stem from the hustle of daily life. Through such networks “resource problems are best solved by bringing points of production and consumption closer together” (Dobson, 2007, 95). In South African townships, such closeness is demonstrated through a matrix of consumer channels, relationships, communities, business interactions, and social networks (Alcock, 2015). Practices that occur through innovation provide new ways of creating unique value chains that simultaneously provide productive employment through existing knowledge and capabilities (Swilling & Annecke, 2012).

The practices described in this section allow people who live in marginalised urban areas of the global South to be self-sufficient in providing for and making their homes. Williams (2005, p. 60) best describes the meaning of self-sufficiency in the South African context as a means to:

generate a sense of dignity and pride in a community of the historically neglected and excluded, transforming ordinary people at the grassroots level into active citizens, directing and shaping their everyday lived experiences, congruent with the principles and ethos of the post-apartheid constitution of creating a caring and sharing society.

One of the most important human needs is dignity, which develops when people become self-reliant and self-sufficient (Swanepoel & De Beer, 2006). Swilling and Annecke (2012)

argue that being self-sufficient is what all people should aspire to in order to address the consequences of inequality. In addition, being self-sufficient rather than relying on institutional support, is a potential path to improving quality of life, and, ultimately, creating the caring and sharing society that Williams (2005) speaks about above. The sustainable practices happening in Southern cities are more associated with the principles of African urbanism and the aspirations towards quality of life, as discussed throughout this section, than practices that relate to the concept of environmentalism of the poor.

Similar to the environmental justice movement, the environmentalism of the poor concept and practice may help to move society and the economy (local and national) in the direction of social justice and ecological sustainability (Martinez-Alier, 2014). However, others argue that the social transformation and environmental justice initiatives that are specifically committed to bring about more sustainable and equitable futures lack attention as transformative agents in sustainability transformation processes (Temper, et al., 2018). To address this significant gap in our understanding of sustainability transformation, Olsson et al. (2014, p. 1) suggest that change in human and environmental interactions and feedback are required through “systemic shifts in values and beliefs and patterns of social behaviour”. The next section of this chapter describes pro-environmental behaviour and the social values that influence it as ways to address sustainability challenges.

### **Pro-Environmental Behaviour**

Pro-environmental behaviour is the behaviour of doing what is right to help protect the environment with the intention of improving the negative impact of one’s actions on natural and urbanised environments in general daily practice (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002; Mobley, et al., 2010; Stern, 2000). Pro-environmental behaviour can be mindfully or consciously actioned by individuals, who incorporate ecological considerations and responsibilities in their day-to-day lifestyles in order to ameliorate negative consumption impacts (Jagers, Martinsson, & Matti, 2014), such as over-consumption of material items and the impact of food choices and wasteful water usage. Lifestyle changes to accommodate pro-environmental behaviour can be motivated by morality where individuals understand their environmental responsibility and voluntarily choose to change their behaviour by trying to ‘do their bit’ in the world, either by adopting a green lifestyle or by changing everyday behaviour in small yet manageable ways (Barnett, et al., 2005; Hobson, 2013).

In the context of sustainability debates, proponents of pro-environmental behaviour argue that human values can provide insight as to why people take action and contribute to environmental change, how they value things, and what meanings they associate with place and the environment (Horlings, 2015a). Behavioural responses as a result of values determine the type of practices people commit to in their daily lives. Environmental sustainability can derive meaning and significance from social values, which define what communities think is worth protecting and doing (Granderson, 2014). Social values are responsible for shaping much of our intrinsic motivation, but what shapes social values is complex and considered to emerge from: childhood experiences in nature; experiences of environmental destruction, near to one's home, for example; familial pro-environmental values; environmental organizations; role models, such as mothers and teachers; and education from parents or school (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Humans can imbue intrinsic moral motivation to protect nature based on the notion of nature being equally as valuable as humans, and such morality plays a crucial role in motivating reduced consumption behaviour (Barr, 2007).

Much research has been done on waste management behaviour, which shows human values, such as feeling good about recycling and gaining satisfaction from acting frugally (Barr, 2007). In addition to Barr's (2007) research, Barr and Gilg (2006) argue that those individuals who gain satisfaction from environmental action, such as being frugal as opposed to being materialistic, or recycling material instead of adding to waste sites, were more likely to maintain their behaviour, as satisfactions that create a sense of well-being and self-worth appear to influence the continued behavioural commitment of the individual. This notion is supported by van der Werff et al. (2013), who argue that environmental self-identity influences behaviour via an obligation-based intrinsic (moral) motivation, meaning that people with a strong environmental self-identity will be more likely to feel morally obliged to practise in a sustainable way. Gibson et al. (2011, p. 19) argue, "the more one might be defined by a green identity, the more likely that everyday decisions will be informed by choices, attitudes, and practices that purport to be environmentally friendly". So, the argument here is that by identifying as a person who cares for the environment or supports environmental initiatives, for example, one is likely to pursue an everyday sustainable lifestyle.

Although living a sustainable lifestyle is often considered to be the right thing to do, it can be less profitable, less pleasurable, more time consuming, or take more effort than environmentally-harmful actions (Steg, et al., 2014). For example, organic products are often more expensive than regular products, and using public transport is perceived as less convenient, slower, and less pleasurable than travelling by car (Steg, et al., 2014). Recent research shows that people who live for pleasure in their lives are likely to disengage from living sustainably, because such lifestyle is perceived as not being pleasurable or fun (Steg, et al., 2014). Therefore, the argument is that since most sustainability practices are seemingly not fun to perform, obligation-based intrinsic moral motivation is important for the regular or continuous enactment of pro-environmental behaviour instead of relying on the enjoyment of enacting such behaviour (Steg, et al., 2014). These differences in behaviour can be related to wealth, as the majority of poor people cannot afford a so-called pleasurable lifestyle, such as travelling by car. Hards (2013) argues that certain energy practices, for example, are more often associated with status than others, and that these status-enhancing practices are accessible only to the affluent. The effect of affluence and pro-environmental behaviour will be discussed later.

In contrast to the perception that sustainable lifestyles are less pleasurable, studies about the ways in which people relate to their plants, gardens, and flowers in their homes have shown that such relations reflect pleasure, because they can “restore and block out the demands and stresses of daily work and urban living” (Landazuri, et al., 2011, p. 127). Therefore, pleasure can be experienced in places with greenery, implying that pleasure increases slightly as people have a more positive perception of their green areas (Landazuri, et al., 2011). The implication is that maintaining plants and natural spaces is a sustainability practice that imbues pleasurable effects. Positive and pleasurable reactions to green places align with place related behaviour when green spaces that permeate pleasure can influence pro-environmental behaviour. Place related behaviour is elaborated on later in this chapter.

Whether pro-environmental practices are fun or pleasurable, or one feels morally obliged to participate in such practices, both aspects cannot guarantee the long-term viability of such practice. Gibson et al. (2011) assert that morality emerges from within social practice and not just out of aspiration towards altruistic ideals. Thus, moral practices are situation or context specific and the impact of urging people to behave responsibly or morally towards the environment can be limited. In addition, when people’s values are influenced by others,

their behaviour can change. Social influence on individual values towards sustainability emphasises the role of friends, relatives, and neighbours in constructing environmental awareness and encouraging sustainable enactments, especially with regard to highly visible activities, such as reduced consumption, kerbside recycling, and conservative water usage in gardens (Barr & Gilg, 2006). In addition to social influence, the structural and situational elements of pro-environmental behaviour warrant discussion, particularly in the context of my study. The sub-section that follows discusses the structural enablers and barriers of pro-environmental behaviour.

### ***Navigating the Structural and Situational***

Blake (1999) finds that theoretical approaches to complex relationships between different people's beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and actions towards the environment often failed to incorporate structural and situational aspects that enable or prevent individual environmental action. Blake (1999) talks about people's views of the environment in different social situations in which they live by using the insights of Myers and MacNaughten (1998, quoted in Blake, 1999, p. 265) in the following quote:

Research has shown that people do not have a fixed, rational and ready-made set of values that will be activated by particular calls to action; rather people's values are negotiated, transitory and sometimes contradictory. Different people will interpret and respond to the same environmental information in unpredictable and often highly variable ways.

Therefore, environmental knowledge and action “depend on how people link them to their everyday lives and their relations to organisations and others” (Myers and MacNaughten, 1998, cited in Barr, 2003, p. 228). In relation to practice theory, the practice that people perform from knowledge and skill interconnects with what the practice means and how it is valued, and the material infrastructure available to make the practice possible (Strengers, 2012). So, people's relations with and the ways in which they behave towards the environment ultimately depend on the main elements of practice (knowledge, meaning, and material).

Factors that can determine pro-environmental behaviour are about individual choice and perception of particular activities, which can fluctuate in frequency and capability. However, one does not always have the opportunity to act, because one can be physically unable to perform the act or mentally unable to interpret it, or, more specifically to Southern cities, because of situational constraints. The situational factors of sustainability refer to those that are economic and institutional. The former speak to the ways that people can be influenced by economic incentives to implement sustainable practices in their daily lives, as well as the financial unaffordability to implement such practices, and the latter are about sustainable practices taking place only if the necessary infrastructure is provided (recycling facilities and public transportation, for example) (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002).

From an economic perspective, laws and regulations that punish unsustainable actions, such as littering and other varying forms of pollution, and market approaches that align economic incentives with sustainability goals, such as green certification programmes, can motivate more sustainable resource use by focusing on policy and market instruments that incentivise desired outcomes (Chapin III & Knapp, 2015). Reliance on such incentive schemes instead of implementing regulatory strategies is common to some cities (Davison, 2011). However, people can also be disincentivised to behave responsibly when the cost of a sustainable action far outweighs the benefit.

As Stern (2000) notes, the situational factor of financial barriers may be a significant contribution to preventing behaviour change, such as the (often) higher price of organic products for some people, and the cost of installing solar and grey water systems in households of lower income status. In low-income urban areas of the global South, such technical systems are inaccessible because of the high costs involved in not only purchasing them, but also in installing and maintaining them. Thus, in these cases, constraints may even be so severe that behaviour change is very costly, and motivations make little difference in the behaviour of even the most environmentally ethical individual (Steg & Vlek, 2009).

An economic factor that seems to have received little attention is socio-economic status and its influence on sustainable practices (Hards, 2013). Socio-economic status is determined by an individual's or household's economic and social position in society, relative to others, and is based on financial security and education (Kennedy, et al., 2015). With the common assumption that "only those who are affluent enough to care about concerns beyond

immediate survival are able to devote energy to environmental problems and to engage in actions that demonstrate such concerns”, research has found that income is positively associated with participation in household energy saving and transportation energy-saving behaviours (Kennedy, et al., 2015). However, Whitehead (2007) argues that developing countries could become less receptive towards the notion of pro-environmental behaviour because of the local pressures of income generation in order to meet basic needs. His argument relates to the consequence of unequal resource distribution and the environmental justice theme already discussed in this chapter. Essentially, the argument suggests that affluent citizens are more able to support pro-environmental behaviour and sustainability than lower income citizens.

Yet research shows that from a Southern perspective, the urban poor, who have been historically and are mostly still marginalised, are involved in pro-environmental behaviour, such as waste-related activities for their livelihoods (Anantharaman, 2014). As discussed in the previous section, recycling of materials in cities of the global South is a reality of daily life and an important means of subsistence. Therefore, contrary to Whitehead’s (2007) suggestion, those people who are marginalised in developing cities *are* practising pro-environmental behaviour, but often unintentionally and for the purpose of income generation. The difference between the two types of cities is expressed by Bridge and Watson (2003, p. 111), who distinguish between sustainability in poverty-stricken cities and that in developed cities:

Sustainability means survival and is an everyday matter of life or death. In contrast, over-consumption of materials in most Western cities means that sustainability is about reducing consumption.

Kennedy et al. (2015) concur with Bridge and Watson (2003) and suggest that affluence does not always mean that pro-environmental behaviour is likely to occur, especially since those with higher incomes tend to consume more, own larger homes, and travel more frequently. However, in middle class India, people recycle their waste and compost green waste, which are considered as acts of ecological stewardship (Anantharaman, 2015). Thus, in this instance, the support for environmental protection is more strongly related to the quality of the natural environment in the participant’s area of residence, suggesting that other situational factors may have more influence on pro-environmental behaviour than affluence

(Kennedy, et al., 2015). Anantharaman (2015, p. 89) explains in her research that “because the middle classes [in Indian cities] to a large extent voluntarily decided to adopt sustainable waste management practices, they see themselves as citizens contributing to better cities and better planets”. Therefore, one’s socio-economic status is not necessarily a determining factor of pro-environmental behaviour, but rather one’s environmental identity and stewardship towards the environment.

In view of all that has been discussed in this section, anti- or pro-environmental actions, and more or less sustainable patterns of consumption, are not always seen as the result of individuals’ attitudes and values, affluence and status, and according to fun and pleasure. Rather, they are seen as embedded within social practices (Hargreaves, 2011). Scholars argue that behaviour change processes that focus exclusively on individuals’ explicitly pro-environmental attitudes and values fail to appreciate the ways in which social relations, material infrastructures, and context are intrinsic to the performance of social practices (Hargreaves, 2011). Bringing about pro-environmental patterns of consumption, therefore, does not depend upon educating or persuading individuals to make different decisions, but instead on transforming practices to make them more sustainable (Hargreaves, 2011).

From a perspective of material infrastructures, context, social relations, and sustainability practices, household sustainability is another important theme to discuss from sustainability literature. According to Hobson (2011), the home is considered as the primary space where pro-environmental activities take place in developed countries, such as England. Furthermore, Lane and Gorman-Murray (2011) express the significance of the household in sustainability research and that it has not been adequately conceptualised and analysed in the sustainability field. In the next section, I describe household sustainability and the ways in which it fits in with sustainable practices in the global South.

### **Household<sup>17</sup> Sustainability**

Policy interventions and economic incentives that are enforced by governments to encourage sustainable lifestyles, as discussed in the previous section, are challenged by

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<sup>17</sup> Household and home are used interchangeably in the literature. However, Collins (2015) views household as an organisational unit of which multiple individuals within the household have control, and interprets home as more than a household, as meanings and experiences of home are mediated through the organisational processes that characterise being a household. I use the term household in this section that describes a specific practice. I use the term home in the main argument of my thesis and in the penultimate section of this review.

scholars in the field of household sustainability. Hobson (2011) argues that quick-fix solutions to sustainability challenges, such as offering monetary incentives for individuals to implement change in their daily domestic lives, are inadequate to achieve noticeable and sustained domestic behavioural changes. Rather, practices, such as the re-use and recycling of clothing and furniture and the establishment of vegetable gardens are happening in households without the enforcement of top-down interventions. Thus, there is recognition of the need to consider and engage more deeply about the existing practices that people are enacting at the household level within debates about household sustainability.

Household consumption is an element of diverse practices of household sustainability and is dependent on times, places, and social contexts, including household organisation, types of economic exchange, and cultural traditions (Lane & Gorman-Murray, 2011). In some developing cities, the unsustainable domestic consumption practices seen today are a result of modernisation and the aspiration to live modern lifestyles. Paling and Winter (2011) highlight that modernisation happening in the developing city of Phnom Penh is not incorporating the more sustainable traditional form of architecture in housing, such as passive cooling rather than reliance on air conditioning. This is an example of the challenges faced in developing cities where modern aspirations trump sustainability in the household. It demonstrates how innovation and supposed advancement of a particular time and place can interrupt or disrupt conventional sustainability practice.

Despite the perception of some people living in developing cities that modern and consequent unsustainable lifestyles improve quality of life, there is evidence that small scale sustainable consumption practices at the household level are enacted today, which will have a long-term impact on quality of life. Examples include waste management practices, as demonstrated in previous sections of this chapter, purchasing used (second-hand) home furniture, as well as the general maintenance of homes that comprise both the interior and the exterior elements of the home (Horne, et al., 2011). To reiterate the argument of Lane and Gorman-Murray (2011) above, the household sustainability practices that people are doing and why they are doing them are determined according to people's everyday social contexts and circumstances.

Rather than focusing on the values and behaviour of individuals that determine their (un)sustainable practices, Lane and Gorman-Murray (2011) suggest that there is a need to

look at people's everyday lives as a collective, which may include the living and non-living elements of the neighbourhood, the dwelling itself, the bodies of those who inhabit it, and the objects, resources, and materials that move through the dwelling. The idea is that collective use of outdoor space can inspire social interventions to further improve neighbourhoods.

An example of the perspective of the neighbourhood relates to the aesthetics of the area that influences particular practices. Community gardening has been shown to be an effective means to improve degraded neighbourhoods and transform dangerous and neglected public nuisance spaces (Battersby & Marshak, 2013). Furthermore, various studies show that there is a relationship between neighbourhood appearance and perception of physical and social disorder,<sup>18</sup> and that safety perception depends on the use of the surrounding physical environment, including the possibility of social interaction among residents (Landazuri, et al., 2011). The social relationship with the physical environment suggests that certain social conditions are necessary to support practices, such as social interaction within treed outdoor spaces and community gardens, which are important to creating a city where people want to live (Trudeau, 2013). As already discussed, such interventions can also help to provide a sense of belonging when residents and neighbours look out for each other in times of stress.

Evidence about practices in outdoor spaces suggests that in American inner-city neighbourhoods, vegetation might introduce more surveillance on the street by increasing residents' use of neighbourhood outdoor spaces (Kuo & Sullivan, 2001). Moreover, such research suggests that treed outdoor spaces are consistently more well-used by youth, adults, and mixed-age groups than are treeless spaces (Kuo & Sullivan, 2001). As will be discussed in the analysis chapters, trees are not always an appropriate intervention to implement in neighbourhoods that endure regular criminal activities. In fact, trees are thought to assist criminals rather than deter them. Although Kuo and Sullivan (2001) argue that well-maintained vegetation outside a home suggests a sense of pride and territoriality, implying that an intruder would be noticed and confronted, thus eliciting less fear of crime,

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<sup>18</sup> Disorder in the community refers to social (illegal or questionable behaviour, social conflicts) and physical (litter, vandalism, abandoned houses, and lack of maintenance) conditions that exist in a given location (Landazuri, et al., 2011).

the specificities of households and neighbourhoods matter in determining the appropriate practices for the area.

Within and around the home space, social aspirations and changes can be influenced by the processes of home-making for the material needs of shelter, food, and clothing (Lane & Gorman-Murray, 2011). The domestic sustainability practices that people perform in home-making processes are sometimes unintentional. By “illuminating household sustainability in unintended ways” (Dowling & Power, 2011, p. 76), people can find themselves practising sustainability in their everyday lives without knowing as such. Hitchings, et al. (2015) refer to such unintentional practice as inadvertent environmentalism.

An example of inadvertent environmentalism, described by Hitchings et al. (2015), is divesting, whereby material items are diverted away from regular waste processes and prevented from becoming waste in ways that are arguably aligned with the principles of sustainability, but without particularly attaching these practices to sustainability goals. Divesting is an example of less resource intensive living as an outcome of social context rather than personal commitment towards sustainable living (Hitchings, et al., 2015). According to Horne et al. (2011), many methods of divestment rely on informal systems of provisioning, systems that are characteristic of Southern cities, as discussed earlier in this chapter. It is a practice that many people in Southern cities have already adopted in their everyday lives, but who do not know of its sustainable effects.

Inadvertent environmentalists live in certain relatively low impact ways according to past experiences and current pressures, without ever really connecting their lifestyles to sustainability (Hitchings, et al., 2015). Past experiences from childhood of recycling or vegetable gardening at home or school, for example, often elicit memories of family and home. Memories of cultural practices and daily life play a role in people’s present less resource intensive lifestyles that they have chosen to adopt in their households, rather than through top-down regulation or moral motivation, for example.

Thus, the space of the home and household is a key site in which the “cultural practices and meanings of consumption are created, embedded, and transformed” (Lane & Gorman-Murray, 2011, p. 3). Instead of interpreting the household as a unit in the analysis of sustainability practices, Lane and Gorman-Murray (2011) argue that the context of the household should be broadened to include wider social networks that are sources of

influence on household sustainability practices. Furthermore, Collins (2015) argues that although the physical structure of the household and the material possessions shape domestic practice, the social relations within it which connect to wider social networks and cultural meanings are interesting and fundamental to making a household a home.

Similarly, I argue that such context of the household is represented in the imaginaries of home. In the setting of my study area, family extends beyond that of the physical dwelling and includes social relations of the community both in the present and past. I concur with Hay (1998), who argues that in order to create sustainable communities “. . .more people need to reconnect with a place that they call home, valuing the ancestral heritage that comes with development and maintaining a rooted sense of place” (Hay, 1998, cited in Horlings, 2015b, p. 166). The penultimate section of this chapter focuses on the concept of home and fleshes out my primary argument.

### **Homing in**

A common theme in the preceding sections of this chapter is that place matters in practices of sustainability. Although places are physical, built environments, they are also experienced, made sense of, and interpreted through human imagination and narration (Erwin, 2017). The different ways in which meaning of place is expressed can develop in relation to the contexts of geography, culture, and economy (Wolf, et al., 2014). Frumkin (2003, p. 1451) argues that “a person’s place in the world, including socio-economic status, sense of worth, and cultural heritage, affects the experience of place” (Frumkin, 2003, cited in Svendsen, 2009, p. 61). Thus, a person’s sense of place can be imagined and influenced by past and present settings and circumstances.

Halpenny (2010) describes place as a spatial location that is assigned meanings and values by society and individuals, and asserts that its significance and meaning varies between individuals, groups, and cultures. Others differentiate it with space, which is the physical environment, and relay place as being experiential, narrated, and imagined (Chapin III & Knapp, 2015). Furthermore, people can form place attachments, which are emotional bonds to a physical environment, to create meaning to their lives and inform a sense of their identity (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014). Therefore, there is a human-centred element to place that allows for emotional attachment.

Place attachment of individuals develops through actions that include spending meaningful time with family or friends in a particular place, learning about the place through personal experiences, stories, readings, and writings, or building a livelihood rooted in that place (Chapin III & Knapp, 2015). When urban spaces transform as a result of increased development and urban sprawl that impact on people's livelihood and socio-ecological relations, for example, place attachment can be negatively affected. Thus, social attachment to place is important in the urban sustainability debate.

### ***Spaces of everyday encounter***

Pieterse and Simone (2017) argue that in order to grasp the complexity of cities, effort must be made to explore them through the everyday stories and nuances of dwellers' lives. Barr (2008) asserts that sustainability is localised, and that context, time, and scale matter. In this section I will show that the microcosm of home as an intimate place and the imaginaries of home in urban contexts are shaped by memories, as well as everyday individual and community domestic practices.

Home is described by Kaika (2004, p. 266) as:

a place imbued with cultural and ideological meaning...the spatial inscription of the idea of individual freedom, a place liberated from fear and anxiety, a place supposedly untouched by social, political and natural processes, a place enjoying an autonomous and independent existence: a home.

Other scholars describe home as a relational concept that reveals an embedded sense of belonging to a particular space (Sollien, et al., 2013). Blunt (2005, p. 506) suggests that the home is a material and a symbolic space that is "shaped by everyday practices, lived experiences, social relations, memories and emotions". It encompasses the imaginations rooted in specific places, and affects and is affected by the physical environment (Sollien, et al., 2013). Thus, social attachment to both the physical and emotional elements and imaginaries of place, forming a sense of belonging, manifests a feeling of home.

Dowling and Power (2011) describe the sense of homeyness<sup>19</sup> or to feel at home as multi-sensory and highly contextual, in terms of environmental, social, and cultural contexts, which draw on culture, practice, and place. In the South African context, cultural associations and values by many rural and urban Xhosa-speaking people are attached to elements of the natural environment and the activities carried out there (Cocks, et al., 2016). Furthermore, Chiu (2004) argues that culture, which includes the materialism and symbolism of lived experiences, gives identity to a place over different time periods and plays an important role in the quest for sustainability of a place. For many people living in Cape Town, the natural environment of home in the Eastern Cape is an integral part of their identity and shared heritage (Cocks, et al., 2016). The embeddedness of culture in home and lived experience are, therefore, integral in understanding how sustainability is incorporated into Southern cities. The home is the interface between the social and the environment and connects the wider scale of urban complexities with the routines and domestic cultures of ordinary people's everyday lives (Hawkins, 2011). Thus, home extends to wider scales, as well as to a more intimate scale.

Definitions about the concept and scale of home have commonly been related to a fixed location, where members of home came from the same community, which was constructed to maintain home as a shared space (Masade, 2007). Researchers, such as Tolia-Kelly (2004), have studied the domestic display and use of family photographs, alongside images of landscape, religious symbols, and sentimental home possessions, and show that geographies of home extend far beyond the household (Tolia-Kelly, 2004, cited in Blunt, 2005). Masade (2007) suggests that before globalisation influenced travel and migration, home embodied domestic objects, as well as cultural aspects, such as languages, traditional practices, histories, myths, and faiths, which were all connected to a specific place. In modern times, where urbanisation is common, Hay (1998) argues that people need to renew their ties to place in order to achieve sustainable communities and develop local ecological knowledge. He says, "people need to *reconnect* with a place that they call home, valuing the ancestral heritage that comes with developing and maintaining a rooted sense of place" (Hay, 1998, p. 264). Although Hay (1998) asserted the value of home in achieving sustainability in the late

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<sup>19</sup> "Homeyness is both a motivation for and outcome of home-making practices as inhabitants materially and figuratively ensure that their house is a 'home'" (Dowling and Power, 2011, p. 76).

90s, such assertion is still and even more relevant today in times of rapid urbanisation in the global South.

### ***Home as an enabler of sustainability practice***

More recently, research about home has included insights about cohabitation of humans and non-humans in the form of domestic gardens, and the meanings that people attach to gardens and to gardening (Blunt, 2005). The idea that homes are not always material is represented in research about the domestic entanglements of nature and culture in the space of the garden, the embodied practices of gardening, and the meanings that people attach to gardens and to gardening (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Research about gardens shows that they imbue a “pleasant and a relaxing” effect to urban dwellers (Landazuri, et al., 2011, p. 167). The garden and gardening provide people with more of an embodied and sensual engagement with nature (Bhatti & Church, 2004). Gardening would allow for newly settled women in townships to draw upon childhood memories of wide-open spaces that were emphasised by the freedom of movement allowed in the rural areas and small towns of the Eastern Cape (Lee, 2005). Thus, embodied memories of past landscapes connect people between the past and the present and across diasporic space (Blunt, 2005).

The stark contrast between the peaceful landscapes from which migrants come, or even highly conflicted and harsh landscapes from which they escape, and the bustling urban landscapes in which they find themselves, can encourage positive landscape change on an individual and collective level through memory. Jones (2011, p. 882) supports this by saying:

Geography can help open up the tracings of the spatial remains that make us. It can help trace out the legacies of the past we carry through memory as we practice the present and enter the future. Such tracings are not to tie us to any fixed past. They are, or can be, a creative (therapeutic) process of affective mapping.

Therefore, as expressed in Lee’s (2005) and Blunt’s (2005) work, gardens are places that connect people to the spatial remains they call home. Gardens are, thus, an extension of home.

Home, described as place-rootedness, can also be understood as a place of history and memory, which has been shown in people’s material belongings and family photographs of

past homes and through the histories, memories, and imaginations of people (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Moreover, the home ranges in scale from a mental state of emotions and meanings, to a house and the relationships that it inhabits, to a continent and all the lived experiences and imaginaries of places in distant lands (Blunt, 2005; Duncan & Lambert, 2004). Therefore, home can be an intimate sense and a personal feeling, a domestic space and the materialities and social relations that form the household, and it can be a memory and an imaginary at a regional and global scale.

Research and oral history about home largely range from memories and meanings of home, domestic work, to family relationships (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). The association with family includes the loss of family members, who either move away or pass on, and affects the wholeness of home for many (Duncan & Lambert, 2004). Through memory, people can connect to estranged and deceased family members, as well as to distant lands. Memory, together with emotion, forms the “interrelating foundational processes of our ongoing lives”, and geography is argued as a means of engaging with memory (Jones, 2011, p. 875). So, for individuals who are comparatively new to an area or have experienced the loss of a family member, memories can shape a sense of belonging and develop feelings of rootedness, thus allowing such personal meanings to contribute to effective bonds between people and place (Rishbeth & Powell, 2013).

Memory is important to ideas of place and landscape, as both are based on some notion of familiar and remembered physical space, such as a city, park, house, vista, and a place where something special happened (Jones, 2011). For Swift (1997), the home is specifically a space where memories can flourish. Thus, the ideas of being-in-place or remembering a place are considered essential to daily life when certain types of behaviour or practice, such as gardening, that are associated with geographic places are seen as “inhabiting” people who come from those places (Erwin, 2017, p. 79). Therefore, to draw on authors’ work which I discussed earlier in this chapter, when people form an attachment to place through memory, they are likely to enlist place protective behaviour and sustainable practices, such as gardening (Halpenny, 2010; Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014; Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

Another aspect of memory is associated with story-telling where built and natural landscapes are remembered and imagined. “Many human stories are framed by the theme of connection or lack of connection to place” (Madden, 2010, p. 37), which have personal and

relational meaning to people. Stories attempt to draw lines between a “here” and a “there” or a “then and a now”, as well as imagined future places and times (Pieterse & Simone, 2017, p. 194). Blunt and Dowling (2006) argue that life stories can explore personal and collective memories and experiences of people, particularly those whose lives are marginalised in some ways and in the places, such as home, that might be absent from other sources of information. Such descriptions of story-telling relate to the context of my study area, as the narrative between people about distant homes and the future to which people aspire, is important when access to meaningful places is difficult.

In African environmental history there is a strong focus on the use of story-telling, which expresses encounters with the natural world; and many fables illustrate imagined animal characteristics and observations drawn from nature that offer metaphorical meanings to human society (Beinart, 2000). The history of the built environment and its association to natural landscapes and aesthetics, where symbolism and social space have been used to describe the layout of African settlements, have also been recorded (Beinart, 2000). Environmental influences, such as the availability of natural resources, as well as social influences, such as preferred style and aesthetics of African settlements, are incorporated into the stories (Beinart, 2000). In urban settlements that lack natural aesthetics which people desire, stories and dreams can be shared in order to imagine the type of home environment in which to live. Thus, the strong human-nature link from past settings that can be remembered and used in current urban settings, such as home and neighbourhoods, and those natural settings in which people wish to live, are illustrated through story-telling.

Another form of memory is what Barthel et al. (2015, p. 1325) discuss as “social-ecological memory”, defining it as “the combined means by which knowledge, experience, and practice of ecosystem management are captured, stored, revived, and transmitted through time”. I associate this definition with the practice of sustainability that is enacted through activities that are triggered by memory. When people, individually and collectively, associate themselves with an imagined and remembered place, for example from childhood experiences, they are likely to perform everyday practices sustainably, particularly when well-being and a sense of place are enhanced. Gardening and urban agriculture are examples of such practices that not only connect people to one other, but also to urban places, as a way of enhancing people’s sense of place and belonging (Battersby & Marshak, 2013).

In the apartheid era, housing for black South Africans was mass produced and part of a process of social control by the government (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Despite mass production of government houses and the forced mobility of much of the black population, “like birds, fly off, settle, fly, settle” (Alcock, 2015, p. 128), people grew and transformed their houses, and created homes out of the “concrete and brick ‘shells’ that [they] had received” (Lee, 2005, p. 613). Houses were not owned, had no trees or gardens planted, and were without love and pride, according to Alcock (2015). However, people transformed houses into homes, particularly when title deeds were given to the residents of these homes by the post-apartheid government, by creating small gardens that evoked memories of the homes and communal areas that were destroyed during forced removals (Alcock, 2015). The feeling of comfort that one feels in a place is described as feeling at home (Duncan & Lambert, 2004). Therefore, the creation of homes by people living in transitory and unpredictable spaces provided them with security, belonging, and comfort.

Social attachments to places have been explained using a variety of constructs that include place belongingness, where people feel a “membership” to an environment; place rootedness, which refers to a very strong bond to home; place familiarity, defined as pleasant memories, achievement memories, and environmental images associated with places; and neighbourhood attachment, which captures one’s emotional connection to one’s immediate surroundings (Raymond, et al., 2010, p. 2). Alcock (2015) refers to a culture of community in South African townships, which are socially connected places where community has been built over generations. Despite the mercurial and often unpredictable nature of such places, people have been able to stay connected.

However, sense of place can also hinder stewardship and cause conflict among people who value a place in varying ways, as often seen in debates between conservation and development in an area. The contested nature of sense of place can motivate parochialism and exclusionary practices, as seen in acts of xenophobia (Chapin III & Knapp, 2015). Von Wirth et al. (2016) argue that the effects of urbanization on social processes and human interaction with the urban environment, particularly when significant changes in places affect residents' place attachment, are difficult to measure. However, when humans connect to their homes through place attachment constructs, sustainability that is practised for their home environments is one such way to measure human-nature relations. When socio-ecological relations strengthen as a result of place attachment, these relations sometimes

motivate civic action on behalf of valued places (Chapin III & Knapp, 2015), a notion that relates to environmental citizenship.

Aligned to this notion, environmental behavioural change campaigns and environmental education programmes that are easily evaluated are considered to encourage natural place attachment, whereby “cities could emphasize the ‘green’ dimension of their image” (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p. 296). From an educational perspective, the garden, as a site for engaging with nature, is a place to learn about the ecology of both plants and humans (Bhatti & Church, 2004). Community garden projects have given volunteer gardeners a sense of empowerment and achievement that they may once have had before the deterioration of their neighbourhoods (Stone, 2011). From a community perspective, much of the literature on community gardens examines the ways in which they are spaces of:

community empowerment and resistance to marginalization and dominant narratives of urban development, where community groups become empowered through collective, place-based decision-making (Taylor & Lovell, 2013, p. 5).

Halpenny (2010) suggests that as individuals increase their understanding of and attachments to natural contexts, which may form and confirm their sense of identity associated with these places, their attachment to natural settings may adopt a commitment to the environment in general. Thus, in times of crime, forced relocation, and environmental disasters, subsequent feelings of loss and alienation may help to mobilize citizen participation in rebuilding communities, physically and emotionally, when people claim a sense of identity and place attachment to an affected area (Wolf, et al., 2014). Therefore, place identity is a useful concept that captures the relationship between the physical environment and social identities (Erwin, 2017). In other words, people can identify themselves or where they come from through places of familiarity. Furthermore, increased knowledge about a place increases the likelihood that individuals will demonstrate place-protective behaviours (Halpenny, 2010), as mentioned earlier in this section.

Despite studies showing that the garden may have the potential to be a site for human creativity and sensual connections to nature, Bhatti and Church (2004) explain that it is also “imbued with the tensions, ambiguities and contradictions of late modern living”. A domestic garden can be considered to be too time consuming and costly to maintain, and hard work

for full-time workers, despite the restorative and relaxing characteristics (amongst others) that gardens have been found to instil. For Blunt (2005, p. 506), the meanings and lived experiences of home in modern times are diverse and are represented by paradoxes of home as spaces of “belonging and alienation”, “intimacy and violence”, and “desire and fear”.

Similarly, the ambiguity and diversity of the meanings of home are debated in Imrie’s (2014) work. She describes the undermining of the home as sanctuary when the home environment becomes the place of withdrawal from wider social networks. In her research she describes how the wider “social, attitudinal, and environmental circumstances”, that extend beyond the home, can cause people to stay at home, “rarely venturing beyond the front door” (Imrie, 2014, p. 159). Moreover, the notion of home as sanctuary is at times dampened by the knowledge that private homes are places of domestic violence (Duncan & Lambert, 2004). In the context of this study, the ambiguity and turmoil of social relations in private homes, the broader neighbourhood, and home as a memory are not mutually exclusive. Home that is not a place of sanctuary in this case can be found in other forms of home, those that have positive meaning, such as community gardening.

Although home is an ambiguous social space, it does allow for social relations that influence practices that have sustainable effects to occur, such as community gardening and urban agriculture. Ultimately, home represents a space of social and family networks, a geography of urban mobility, an economy of production and consumption, and physical and symbolic meaning (Sollien, et al., 2013). Therefore, to understand home entails the understanding of the social, physical, economic, cultural, and temporal aspects of cities (Sollien, et al., 2013). The symbolic meanings of urban places where history and culture reinforce and/or change people’s practices are strengthened in places with which people regularly interact, such as community gardens (Chapin III & Knapp, 2015).

Moreover, while home and community gardens may not individually change people’s relationship to urban nature, thoughts about what they do for people and the ways in which they influence people’s behaviour can provide new ways of thinking about nature. In this chapter I relay that the ordinary lives of people trying to sustain a livelihood and feel connected to others to reinforce that they belong to a community, are good avenues to start to explore changes in thinking. The profound words of Buttimer (1976, cited in Hay, 1998, p. 248) express, “to build a home...is the everyday symbol of a dialogue with one’s ecological

and social milieu". So, by feeling at-home, a sense of belonging, and connecting to home, people can engage with the natural in a positive way.

By now we know that sustainability literature shows that people's behaviour towards the environment is determined or influenced by social values and the situational factors that allow for particular human activities to be performed. However, we also know that the potential for behaviour-change to be sustainable does not only depend on educating or persuading individuals to make different decisions, but also transforming the nature of the practices themselves (Mylan, 2015). The literature shows that the concept of urban sustainability itself encompasses a range of ideas to address urban challenges and implement potential remedies. Gibson, et al. (2011, p. 29) describe such range:

Amid this swirling mix of industry logics, societal norms, and ethical responsibilities to the environment, family, society, and self are the lived moments of decision making about everyday practices around the home.

In other words, although there are a multitude of ideas from different role-players about how to deal with sustainability challenges facing cities, the ordinary person's everyday decisions about home-making and feeling at-home matter. Home is an inclusive concept and provides opportunities for all people to practise sustainability. Therefore, the specificities of place and various societal dynamics, instead, determine the particular form of urban sustainability being practised. I take this idea further by arguing that home, as an important spatial and conceptual aspect of urban sustainability, provides a means for people to practise sustainability in cities.

## **Conclusion**

We need once more to feel at home on this earth and with each other.  
We need a new paradigm that allows us to move from the pervasive culture of violence, to a culture of nonviolence, creativity, and peace...  
(Shiva, 2002, cited in Swilling and Annecke, 2012, p. 25).

...We need to move to a culture of sustainability.

We know that the task of assessing and creating sustainable cities is a challenge. Processes of globalisation have impacted on the global South and resulted in cultural uniformity, a disconnection between places of production and consumption, sustainability problems, and to some extent, placelessness (Horlings, 2016). The complexity of what goes on in Southern cities, specifically, is characterized in the diversity of culture that determines the way of life for urban dwellers. Such diversity is represented in the social dimension of place including social networks and identity, and in the ideological dimension encompassing values and imaginaries.

The literature (for example by Beinart, 2000; Blunt and Dowling, 2006; and Masade, 2007) shows that cultural diversity is usually embedded in diverse historical experiences and stories of society that include value systems and behaviour patterns that are conveyed through social-ecological relations. Although this idea is relevant to some societies, I have argued in this chapter that to rely on social values and behaviour in the quest for sustainable cities in the global South is impractical. Strengers (2012) suggests that instead of trying to instil new environmental morals and responsibility onto individuals in their daily lives, thinking about and attempting to shift the understandings that are embedded into a practice are better suited to diverse cities in the South. However, this suggestion does not take away the value of moral practices or mean that altruistic or eco-centric considerations are not important motives. It instead conveys the importance of understanding the richness of the diverse historical and current experiences of home that emanate sustainability, and which are embedded in the daily practices of ordinary people.

Furthermore, Pieterse and Simone (2017, p. 17) suggest that urbanisation and urban development focus largely on “doing” sustainable development rather than considering the kinds of everyday experiences, histories, and relationships that people are living. Hargreaves (2011) argues that social practice theory directs research attention towards the doing of everyday practices. I argue that by doing everyday practices which stem from historical and current socio-ecological experiences and relationships, sustainability is likely to prevail. I concur with Hargreaves (2011) who argues that if sustainable consumption is to be achieved, conventional models of individual behaviour change should be reimagined, and, instead, policy attention should be paid to creating more sustainable practices. Using policies that focus on changing individual attitudes and behaviours to comply with sustainability standards and goals is likely to fail if policy-makers do not account for the

dynamics of people's everyday lives. I have discussed that encouraging lifestyles that have the potential to be sustainable will not be achieved by calls for such shifts in behaviour through public campaigns, for example. Instead, a focus and reflection on how people live their everyday lives in particular places will offer more effective ways of emphasising and instilling sustainable practices into societies that are influenced by priorities other than the environment.

Flynn et al. (2008) argue that the imaginaries sought in the literature about sustainable lifestyles have been limited because they neglect the social dimensions of what constitutes a sustainable life, and little attention has been paid to the cultural practices and social institutions that promote sustainable living, particularly in urban areas of the global South. Consequently, the interrogation and understanding of the lifestyles of particular social groups in the global South and the situational factors that influence their everyday lifestyles, such as the socio-economic conditions in which they live, need empirical attention. Without empirical study of the everyday lives of people, the social elements of streetscapes, natural areas, and neighbourhoods in their design, and, consequently, the sustainability of spaces, are ultimately affected. Nuanced attention is needed on the ways in which communities define their shared experience, identity, values, needs and priorities, and, ultimately, their way of life and embodied actions at home. In this study, I use ethnography to explore these concerns, which I describe in the methodology chapter of this thesis next.

My contribution to urban sustainability literature in the global South speaks to the significance of the socio-spatial place of home in shaping sustainability practices in people's everyday lives. It emphasises that home is a key spatial frame in unravelling the socio-ecological entanglement, particularly in relation to the diversity and complexity of Southern cities. Additionally, it adds to the argument that place attachment complements urban sustainability, particularly at a micro-scale. Furthermore, my inclusion of the concept of inadvertent environmentalism warrants future research to understand and promote the most effective means of promoting lower impact living. In addition, more understanding and analysis of the different types of household practices in different neighbourhood contexts would be useful for urban sustainability research. I aim to illustrate the particular types of practices being performed in Nyanga that have sustainable outcomes in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

*My journey to Nyanga, which has become a regular ritual for me, takes me along the N2 to the turn off just past the airport. I turn right into Borchards Quarry Road and see the old man again practicing his putting skills on the piece of public open space that has become his putting green. Ahead of me I see the gateway to Nyanga, a crossing over into a different world.*

*I see the usual flurry of movement of people, vehicles, and animals, all with a purpose. Taxis gathering on the side of the road, eagerly awaiting their customers; braaied mielies<sup>20</sup> selling on the corner by an older woman; creatively constructed shacks encroaching onto the pavement on the left; an old shipping container is advertising a hair salon; dogs are scavenging; children are playing close to the road; and the queue to the doctor's practice snakes along the pavement. This road is busy. The sports field on the left has been enclosed by a dull grey wall and laced with barbed wire on top of it, showing off the "plastic flowers" of the township. The car wash is busy with cars queuing for their weekly wash.*

*Left into Miller Street. On a hot day the children are playing around the communal tap. It's washing day... bright clothes are hanging on make-shift washing lines along the strip of old houses on the right. The few old Eucalyptus trees provide shade for the old men sitting on crates. Right into Zwelitsha Drive. A dumping site blooms on the corner with chip packets strewn around it. People are buying milk at the spaza shop.<sup>21</sup>*

*I come to the intersection of Zwelitsha Drive and Sithandatu Avenue. The black smoke of the braais<sup>22</sup> ahead of me on the right engulfing the traffic light, a hive of hungry people waiting for their freshly cooked*

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<sup>20</sup> A local term for maize/corn cooked on an open fire.

<sup>21</sup> Informal home-based and pavement shops.

<sup>22</sup> A local term for cooking on an open fire.

*offal. It is busy today with all kinds of customers, like policemen, government officials, taxi drivers, the general man or woman on the street, and even dogs. The smells are inviting. This is the intersection that leads me to the people and places around which I base my study.*

The above extract is formulated from my field notes. It describes a small part of Nyanga that became a big part of my life during my fieldwork in 2016. Since my study is about the everyday lives of people living sustainably in Nyanga, I used ethnography as my methodology. As Crang and Cook (1995) claim, ethnography is used to understand the ways of life of people in the context of their everyday, lived experiences. After reading several studies in the literature about place, identity, home, and sustainability using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, I realised that more qualitative and empirical work is necessary to enrich these topics. With particular relevance, Wheeler's (2014) study about memory and place in an old mining community used ethnography over the course of a month to observe and interview local people's feelings, perceptions, and attitudes towards the study area, as well as their memories about the study area. The study was useful for me to see that instead of using surveys to interpret what people thought and felt, Wheeler captured rich data by engaging directly with her participants.

In the literature about home I found ethnographies that strengthened my decision to use this methodology, including Reem Awad's (2018) "'Here, There, Everywhere': An Ethnographic Study Exploring the Notion of Home", Henrietta Nyamnjoh's (2014) "Intimate Ethnographic Encounters in a Mobile Community: Expressing the Notion of Belonging through 'Life Crisis' Performances amongst Cameroonian migrants in Cape Town, South Africa", and Blunt and Dowling's (2006) "Home". Gibson et al.'s (2011) study on household sustainability assured me of the usefulness of ethnography in understanding the everyday sustainable practices at the household level. After reading different ethnographies relating to home and sustainability, I realised the usefulness for me to use ethnography to enrich my study.

My fieldwork spanned a nine-month period in 2016, during which I was able to gain insights into the ways of life of some of the people living in Nyanga. During this time the township became a familiar place, where I grew to know the streets, houses, landscape, and the people. It was a place that I left with a sense of relief and returned to with much enthusiasm on a regular basis, making it a place of ambiguity and ambivalence for me. I drove in and out of

Nyanga during the fieldwork period, and every day was different, in both activity and scenery. New structures were erected or taken down, new businesses emerged and then disappeared, and the social atmosphere of the area and people's moods varied from day to day. It was a place riddled with crime, and it was also a place of camaraderie and resilience.

My transition into the township from a relatively affluent area seemed effortless and natural, partly because of my ability to speak the local language, isiXhosa, and partly because of knowing the organisations at which I did preliminary research prior to starting my fieldwork. However, I was still an outsider because of my white skin. I was conscious of my appearance, being a young female; so, I tried to avoid attention by always dressing conservatively and never wearing jewellery.

My choice of Nyanga as the geographical study area was both personal and useful for addressing my research question. I formed personal relationships with some residents of the township prior to contemplating doing this research project. I did so when I volunteered at a children's home where I was able to take the children on excursions to natural and recreational spaces. Witnessing the encounters that the children had with nature made me question what the relationship was between people living in the township and the natural environment. I wondered if people had easy access to nature and where that was. I questioned why so few parks and trees were in Nyanga and what people felt about this. Then there was a contrast in my seeing sporadic pockets of greenery in people's yards and on pavements. With the negative perception that some people have of Nyanga, which I discussed in Chapter One, and my realisation of the under-resourced nature of the township, the greenery that was apparent intrigued me.

As a result of my experiences and observations in Nyanga, I wanted to investigate the existence of the small gardens I saw to determine how they were created and what they meant to the people who made them. Upon further research I found two non-profit organisations (NGOs) operating in Nyanga that were influencing and enacting some forms of sustainability projects, such as vegetable gardening. Such discoveries opened my mind to the sustainable lifestyles that some people had become accustomed to by living their ordinary lives. Hence my interest to explore the concept of sustainability in Nyanga came to life.

I selected the participants based on their everyday practices that had sustainable effects, and rather than recruiting people by survey or notices, I observed people's activities and approached them based on their practices. Although my selection of participants was not based on age, gender, or position, some participants did reveal their age, which I note in my findings. The ages of the participants ranged broadly between 24 and 65 years and I have indicated the estimated age of each participant when introduced in the thesis. Moreover, I have clarified the genders of each person mentioned in the thesis when I introduce them by name. Most of the participants were not employed, either because of retirement or because of not finding work. In total, 20 formal interviews were undertaken with a variety of residents, either at their homes or at Abalimi Bazekhaya's garden centre. In these settings participants were enthusiastically immersed in the environment of the practice in question, and rich narratives were relayed to me. These settings had meanings of comfort and homeliness, which prompted memories and imaginaries of participants' childhood homes and family members.

The sites in Nyanga that featured prominently in my study were either selected before commencement, which were the two NGOs, or were discovered as a result of my being in the area. Examples of such discoveries and the descriptions of the NGOs will feature in the next section of this chapter. Since ethnography is the "direct observation and documentation of some group or community, their practices, habits and culture" (St. Martin & Pavlovskaya, 2009, p. 370), I was able to study the activities of people in a specific geographical area, whether being practices of habit or culture, using this methodology. I will discuss the methods I used to study such activities and practices later in this chapter. As an environmental and human geographer, I used ethnography to immerse myself in the field to better understand the imaginaries of human-nature relationships in a Southern urban context.

All names used in this thesis are real, as all of the participants were not concerned about anonymity and I feel that there is more power in people's stories when referred to by their real names. All the interviews were relatively unstructured in order to allow participants the freedom to talk about aspects of their homes, landscape, and change, and the practices they perform daily that they themselves feel are important, and for the themes to be explored in some depth. The remaining informal interviews (between 40 and 50) I had with a range of people I met would be better described as conversational encounters than interviews. In all

forms of dialogue with participants I did not use the term “sustainability” in order to discourage participants from presenting a false interpretation of self. In other words, participants were able to identify with and talk freely about what they knew and understood without being defined by a specific term. One key finding related to how participants were performing particular practices without attaching these enactments to the sustainability agenda. This finding relates to the concept of inadvertent environmentalism, as described in the previous chapter.

Ethnographic data was also gathered using other methods, such as photography and observations, by spending time in Nyanga, walking around the area, and taking part in community activities, including community meetings. These data supplemented those from the interviews and allowed me to explore the themes from a variety of perspectives. The various methods will be discussed after first presenting the sites of my fieldwork.

### **In the Field**

A researcher in the field starts with gaining access to the chosen site. Secondly, the researcher lives and/or works among the people under study in order to take in their ways of life. Lastly, the researcher makes sense of data collection through writing up an account of that community's culture (Cragg & Cook, 1995).

### ***Etafeni***

*“A flourishing community in Nyanga”* (The vision of Etafeni)

Etafeni Day-care Centre Trust<sup>23</sup> is a community-driven NGO that was established in 2001 as a day-care centre for HIV affected children and their caregivers. There is a high level of local community involvement at Etafeni, which has been vital for the long-term sustainability of the organisation. Literally meaning “At the Open Space”, it was originally situated on an open piece of land and founded by two women who looked after children whose parents went to work. Through funding initiatives and community involvement it grew into an organisation and a centre was eventually developed on the open space (see Figure 12 below). The large cream buildings surrounded by green landscaping and children’s play equipment now provides a multidimensional and holistic focus on prominent development issues in Nyanga.

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<sup>23</sup> Referred to as Etafeni from here onwards

Its operations encompass twelve programmes that focus on education, food security and nutrition, health care, job creation, and greening.

The Greening Nyanga programme's projects encourage community members to keep the environment clean and green, plant trees, and establish home vegetable gardens. Its main objective is to transform nuisance plots into beautiful, convivial, and safe spaces for the community to enjoy. Other projects include establishing vegetable gardens in people's yards by providing homeowners with the basic skills to lay out a garden, the necessary resources to get started, and environmental education workshops at the centre.



**Figure 12: Inside Etafeni (5 December 2016)**

During the period of my fieldwork I was able to gain much insight into the operations of Etafeni and the Greening Nyanga programme by attending management and community meetings, participating in organisational events, and volunteering in the development of a second park across the road from the centre (Sithathu Park). Most significant to my involvement in the organisation was the opportunity to interact directly with community members, mainly through the development of the park and then by being taken to the homes of certain members of the community by the Greening Nyanga coordinator, Themba (male,

38 years old). I established a close working relationship with Themba during the months I spent at Etafeni. When I met with people in the vicinity of Etafeni, Themba always accompanied me, as both my guide and translator when I needed assistance with translation. I was told on numerous occasions that it would be safe for me to walk in the area only when a local member of the community accompanied me. The ways I encountered various people will be described in the next section of this chapter.

The second NGO I identified in Nyanga was Abalimi Bazekhaya. I had known about this organisation for many years before my study started, as I once visited its vegetable market in Philippi and some of the gardens on a tour that was given by its founder. However, I discovered the garden centre in Nyanga only through reading about the organisation on its website.

### ***Abalimi Bazekhaya***

Knowledge to farm... *“begins as a seed at Mama Bokolo’s garden centre in Nyanga...”* (Abalimi Bazekhaya Newsletter 41)

The garden centre in Nyanga referred to above is an oasis amongst the hustle and noise of daily life in the township. It consists of rows of manicured plots (see Figures 13 and 14 below) growing an assortment of vegetables that provide for the nutritional needs of the day clinic next door. It also provides local people with a place to source seeds, seedlings, manure, organic vegetables, and even to attend workshops and get gardening advice and words of encouragement. In the two-roomed structure hidden in the corner of the garden, people are taught the theory about how to farm vegetables and produce their own home gardens sustainably. They learn that with sustainable agriculture, farmers minimize water use and lower the dependence on chemical pesticides and fertilizers. They also minimize tillage of the soil and rotate crop planting each year to ensure higher soil quality.



**Figure 13: Abalimi Bazekhaya Garden Centre (16 May 2016)**



**Figure 14: The Nursery at the Abalimi Bazekhaya Garden Centre (16 May 2016)**

The garden centre was established by Abalimi Bazekhaya<sup>24</sup> (meaning “Farmers of Home”), which is an NGO that aims to promote empowerment of marginalised people who live on the urban periphery in Cape Town. Mama Bokolo (female, late 50s) is one such individual who became empowered through an employment opportunity to grow and sell organic vegetable produce at the Nyanga garden centre. Through the implementation of urban agricultural programmes that include skills development training workshops, local communities can also benefit from being empowered to self-sustain by producing and consuming their own organic vegetables, or earn an income by producing and selling organic vegetables. These

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<sup>24</sup> Referred to as Abalimi from here onwards.

workshops are facilitated by a local community member, Vathiswa (female, 40s). She gives her vast knowledge of vegetable farming generously over a three-day period, by providing theory lessons, intensive practical training in the garden, and the necessary resources to start up one's own vegetable garden. Resources include compost, seeds, seedlings, and a printed handbook. During my time at the garden centre I attended six training workshops, but participated in only two full workshops, which I will describe in the methods section of this chapter.

### ***Everything in between***

Between, amongst, and surrounding both field sites were the homes, pavements, and schools where I observed varied forms of sustainability. The array of activities I found was either a result of the work of the organisations or of individuals operating on their own accord. At the main intersection between both NGOs (Sithandathu Avenue and Zwelitsha Drive) was a hub of stalls selling meat on one corner, recycled kettles and irons on another, and reused fridges and microwaves on a third corner. Beyond this intersection I encountered people's home gardens and two schools – John Pama Primary school near Abalimi, and Linge Primary school near Etafeni – where I viewed vegetable gardening, tree planting, and an ornamental garden.

This intersection became familiar to me and was a fairly comfortable area for the people who accompanied me to these sites (I learnt that people were hesitant to take me to some areas of the township because of the crime there). The built-up area consisted not only of the sites described above, but also a range of different housing structures (hostels, small four-roomed houses, and shacks), a clinic, and two community centres. It was a highly pedestrianised area, as it was the main route to access public transport. Dispersed along the pavements were informal shops and car washing facilities, which added to the activity of the area.

People's homes were the main sites that I visited to view their gardens and listen to their stories. The domestic spaces allowed me to delve deeper into the motivations behind people's everyday practices. The people who feature in my study felt comfortable to tell me their stories about the natural environment and their sense of place within their homes. The homes were intimate and personal spaces that provided a clear understanding of the everyday lives of the people with whom I interacted. The next section will explain how I gathered my data when I went to the field sites described in this section.

## **Methods**

I used the following methods to help immerse myself into the way of life in Nyanga over a period of nine months. I did not visit the site daily during the nine months. I found that week days were easier for me to get access into the community through Etafeni and Abalimi – both organisations did not operate over weekends. Although I did conduct some field work over one or two weekends, mainly because of a specific event, for example, I found that most community members were not available on weekends because of family and church commitments.

### ***Observation***

Observation of my surroundings in the field was important for my understanding of the day-to-day activities, routines, and practices of people, and the spatial aspects of each street, including the aesthetics of a place and the designs of structures.

With prior permission from both NGOs, the employees provided generous opportunities for me to be present in their activities and observe the functioning of each organisation, the people who run them, and the community participants involved in the activities. Ethnographic observation is more complex than just looking at people, says Madden (2010), as it has to happen in relation to what is being studied and the conversations and embodied engagements that have already ensued or are about to. Ethnographic observation was an integral method in my study, as it allowed me to witness interesting events or small moments that had relevance to the study. The saying “seeing is believing” comes to mind, as observation in the field provides truth to the findings, which can add authenticity to the description that I present in my analysis chapters. Rather than relying on others’ first-hand observations, I made sense of them in a real-life situation.

I observed people doing their ordinary daily tasks while I drove through Nyanga. Because of the high crime rate in the township, I seldom left my car when I was unaccompanied, nor did I walk through the streets alone. Despite this, I still observed a lot of fascinating activities from my car, such as the intricacy and skill of slaughtering a sheep, the hive of activity around the meat stalls, and the different types of customers purchasing the meat. I observed children walking and playing along the streets, the many dogs roaming and scavenging the streets, and the different levels of litter strewn or dumped along the streets.

When I was in safe spaces and accompanied by Themba or another member of the community, my observations were more specific. From walking to people's houses and going inside their yards, to standing in the park and watching people walk by, I was able to think more deeply about their gardens and some people's perceptions of the park whilst they were walking to various destinations. At the Abalimi training sessions, I was able to more critically observe the teaching, learning, and gardening activities. I was privileged to observe the trainees' encounters with the soil and seedlings, as well as the passionate teaching by Vathiswa (see Figures 15 and 16 below). I gained insight into the daily social gatherings inside the garden by observing Mama Bokolo and various women who would visit her and either assist her with her gardening tasks or simply enjoy her conversation.



**Figure 15: Trainees Planting Seeds at the Garden Centre (25 October 2016)**



**Figure 16: Vathiswa Teaching a Group of Trainees (25 October 2016)**

### ***Participation***

Both NGOs allowed me to participate in the activities that they offered to the local community. My participation entailed being part of the training workshops at Abalimi, where I was able to ask questions in the class, join class discussions, listen to the practical lessons in the garden, assist the trainees with the planting activities, and eat lunch with them.

At Etafeni I was included in regular management meetings and team-building events, and the community meetings that revolved around the development of the community park. Upon my arrival at Etafeni a plot had already been identified as being the next park to develop. I observed the conflict that arose between community members and the fence company that erected the fence around the plot, and then I observed the resolution of the conflict at a street committee meeting. I was able to participate in the design of the park with the community and Etafeni, and assist in the procurement of the resources to go into the park. My hands-on involvement at the organisation enabled me to form friendly and professional relationships with the employees and the community members who live in close proximity to the centre. It enabled me to meet people who were benefitting from the

home vegetable gardening project, and those who were enacting their own form of sustainability, such as the recyclers.

Another occurrence in which I participated was eating at the meat market, where, simultaneously, I could observe the interactions between the traders and their customers, as well as be immersed in the smells and sensations of being in the stalls (see Figure 17 below). I tasted the meat, casually spoke to the traders, and shared a table with customers. The experiences were rich, as my participation also involved observation and conversation, which was a form of interviewing, and is the next method I will discuss.



**Figure 17: Inside a Stall at the Meat Market (5 August 2016)**

### ***Interviewing***

Styles of interviewing range from less formal, to semi-structured, to formal. I used a semi-structured style when I had specifically arranged to meet with someone and ask them prepared questions. The people I interviewed included some of those who attended the

Abalimi training, and I conducted the interviews at the garden centre and at people’s homes, depending on availability of time in both settings. Other people I interviewed were referred to me by local community members whose neighbours were gardening and/or recycling. I identified individuals based on my observations of their gardening and recycling during my time in the township and was able to interview them by being accompanied by Themba or another community member. Questions put to the people I interviewed were designed to gauge the importance of the natural environment to people already enacting their everyday practices sustainably.

All together I conducted 20 semi-structured interviews, which all started with just three of my prepared questions and flowed according to the person’s interpretation of the questions being asked. My questions did vary according to the practice and the setting. For example, those attending the Abalimi training would have a different opening question to those who garden at home. Therefore, there was no rigidity in the interview process, as the more flexibility provided to the participants, the more interesting the information I seemed to gain. Table 1 below shows the types of questions I asked the participants whom I interviewed.

**Table 1: Semi-structured interview questions**

1. Where/how did you learn to garden? / How did you hear about the Abalimi training?
2. What does gardening/nature mean to you? / Why are you learning how to garden?
3. What would you like to see in Nyanga in terms of green spaces and gardens?
4. What and Why do you recycle?
5. Where did you learn to trade / Why are you trading this/these products?

Before the semi-structured interviews commenced, I tried to, as far as possible, explain the purpose of the interview and the nature of my research clearly and convincingly to get the best collaboration with the people concerned. If the language of choice for the interview was isiXhosa, I tried to communicate as much as my Xhosa vocabulary would allow me; otherwise I always had a mother-tongue Xhosa speaker, such as Themba, with me to translate. I also

asked if I could record the interview with my Dictaphone so that I could focus on the person talking rather than writing notes. I transcribed the interviews at a later stage, usually after a series of interviews (See Appendix A for an example of a transcribed interview). All the quotes I used in this thesis were captured in English directly from the participants.

This style of interviewing did not often produce a fruitful engagement with people, either because of a perceived formality of the situation that may have caused nervousness in a participant, or because some people simply could not express themselves as eloquently as others. Informal interviewing was much more productive, as it was a form of everyday conversation with people that occurred spontaneously and as and when the moment seemed right. It meant, however, that I had to remember the conversations for noting in my diary at a later and appropriate time. I estimated doing between 40 and 50 informal interviews.

### ***Diary***

A method to remind myself of moments and places in the field was using a diary to make daily notes of my experiences (See Appendix C for an extract from my diary). Some ethnographers might use a simple notebook for writing field notes together with a diary to record a more personal account of being in the field, while others choose not to use a diary and prefer using only a simple notebook. My diary was used as both. I recorded moments and conversations, and I described them with feeling and honesty. I personalised my diary by sketching the plan of Sithathu Park in it, and I stuck photographs in relevant spaces inside it to complement my writing. My diary was a means to practise and continue writing, reflect on my day in the field, and put into perspective the events that I experienced. It was a debriefing tool I used at the end of the day. It became an irreplaceable, personal tool; so, it was imperative that I looked after it. I was selective in when I brought it into the field, and when I did, I always kept it safely in my car. If I did not have time to jot down my notes on site, I would have to be disciplined to do it in the evenings.

Upon completion of my fieldwork, I found my diary to reveal the richest and most descriptive findings. I drew a lot of information from it during the analysis stage of the project, which I will discuss in a later section. Obviously, the findings from my diary and the other methods described in this section harnessed elements of sensitivity and confidentiality, which relate to the ethics of the study that will be discussed later in this chapter.

## ***Workshop***

The Greening Nyanga programme coordinator was approached by a member of the local community about developing a park in her street. She expressed her interest in the work being done at Sithathu Park and explained that the Siyo Square Street Committee she represented had ideas about how to transform the large open space in the middle of their group of houses. I decided that this would be a valuable opportunity to gain insight into what this group of residents needed in a park and what a park environment would mean to their community by hosting a workshop.

Prior to the workshop I got permission from the director of Etafeni to use the dining hall to host it. Furthermore, I had to address the Siyo Square Street Committee at the chairman's house one evening to discuss the content of the workshop, the date, and the need for other members of the community to be invited. The main activity of the workshop was to design posters in small groups showing the most ideal park for the area (see Figure 18 below). On the day of the workshop 20 people arrived; so, four groups of five people were formed. I supplied the materials used to make the posters, which included paper, magazines, paint, colour pencils, glue, and scissors. I also provided petals and leaves picked from a garden to encourage the groups to be creative with the variety of materials. This encouragement led to one group picking some blades of grass outside in the garden, which enhanced the imaginary of a lawn in the group's design.

After an hour and a half of dedicated designing, each group had to present their posters (see Figure 19 below of an example of a poster) to all the participants, which I filmed using my cell phone for later reference. The presentations allowed for discussion and debate among participants about certain aspects of each design. As Vogel et al. (2016, p. 517) suggest, "In such interactions, people can begin journeys of imagining futures together". The rich imaginings that emerged from the interactive workshop showed that it was effective and positive. It provided me with valuable insight into the needs and desires of the community, as well as the issues that people in the area face daily, such as crime.



**Figure 18: Group Work at the Workshop (10 November 2016)**



**Figure 19: One of the Posters Presented at the Workshop (10 November 2016)**

## ***Photographs***

Visual ethnography, to which Madden (2010) refers, includes the use of photography as a method that provides reference points to and reminders of a place or people. Photographs offer a real-life experience for the reader to easily visualise the place and the people. Photographs of participants and their practices in my study offer confirmation of their description and appearance, as well as the imagination of the encounters and relationships formed with them. As a way of showing respect I asked people for permission before taking photographs of them. People tended to appreciate having their home gardens photographed. I sensed an element of pride when I asked if I could take photos of their gardens. I received a negative response once from someone I photographed from my car, who was one of the meat traders. My imposition was a surprise to me, given the willingness of others in the area to be photographed, but it confirmed the sensitivity and invasion that photography can cause.

I took many photographs of the landscape of Nyanga and the activities of the participants that were included in the study. The photographs not only reminded me of the experiences, but also provided a useful way of dating the experiences. I wanted to document the progress of particular projects, such as the home gardens of a few of the Abalimi trainees, and Sithathu Park, and photographs enabled me to do this successfully. I used my cell phone to take the photographs, and although I was warned several times not to carry my phone with me in the streets because of the possibility of being robbed, my desire to capture relevant moments prevailed. The value of the photographs subsequently meant that I had to diligently upload and save them onto my laptop and USB device.

## **Post-field**

After the nine-month period in the field it was time to reflect on the experience. I found it difficult to have an end-point to my being in the field, because projects were incomplete. I realised that I formed an attachment to Sithathu Park, and I was not ready to walk away from it when there was still work to do to finish it. I wished that I could see more home gardens, and those gardens that I did see, I wished I could continue to watch their progress. However, as people's lives in Nyanga carried on, so too did mine. I had to continue with my own project. I had to finish off transcribing interviews, upload photographs, and start with the analysis of all my data.

## *Analysis*

The analysis of my ethnographic research involved much sorting and ordering of the data that I captured in the field. The aim of my analysis was to interpret and understand the various elements of data. It entailed a critical inspection of my transcriptions, field notes, and photographs to find the relationships amongst the different variables, such as the people, their stories, and the projects, for example. Patterns or commonalities of the variables emerged, which I grouped into themes. This approach is known as thematic analysis. Since analysis requires purpose for contribution to the study, identifying key words relevant to the purpose was important in the analysis process.

By using my field notes, transcribed interviews and workshop presentations, and photographs, I was able to draw out key words that were conveyed through the various practices I observed (such as gardening, recycling, and informal trading) and, at times, in which I participated, and people's stories that I recorded. I did this by reading and re-reading my data in order to become familiar with them and deducing specific patterns that emerged. I used highlighters and assigned particular colours to key statements and circled in pencil common themes. I documented where and how the patterns occurred next to each key word on the data source. This process of deducing patterns and key words occurred multiple times, as my deduction reflected the surface meaning of the data initially. Only after repeating the process did my analysis deepen.

I then grouped individual key words, using post-it notes, into common themes (see Appendix D on page 237), which were subsequently revealed as: "memory", "livelihood", and "social relations". After interpreting the themes and contextualising them in the literature, I found that each theme related to the theoretical perspective of my study, which made it possible to convey a coherent story using my data. I wrote about these themes using data from my transcriptions and field notes, while relaying relevant information from my literature review. Each theme is reflected in Chapters 4 to 6 of this thesis. After extensive writing and further analysis from my writing that involved comparing and contrasting the relationships between various sub-themes in the text, I could see that the concept of "home" consistently emerged. In the next chapter of this thesis I will talk about the first of these major themes: Memory.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethnography doesn't have an ethical element – ethnography is an ethical commitment from the very outset and through all phases of ethnographic research and writing (Madden, 2010, p. 34).

There was a range of ethical considerations relating to my research that I was constantly aware of while I was in the field. Doing ethnography in Nyanga required a sensitive approach to living and working through the lives of the people being studied. Confidentiality was explained to the participants before interviews; participants and programme organisers could choose anonymity and privacy as a condition of the interviews; accountability of the data that I gathered was truthfully recorded and described; the responsibility of the equipment I used, such as my diary and Dictaphone, was mine; and consent for me to conduct interviews with participants and my participation in activities was obtained prior to the commencement of all activities.

At Etafeni I provided a consent letter that required a signature from the director and outlined my role at the organisation and the purpose of the study. At Abalimi I emailed my request to use the organisation in my study and was responded to verbally over the telephone by the director of the organisation. Each participant who I interviewed was told about my research and the purpose of the interview in a language of their choice. They could also choose to be voice recorded. All participants did not object to using their given names, therefore pseudonyms were not used. In some instances, I refer to an older man and women as “Madala” and “Mama” respectively, because I did not know their names.

As I was engaging in a very different environment from the one in which I live, I was mindful of being respectful and not being judgemental of people. The greeting of older people was a habit that I adopted, and being open-minded about any experience, conversation, and observation was essential for gaining respect from participants. However, over an extended period of time being in the field, such ethics were not always easy to achieve. There were challenging moments to which I had to adapt or simply accept, which I discuss next.

## **Challenges and Limitations**

Being in the field required discipline, motivation, and initiative on my part, since I was the project manager of my time and my research, and ultimately my accomplishments in the

field. My discipline and patience were challenged when meetings were cancelled suddenly and when people were late for appointments to which they had committed themselves. The sense of urgency and concept of commitment were not prioritised by many with whom I engaged. I found myself slipping into the trap of not being conscious of time, the further into my study I got. This was perhaps a mechanism of becoming more patient with others, since I needed them more than they needed me. The more patient I became, the more I accepted the circumstances of my study area. Getting access to people and finding those who were committed to participating in the study were challenges. Places were not visibly marked, some houses were without numbers, and not all residents had cell phones on which to be contacted. This often meant having to return on another day in the hope of locating them.

Crime was both a challenge and a limitation for my being in Nyanga. Since I was obviously seen as an outsider, I had to constantly negotiate my way in the field. I could not walk alone in the streets and be in the park unaccompanied by a local member of the community. I was advised not to carry my cell phone with me, but my persistence in doing so for photographs prevailed. My car had to be parked in gated parking areas at both NGOs, which were staffed by security guards. Therefore, I was limited to certain areas in Nyanga and was unable to explore them freely. The limitation that crime caused me may have possibly prevented my finding more data in the field. The notorious nature of crime also meant that there was limited support from people close to me to enter Nyanga, because of their being concerned about my safety. I was hesitant to tell my parents, in particular, when I would be doing my fieldwork, as it became worrisome for them to know.

Furthermore, I was prohibited from living in Nyanga for the duration of the fieldwork, because there was fear that the family with whom I planned to stay would be targeted by criminals. The fear related to the perception that being a white person I had money; and my presence would mean that there would be wealth in the house, which would entice criminals to steal. The family explained to me that in Nyanga white people are perceived as being financially wealthy and that they give donations to NGOs and to people who are less fortunate. So, this perception extended to the belief that all white people would give to or provide for poor people, including the family with whom I planned to stay, thus making the family's home a potential target. I felt disappointed by this problem, as my intention had been to live with a family I knew well, but it confirmed the general sense of fear, and the socio-economic inequalities related to crime in Nyanga.

In line with this reality, a big challenge that I encountered when conducting interviews was the expectation by respondents that I would provide them with some sort of compensation. I was asked if I could help them with their businesses by finding donors to support them, and also employment for those looking for work. I sensed that there was an expectation from the respondents that at the end of the interview I would hand over money or make promises about work opportunities. I learnt that this was a similar belief about white people being able to provide, regardless of socio-economic status. I overcame this challenge by baking batches of muffins every time I had a scheduled interview to attend and gifted the respondent with freshly baked products. I found this to be effective since food is a universal need from which everyone can benefit. In the words of a local resident, “you scratch my back, so I scratch your back”, which means that if I take something from someone, then I have to give something to that person in return, I provided muffins in return for interviews.

This phenomenon was also reflected in the notion of voluntary work. I observed the struggle to find anyone who would voluntarily assist with the building of Sithathu Park. The concept of volunteering was non-existent, which meant that “volunteers” had to be paid a stipend for any work done in the park. Again, it is a reflection of the poor socio-economic status of people that is rife in Nyanga. I realised, however, that this approach to volunteering was also one that created opportunity to generate an income and livelihood. This aspect of livelihood is a theme on which I focus in Chapter 5.

Despite these challenges and limitations that I experienced, I can confidently express that my chosen methodology was appropriate for my study, and the data I gathered in my chosen study area were collected successfully. Ultimately, being in the field was about finding a balance between the ‘outsider trap’ and the ‘insider trap’ for the sake of my research project. The former refers to the intangible and conceptual parts of finding data; the latter is about becoming so immersed in a place and a particular way of life that questioning the taken-for-granted or in seeing home in its wider spatial or social context is missed (Buttimer, 1980, p.171). Ethnography was about being aware of such traps and finding equilibrium between my theoretical knowledge and perceptions of everyday life in Nyanga, and the on-the-ground realities of the people who live there.

## Reflection

Crang and Cook (1995, p. 208) point out that ethnographies may be perceived as lacking the “apparently concrete” results of other methods, but express that:

An honest and serious engagement with the world is not a failure because it admits that things are messier than that and tries to think through the various complexities and entanglements involved rather than to deny them.

After doing and committing to ethnography, this insight resonates with me and is reflected in my research. By being in the field I was privileged to witness how other people live their lives. My ethnographic experience in Nyanga enabled me to improve my understanding of the local people and their ways of thinking, talking, doing business, and living. It allowed me to reflect on my own position within a culture different to my own. I gained critical insight and nuanced understanding of what sustainability looks like and how it is practised in an area that is resource deficient and often stigmatised due to rampant crime. Through ethnography I observed first-hand the everyday practices taking place in Nyanga that ultimately had sustainable effects. A few site visits and interviews, and a survey or questionnaire would not have done justice to the people there. Instead, being in the homes of people and listening to people’s stories about their homes and the materiality of them allowed me to gain insight into how the imaginaries of home-making and connections to home shape sustainability in Nyanga.

The next chapter will show that unintended environmental benefits can be produced from memories of distant homes and family, and the sense of place and community in feeling at-home and creating home. Rather than emerging from political interventions or selfless moral motivations, for example, sustainability arises from remembering home through gardening.

## Chapter 4

### Remembering Home

*My Tongue Softens on the Other Name*

*In my mother's back yard washing snaps  
above chillies and wild rosemary.  
Kapokbos, cotton wool bush, my tongue softens  
on the rosemary's other name.  
Brinjal, red peppers and paw-paw grow  
in the narrow channel between  
the kitchen and the wall that divides  
our house from the Severo's. At the edge  
of the grass by the bedrooms, a witolyf reaches  
ecstatically for the power lines.*

*In a corner in the lee of the house.  
nothing grows.  
Sound falls here.  
Early in the day shadows wash  
over old tiles stacked  
against the cement wall.  
In the cold and silence  
my brother is making a garden.*

*He clears gravel from the soil  
and lays it against the back wall.  
Bright spokes of pincushion proteas puncture a rockery.  
For hours he scrapes into a large stone a hollow to catch  
water from a tap that has dripped all my life.  
Around it, botterblom slowly reddens the grey sand.  
A fence made of reed filters  
the wind between the wall and the house.  
Ice-daisies dip their tufted heads  
toward its shadows.*

*At night, on an upturned paint tin, he sits  
in the presence of growing things.  
Light wells over the rim of the stone basin  
and collects itself into the moon.  
Everything is finding its place. (Baderoon, 2010, p. 116)*

The home space is a creative place and encompasses personal imagination (Swift, 1997). For this boy, his imagination comes to life through creative practices in his garden. Furthermore, within the imaginaries of the home space, memories can flourish (Swift, 1997). Pleasant memories or memories of achievement usually emerge where there is a familiarity of place, which is another construct of place attachment (Raymond, et al., 2010). Familiarity of place was revealed in the stories of people in Nyanga who remember the farms on which they grew up. The practice of gardening in the township is familiar to them because of their memories of home. Gardening was the predominant sustainable practice that I encountered during my fieldwork in Nyanga. Although the sustainability of some gardens was a challenge for the community members who were financially vulnerable, and for those who lost interest in gardening, I observed a larger proportion of gardens in people's homes than other forms of household sustainability, such as recycling. Home gardens and a community park emerged in the township with the common element of remembering home. People's memories of home were either of their birth places, primarily in the Eastern Cape, or they were associated with their childhood. Furthermore, the intergenerational influence of people practising gardening came out strongly when some people talked about their mothers' gardens, and in an individual's recollection of his grandfather's plants.

The commonality shared among the people I introduce in this chapter was that they had grown up with a garden, either in the Eastern Cape or where they grew up in Cape Town. They all wanted to replicate a sense of home in their lives in Nyanga. I observed that through the story-telling of memories and imaginaries of people's connection to their homes, and ultimately nature, the youth and people from different backgrounds could understand such connections and behaviours, and ultimately learn from them. The geographical and environmental experiences expressed by the people reinforced their identity and rootedness in Nyanga. Feelings of belonging, which are characterised by an underlying sense of rootedness in a place, are captured and retained in memory. They are portrayed predominantly as images of the place where experiences of sustainability were originally practiced.

My visits to people's homes allowed me to become aware of their sense of belonging and see their memories come to life in the form of their vegetable gardens. The memory of home and the people who practised farming there were tangible in the form of an individual's own home garden. The memory of home through gardening was, thus, an extension to the people

who once were important in the lives of those practising it. People personified their memories of deceased family members from home by embodied rituals of sacrificing plants and animals. A deep connection to the natural is, therefore, not only being practised in the garden through memory, but also in rituals of remembrance that connect people to each other and to home. I describe my experience of a remembrance ritual later in this chapter.

In this chapter I argue that people's homes are remembered when they engage in the practice of gardening. My argument asserts that urban gardens are places where people can connect to families at distant homes, and they provide an imaginary of what home once was. In this chapter I describe memories of home through the stories of individuals who recall gardens and farms they once knew, as well as my personal experience of a remembrance ritual. I identify three main themes that emerged from people's stories that determine their motivations for gardening through their recollections of home. They include identity and sense of belonging; changing urban environments; and responsibility. This chapter is structured in three sections. Firstly, I discuss the stories of the emotional connection, the sense of belonging, and self-identity of place attachment that people have gained from gardening in Nyanga. I then convey the stories of people's motivations to practising gardening in times of urban change, and lastly, I discuss the initiatives of some people who imbue the notion of taking responsibility to embrace sustainable environmental change.

The poem above is set in a home environment and depicts the enactment of the skill of gardening that a boy has learnt from his mother. It is told by the boy's sister, who is recalling their mother's backyard, where the gardening activities by her brother are being played out. In saying that "everything is finding its place", the boy has found his place too. This can be described as place rootedness or place attachment. Raymond, et al. (2010) refer to having a strong bond to home or an emotional connection to one's immediate surroundings as ways of finding one's place (Raymond, et al., 2010). Therefore, one aspect of place attachment is the concept of home, which is signified by terms such as at-homeness and rootedness. It is about belonging to a place both as an individual, like the boy in the poem, and as a member of a community. Research about women's attachment to their homes is based on comfort and security (physical and emotional) that is derived from familiarity, personal rituals, and routines (Cristoforetti, et al., 2011). I identify such attachment in the next section of this chapter.

## **Flourishing at home: The emotional nourishment of gardening**

Maria (female, late 50s) is a resident of Nyanga, who tells me, “I love my home now”, because of the reconnection to plants and her garden that she once had at her rural home in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Through a pleasant memory of her distant home, Maria created a place of comfort in Nyanga. The concept of memory to Jones (2011) is important to ideas of place and landscape, as both are based on some notion of familiar and remembered physical space. Thus, the ideas of being-in-place are powerful to daily life (Jones, 2011). For Maria, “being in place” is to remember a life of gardening that she once lived, and this has provided her with a sense of belonging to an unfamiliar urban environment. Maria loves her home now because it is familiar to her and evokes pleasant memories of a home in which she was raised. The practice of vegetable gardening is, therefore, being enacted through memory at Maria’s home in Nyanga. Through the view of Practice theory, gardening means a familiarity to and sense of belonging of place, both past and present.

Whilst walking in her yard, Maria tells me that she grew up in a village in Kwa-Zulu Natal, but had to leave her home there as a young mother because of an abusive husband. She reminisces about her homeland, telling me that the soil there is very fertile, and that she had a garden there which made her curious about how plants grow. She explains that her curiosity heightened as a child when she experimented with a potato peel:

I put it next to the kraal<sup>25</sup> where the manure of the cows was, to see which is more fertile between the soil and the manure. But the potato grew in both the soil and the manure. I would always check if there was any potato to harvest.

This memory is reflected in her garden today, as she makes a point of checking her broccoli, lettuce, spinach, and spring onions daily to see their progress. She asks me if she should water them again today, giving away her nurturing nature. She tells me that every morning she goes out to check each plant, “to see if it is still alright”.

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<sup>25</sup> An enclosed area for livestock.

After living in Nyanga for 19 years, Maria has reconnected with her childhood interest of gardening and is satisfying her curious mind. Her garden has become an extension of her home and has provided a sense of belonging to the township environment. She tells me:

I love planting, and I love plants and trees and nature and soil. I wanted to learn the reaction of planting a seed and coming out of a plant that I saw as a child.

She explains to me that her curiosity led her to attend a workshop to learn more about vegetable gardening. She refers to the three-day training workshop that is offered to local community members by Vathiswa, a local farmer at the Abalimi Bazekhaya garden centre in Nyanga. I see that the information from the training about organic farming has been put to use in Maria's yard. While showing me her newly established plots that she has built herself, and where she has planted various seedlings, she tells me, "I work hard in my garden. I love my home now because it is beautiful". Maria would like me to visit her home again to see the growth of her vegetables. I return almost three months later and see that she, indeed, works hard in her garden. The progress of the vegetable plots is captured in Figures 20 to 22 below.



**Figure 20: Maria's vegetable plots (2 June 2016)**



**Figure 21: Spinach, Cabbage, and Lettuce in Plot 1 and Carrots in Plot 2  
(30 August 2016)**



**Figure 22: Maria's vegetable plots (30 August 2016)**

Maria has found her place and a sense of belonging in an urban environment. She identifies herself in her vegetable garden and reconnects her curious mind to gardening. Self-identity through gardening can be elicited through memory, which authors such as Taylor (2010) and Wolf et al. (2014) argue. Memories can be understood as a thread of continuity which connects experiences into our personal identity, which we might summarise as “who I am” (Taylor, 2010, p. 21). Such emotional or symbolic meanings that are assigned by an individual to an activity, such as gardening, the physical landscape, or place become part of a person’s self-identity (Wolf, et al., 2014).

Self-identity found in the practice of gardening resonates with Mildred, a grandmother (mid-60s) who was born in Simon’s Town, but moved to Gugulethu under the Group Areas Act during apartheid. I meet her at a training workshop at the garden centre of Abalimi Bazekahya. Despite having been present in the era of forced removals in South Africa when she was a child, she expresses fond memories of the garden she once played in and of helping her mother in the garden when she was a child. She says:

Mostly I was a person of flowers and shrubs and grass. Veggies came later in my life. I’m taking it that maybe I’m taking it from my mother because my mother loved gardening and she also planted also flowers. I was the one who was always helping her in the garden, so I think I am taking it from there. The love of gardening just grew in me.

During a time when the identities of black people in South Africa were stripped in demoralizing ways, Mildred found her personal identity in gardening. By identifying herself with gardening as a child, she discovered a passion that grew into her adult life. She expresses, “How I love it. I enjoy it. It’s a passion to me”. She tells me that her desire is to share her passion for gardening with others. The information she learns from the training will be the leverage to use in fulfilling her desire of nurturing other women through gardening. Her dream is to move to a bigger place where she can hold workshops for women, girls, and young children to teach them about womanhood and how to eat healthily. The interpretation of Mildred’s story shows the internal dynamics of practice where the reproduction of practising gardening is viewed as being on a trajectory of change. In this case, gardening shapes new ideas and subsequent activities that are workshops for young girls and women about healthy eating.

As a woman in the community says, “A healthy mother raises a healthy mansion”, Mildred, as a mother, wishes to apply her nurturing nature to help other women, girls, and young children. For Mildred, learning about the importance of nurturing a garden elicits memories of nurturing a child, especially for those whose children are adults and no longer depend on their mothers. The commitment and hard work of growing and maintaining a garden is, thus, as real as the commitment and hard work involved in raising a child. Vathiswa reiterates this idea by saying, “Your garden is like your baby inside your house. You must look after it”. Mildred’s dream could ultimately present a symbolic place of meaning, identity, and sense of belonging to other women.

Both Maria and Mildred have told stories about establishing new homes after leaving their birth places because of traumatic circumstances. They both found places in Nyanga that represent familiarity of what home once was for them. Through the practice of gardening, they have reconnected to their homes with fond memories and found a sense of belonging and place in the world.

Familiarity of place to other local people in Nyanga is also identified within the Abalimi Bazekhaya garden centre. It is a unique landscape situated in daily urban life of the township. It offers an assortment of organically grown vegetables, seedlings, and fresh compost for purchase by local people. It is also a place where people can reinvigorate their memories about farming in the Eastern Cape or their childhood memories about their mothers’ gardens. As I have described in the previous chapter, the garden centre is open to the public for monthly training workshops in which Vathiswa, a local female resident and farmer, teaches the skill of sustainable urban agriculture. The theoretical and practical elements of the training both provide a connection to homes from past working environments and places of origin. In line with practice theory, the garden centre provides the skill of gardening, the material of the garden and resources, and meaning for the customers and the women who work there. The interconnections of these elements result in transformation of people’s needs, such as the ability of community members to establish their home gardens to connect to their childhood comforts, for example.

One such community member is Minky, a woman (early 40s) living in Nyanga, who explains to me:

I like the garden, because my mother taught me how to garden. I am from Belville and we had a garden in the yard. When I was working my boss taught me how to make compost so I can do it myself.

Minky's story is one that resonates with the scene of the poem in the opening of this chapter. It depicts the intergenerational influence of a mother's skill of gardening. In the poem the boy is making a garden in his mother's backyard, which speaks to the idea that a mother's creation has influenced her son to create his own. For other people, the influence of gardening came from learning about it at school. Sibongiseni (female, early 30s) explains:

In the Eastern Cape there was a school with a garden at the back. One by one spinach, cabbage [were planted]. I like it. I learnt farming at the school in the Eastern Cape when I was still young.

As a child growing up in the Eastern Cape, vegetable gardening was a way of life for Sibongiseni. Living in an urban environment that is Nyanga, however, she has had to reconnect to this way of life at the garden centre. This is where she has recalled the values of gardening. Similar to the scene of the poem, where the boy embodies the values of making a garden by clearing the gravel and making a fence, Sibongiseni re-enacts the values that she was taught as a child at school. The sustainability values of soil conservation, tree protection, water conservation, attention to vegetable and flower growth, and even daily conversation and learning are embodied in the garden centre. The practice of gardening at Abalimi, thus, has deep meaning to Sibongiseni, as it is a skill that she can once again perform for the benefit of her current natural surroundings.

The embodiment of such values that I observe at the garden centre enables me to recognise that gardening matters deeply to those participating in the training. It matters not only for the look of the neighbourhood or township landscape, but also to their intuition and thinking about the environment from which they originated. The clarity of what matters to the participants in the present moment is presented in the practical part of the training, which teaches the participants in nature's ways, cultivating a reminder of their inherent respect for the land. The embodied experience of preparing the soil during one of the training days urges a female participant to advise the class to, "keep your garden clean to respect it and to make you feel positive and happy". The act of preparing a plot reminds me of starting a piece of artwork on a blank canvas to create something meaningful and memorable. It

incorporates the intricacies of spacing between seedlings, the quality of manure used, width of the plot, and the types of seedlings planted to create an artistic design. The wearing of gloves is prohibited, as Vathiswa urges the trainees to, “feel the soil in your hands; feel the passion”. Feeling the soil and passion that Vathiswa refers to relates to feeling connected to the natural environment. The physical immersion with the soil provides a sensual experience of thinking about and connecting to past landscapes.

Hitchings and Jones (2004) argue that embodied experiences and physical encounters with nature provide a tool for communicating with the non-human and a better way about knowing plants in a more direct manner. Additionally, Manzo & Devine-Wright (2014) refer to the embodiment of daily conversation and learning in place-making. Both notions of embodiment with the natural and in place-making are resonant with Lungiswa’s story. She expresses to me, “If I don’t have anybody to speak to, I go and speak to them, my vegetables. It really revive my spirit”. Taylor and Lovell (2013) suggest that interacting with and nurturing plants, and also watching plant growth in gardens can trigger personal growth and transformation, and encourage resistance to social and economic exclusion. The internal dynamics of practices allow for the trajectory of personal change where, in this case, gardening leads to social transformation. Therefore, home gardens can provide a sense of emotional comfort to people, such as Lungiswa. Such comfort stems from the familiarity and nostalgia of a distant home.

Lungiswa, who is a single mother of one child and in her late 30s, was involved in farming as a child in the Eastern Cape and tells me, “I’m that girl who is used to ploughing and cows and all those stuff”. She expresses that she misses the farm a lot and the mountainous beauty surrounding it. Lungiswa’s current home is located along Zwelitsha Drive and is in an old City of Cape Town hostel flat. These hostels offer very little garden space, as much of the space is used for washing lines and parked cars. However, Lungiswa has managed to negotiate for the use of a neighbour’s outdoor space to grow her little garden, under the condition that she shares her produce with the neighbour (see Lungiswa’s garden in Figures 23 and 24 below). As Bhatti and Church (2004) suggest, the garden and gardening provide people with an embodied and sensual engagement with nature, and this is evident in Lungiswa’s daily domestic practices. Such engagements with nature have allowed for a newly settled woman, Lungiswa, in a township environment to draw upon her childhood memories of wide-open spaces in the Eastern Cape.

I ask her to tell me a bit about her home in the Eastern Cape:

My background I came from farm [in the Eastern Cape] so I'm that girl who is used to ploughing and cows and all those stuff. It is *magnificent!* [Her home in the Eastern Cape] A beautiful area, the soil is very fertile. Especially we specialise with maize, with livestock. I miss it a lot.

Although she was exposed to farming as a child, Lungiswa explains that she never understood types of soil and compost, how to plant correctly, and when the appropriate time is to plant. Therefore, she explains that the training at Abalimi was ideal for her needs. She tells me that the training made her "wider and wiser" because of the amount of knowledge she gained from it. I ask her what the most interesting part of it was:

Yho! From the beginning until the end. That was really exciting. You know even the last date that we were just finishing it was so sad because the time was so limited, but everything! I love the time of starting on scratch on how to use the soil, the way that she [Vathiswa] teaches us to plough, how to put seed, how to put all those stuff you know. I enjoy each and every part of that.

Through my engagement with Lungiswa, I interpret that the garden centre was a homely place for her during the training. It was a place where she felt comfortable to talk about her concerns about the youth of Nyanga and the high crime rate in the township. As I spend time with her in her home, the issue of crime creeps into our conversation. I ask her about her thoughts about the aesthetics of her neighbourhood, given her nostalgia about the nature of the area in which she grew up. I am particularly interested in her opinion about the lack of trees in the area, and ask her if more trees are needed. She opposes trees "because of the dangers happening around Nyanga". She elaborates on this:

You know there is so much thugs that are around here that the cause of that is stuff that they are using like drugs and all those things so those people using those stuff they don't think anymore. But eventually those are good things that we are supposed to have [trees], especially in summer... They hide [in trees] to just mock other people. So, you would go into a park that you would want to enjoy yourself

when you see people you thought they are also enjoying themselves, but you find out that they are not. They are in the mission [of robbing people]. The long trees, people are scared to sit there.

Her dependence on her home vegetable garden is not only for nutrition, but also for emotional comfort, and a place of safety from the crime that exists outside of her home. She describes her garden as a place that “really revive my spirit”. As described by Bhatti and Church (2004), this place is one to distance or remove oneself from risk and uncertainty. Sometimes feeling nervous and afraid, and perhaps alienated from the contemporary neighbourhood, Lungiswa finds security in the company of her home garden. Her sense of security stems from her attachment to place, and encompasses emotional and physical security from outside disturbances, such as anti-social behaviour. Her food garden also provides her with food security during a time when the cost of food is high. Just as the boy in the poem is making his own place, a sacred place, to feel love and pride, or to seek rectitude from an unsafe and threatening neighbourhood, Lungiswa, too, has made a sacred place of her own. The origin of personally sacred places, suggest Manzo and Devine-Wright (2014), is from childhood, an expression of one’s identity, or a personal creation by hand. All three elements relate to Lungiswa’s sense of place attachment to her home garden.



**Figure 23: Lungiswa admiring her garden (30 August 2016)**



**Figure 24: The variety of vegetables in Lungiswa's garden (30 August 2016)**

### **Remembering the old, struggling in the new: Changing urban environments**

Social attachments to places have been described using the construct of “place belongingness”, where people feel a “membership” to an environment (Raymond, et al., 2010, p. 2). Abalimi’s garden centre is a place where trainees feel this sense of membership during the training workshops. As members of such an environment, some of the trainees feel free to converse openly between individual members or amongst the whole group. They feel safe and a sense of belonging in such an environment, which allows them to share their stories from the past and their concerns about the present.

During a training session, one of the men (early 50s) tells me about his love for working in the garden. He says that he was taught by his father at a very young age in the Eastern Cape, and also learnt about gardening at the primary school he attended there. He expresses his disappointment about schools in Cape Town not offering gardening lessons to pupils and says that he struggles to teach his 16-year-old son how to garden in their yard. He explains that his son is not interested in it at all. This notion of young people not being interested in

gardening carried over into another day when Lungiswa expressed her sadness about how few young people are involved in gardening these days, and exclaimed:

The youth's minds are in a cave, in jail. The youth think Pollsmoor<sup>26</sup> is jail, but they are sitting in jail in their houses because they are not involved in community things and rather take drugs.

Vathiswa shares the problems that she is having with her children, who also don't want to learn about gardening. She says that they are embarrassed about her being a farmer from the Eastern Cape when they see people watching her in their garden. She describes the problem of status in Cape Town and that farming is considered to be "low" in the city. Moreover, she says that since farming is seen as an activity done in the Eastern Cape, the youth in the city can't associate themselves with it and would rather look for "proper" jobs that will sustain them. This distinctive disconnect between youth and the family origins further distances the younger, urbanised, generation from the natural. Many young people may not be accustomed to nature and sustainable behaviour, particularly through memory, if they have not experienced it. However, the disinterest towards gardening shown by the youth is what seems to frustrate the older generation the most.

Lungiswa follows on with the discussion and says, "Children are not proud of where they come from and of their mothers and aren't understanding their roots". In response, Vathiswa expresses the importance of sharing knowledge with people of all ages in the community to sustain the knowledge of what one was taught in the past in order to encourage the sustainability of gardening projects that in turn develop the community. Perhaps she thinks that the more knowledge that is shared and practised the more potential there could be to make gardening a common way of life. It could also motivate the youth to recognise the importance of gardening and understand why their parents are practising it. The constant changing environment and the values people hold in an urban environment resonate in the everyday lives of the people living in Nyanga. From the perspective of practice theory, introducing variations of a practice that are different or external to existing practice, such as gardening, can cause resistance (Mylan, 2015). In this case, a new generation challenges the

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<sup>26</sup> Pollsmoor prison is located in the Southern suburbs of Cape Town and is notorious for overcrowded conditions and gang violence.

practice of gardening by introducing new skills or ideas of developing the community or preventing development in the community, which is a topic I discuss in Chapter 6.

As Strengers (2012) argues, the idea of maintaining existing ways of life is unfathomable considering the scale and rate at which everyday practices are currently and constantly changing. Thus, changes to a place influence changes in practices that could influence changes in human behaviour that are seen in the youth. The effects of urbanisation on the youth in Nyanga are encroaching into the lives of all residents of the township, particularly when there is a lack of interest in connecting with nature (a topic I discuss in Chapter 6). Von Wirth et al. (2016) indicate that such effects on social processes and human interaction with the urban environment are difficult to measure. However, what is apparent in Nyanga is that urban growth is a common cause of the decline in space, especially green space. The issue of space for gardening is a topic of conversation at the garden centre, where strong emotions emerge about the scarcity of space in Nyanga. Some participants express the need for more space to extend their houses and to accommodate people for different ceremonies, which compromise garden space. An older woman (mid-60s) explains to me:

My son is going to extend his house, because we have a lot of people in the house. There is no space in our yard [for additional vegetable plots] because here we always have customs and we need space to cook [for a funeral, for example]. There is no space in Nyanga. Everybody has little spaces.

Another woman admitted that although she doesn't have a lot of space in her yard, she doesn't want the burden of having to maintain a big garden. She tells me:

I don't have enough land to do a garden. I don't really want a big garden because I am 56 and I don't think I have enough energy, so I would want to have a garden and not a farm. I want something that I can manage with my strength. I wouldn't want to have a big land, but what I have is fine, although it is small.

Questions about how to get land to make a garden in areas with scarce space are raised during one of the training days at Abalimi. In fact, two young men are attending the training to find out if and how they can plant vegetables in a small space at their homes in the

township. All sorts of innovative ways of growing vegetables in containers are scattered around the garden, from an old bath to varying sizes of pots, to unused tyres and even an old canvas sack. As a result of being shown the creative ideas of containers used in the garden, one of the men says he would like to teach other people about growing vegetables in small containers. Vathiswa hopes for and believes in the idea of the knowledge that she shares with people being propagated like the seeds in her garden around the community.

A concern for Vathiswa is that the information learnt at the garden centre will “fade” if it is not practised. Mama Bokolo expresses similar concern and says, “Some people throw it away because if you go outside when the training is finished, people throw away that knowledge”. Remembering the skills of vegetable gardening is important to both women. Once people gain the knowledge of gardening, both these women encourage people to spread it so that the reminder of a skill once practised in people’s everyday lives will be sustained. This concern is reiterated by Barthel et al. (2015, p. 1322), who say that people are “forgetting” how to grow food and that the local knowledge relating to agriculture is fading from people living in cities.

Similarly, Orsini et al. (2013) are concerned with the loss of agricultural knowledge in just a few generations. Modern production and consumption practices dictate to most urban dwellers in society that the convenient purchasing, cooking, and eating of food are more practical than growing it oneself. Soper (2008) reminds us about today’s fast paced societies, where food is often fast food, eaten on the run, and consumed in solitary and preoccupied moments. Therefore, people living in cities are seemingly too busy and preoccupied to think about how to grow their own food.

Visibility of urban vegetable gardens is a way of reminding people of gardening skills they were once taught and the possibility of practising a skill they may long for. In a township setting that is densely populated, home gardens are easily visible to neighbours and passers-by. Taylor and Lovell (unpublished) suggest that such visibility may encourage the sharing of vegetables and information about planting. The neighbourly interactions of daily life and story-telling about home gardening experiences may evoke memories of one’s embodiment with nature. For some people, gardening is an activity that happens in rural places, where there is space and fertile ground. By viewing neighbours’ gardens in a township setting, people are able to remember the gardens they once had and imagine the gardens they can

create. Interaction between neighbours through plant sharing is an aspect of everyday life for Robert (male, 60s).

Robert has been living in Nyanga for almost 60 years. His house is one of the original houses built in 1952 under the government housing scheme of that time. What makes his house stand out from the rest of the neighbourhood is his garden, as illustrated in Figure 25 below. He tells me that he likes to think that his gardening is making a difference to the township, not only because of the aesthetics, but also because it provides a means to connect to old friends in the area. This notion of connecting people through home gardens is aligned to the work of Comstock et al. (2010, p. 435), who argue that home gardens are a feature of a neighbourhood environment that connects people to place because gardens require “action, responsibility, and nurturing”. Additionally, they argue that home and community gardens are affordable and easily accessible for all people, regardless of age, income, and education, for example (Comstock, et al., 2010). Robert explains to me that he connects with an old woman who lives next to Sithathu Park by giving her some of the flowers in his garden. He does this, he says, because he knows that she also enjoys gardening. Furthermore, he tells me that his “blom pots”<sup>27</sup> are safer with her because at night they get stolen from outside his house. Since she has a wall and a gate around her yard, the potted succulents are safe. This exchange of flowers, he tells me, allows him to depend on her if he needs anything in return, such as sugar.

This Mama<sup>28</sup> (age 65) to whom Robert refers has a garden with a variety of plants. The paved area of her yard has an abundance of indigenous succulent species in pots that require very little water. I identify that most of these are from Robert, as they resemble the succulents that he has on display inside his home. Mama tells me that she was taught to plant flowers by previous employers when she worked as a domestic worker. Every morning she had to water the plants when she got to work, and this activity subsequently became part of her life that she adopted in her own home. Although, these days she doesn’t have to spend too much time watering her plants, which is a benefit of growing succulents in the water scarce city of Cape Town. She too has spent most of her life in Nyanga and has used her memories of working for people who had gardens to create her own.

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<sup>27</sup> Afrikaans term for flower pots.

<sup>28</sup> Respectful Xhosa term for an old woman.

Robert tells me that for him, “The gardening I think is something that is coming from my heart”. He shares his story with me by reminiscing about his childhood and the rules that were implemented at home. They included the rule about cleaning the yard of litter and sand. He says that this practice encouraged him to start a garden in the yard, which then became his hobby. He describes his fascination with planting when he was a young boy, “I used to grab something from the bush and then I plant it at home, and it grows without root”. Now, as an adult, his fascination and love of flowers still exists. He says, “I can say sometimes I don’t know if my hands is clean or what, because if I plant something it grows bigger”. The memories of his childhood have influenced the continuous maintenance of his garden at his home, despite his frustrations about the vandalism and theft that he believes are caused by the youth in the area. He explains:

The kids, if you make something look beautiful outside, they come and play and spoil the place. Like if people are drunk they throw the bottles here [in his garden]. Sometimes some of them wee just next to my fence.

Persevering at his childhood hobby provides a homely environment for Robert. His home garden gives him a feeling of being “alright”, and seemingly content in his space. He describes the best part of his home as, “Sometimes it’s smelling very nice like Lavender. Lavender has got a nice smelling you see, and some other flowers. I like it”. We don’t talk about the sustainability benefits of the bees swarming around his lavender bush, and is something of which I realise he is simply unaware. He tells me that he likes knowing that people find his home attractive:

My house has not been renovated, but my gardening is attracting the people when they are passing. They always look at my place. That’s what I feel, and I see it happening. It means [the garden] attracts everybody. I like that, although I know I don’t have nothing, there is something attracting them here.



**Figure 25: Robert in his garden (30 November 2016)**

Robert's stories show how memories of home can generate particular practices of sustainability. Rather than relying on moral motivation, especially during the times when his garden is vandalised, or economic incentives of having a garden, the imaginaries of home and home-making practices stimulate sustainable behaviour. These stories are important reminders of where the connection to nature arises in urban landscapes. The memories that are personified through gardening provide stories for the youth to imagine how to embrace nature. The older generation of Nyanga is talking about the behaviour of the youth out of concern for themselves, in terms of safety, and for their immediate surroundings and neighbourhood. In line with household sustainability that Lane and Gorman-Murray (2011) refer to, sustainability practices that inspire social interventions to improve the aesthetics of neighbourhoods, such as gardening, can potentially improve the safety of the area. Thus, stories of gardening from the older generation to the younger generation of Nyanga are a way for the youth to imagine safer spaces in which older people want to live.

Bhatti and Church (2004) explain that the fast pace of cities and the sense of alienation that some people can experience in cities can cause mental fatigue and anxiety, as well as stress from the pressure of making the right life choices. Their argument about the stresses of daily urban life can significantly influence the behaviour of the youth that has been described in

this chapter so far. However, the idea that such stresses can actually encourage practices of sustainability speaks to the story of Zimkita, who wants to change the mindsets of people in Nyanga through gardening.

### **“Born, bred, and buttered”: Living in the urban; imagining the rural**

Zimkita is a 24-year-old woman who is passionate about gardening. She was born in Nyanga and recalls her childhood as being very sheltered because of the crime in the township. She remembers a park up the road from her house, but was never allowed to visit it. She says that parks are dangerous, even for children, “People you know as your neighbours, and even the children you go to school with, they rob you”. Her mother’s small garden at home was the place she sought to play and feel free. At primary school she was involved in a gardening project; so, as an adult she wishes to recollect the experience and sharpen her knowledge about planting vegetables.

At Abalimi’s garden centre she tells me, “I am doing what I have been longing for a while; it was in me the whole time”. Her connection to gardening is perhaps a trait that she inherited from her grandfather, who was a chief in his village in the Eastern Cape and farmed livestock and vegetables. Her exposure to a rural farming environment may have influenced her desire to resurrect it in an urban environment. She speaks about the feelings that she has experienced at Abalimi, and associates them with feeling at home in the garden, and says:

With this, it’s happy, I can sleep now. That’s the feeling I have. I feel like you are full in your tummy, you ate everything you wanted to eat. I’m getting out of this gate well equipped.

Zimkita’s desire to change her now paved yard into what she once had as a child is indicative of urban landscapes, such as townships, where change is constant, and improvement is imagined. I sense that she feels responsible for implementing the change to her family’s yard into a grassed area with flowers, as she is the family member who wants such change. She has longed to learn about gardening, and now she has the knowledge to fulfil her desire.

Another local woman whom I meet at the garden centre wishes to instil positive change in an urban environment that has undergone rapid urbanisation, but is severely underdeveloped. Nobesotho (mid-30s) is unemployed and has a dream to develop Umtata, a city in the Eastern Cape, with other women so that they can learn how to farm and “avoid

poverty". She explains the reality of the disintegration of the farming sector in Umtata by comparing it to what it was when she grew up there. She explains that her father once had four farms where he farmed maize and cattle, but they no longer exist. She explains that the family left farming because of urbanisation that has happened over many years. She imbues a sense of responsibility towards uplifting her home and hopes to re-establish farming in her birth place with other women. She praises Vathiswa's teaching and says that without Vathiswa's sharing of farming knowledge, she would not have thought about or remembered the "correct months to plant turnips and which months to plant spinach". She expresses her satisfaction of the training to me, "It's the best, the best to learn how to make your own food and feed yourself. My brain is open now". Her memory of Umtata and the farming community has been ignited by the teachings of Vathiswa at the garden centre. Thus, the practice of gardening that she once embodied will be re-enacted with her memory of home.

In addition to natural places of origin being remembered and reinvented in the homes of some people living in Nyanga, plants are considered to not only feed communities healthy food, but also to feed the need for individuals to be the change agent in their community (Taylor & Lovell, 2013). I maintain my argument that memories of natural places and practices of home that have sustainable effects are portrayed in the making of home vegetable gardens in cities where change is constant. Such stories of reinvention of urban spaces and of the mindsets of the people who inhabit them can be influential to those who wish to transform a once undesirable space to one that is valued by a local community in Nyanga.

The creation of Sithathu Park is an example of such transformation and is a result of consultation and participation between City Parks,<sup>29</sup> the local community, and Etafeni. As the main objective of the Greening Nyanga Programme is to redevelop nuisance plots,<sup>30</sup> the space was identified as an area where undesirable behaviour occurred, and needed to be upgraded. The design concept of the park emerged from the Greening programme after the programme coordinator and the Zwelitsha Street Committee identified many older people and pensioners living in close proximity to the space. The Street Committee agreed that the

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<sup>29</sup> The department in the City of Cape Town that is responsible for public open space.

<sup>30</sup> Etafeni defines nuisance plots as open spaces where anti-social behaviour occurs, such as drug-dealing. I was informed by community members that a dead body had been found on this particular nuisance plot. This was one of the motivations to develop the park in haste.

older generation seldom have safe options of spaces in which to socialise and relax. The idea was to use Sithathu Park as a safe and homely place for mothers and grandmothers and their daughters to come together to talk about their lives and life stories. The park was, thus, imagined as a place of story-telling and the sharing of memories at a time when life is difficult for most women in Nyanga.

During the beginning phase of construction of the park, in April 2016, a violent act of crime shook this community when an 82-year-old grandmother and two of her young grandchildren for whom she was caring were murdered in her home by suspected gangsters. The life of this grandmother will be remembered in this park, which would have been a place that she could have visited in her immediate neighbourhood. A sense of responsibility by the community in developing this space lies in the hope that the park will provide a connection to each other and past relationships. The Street Committee's idea is that the park will offer reinvigoration of both the area and the older women who take ownership of the park. It is, therefore, a place that the community has re-claimed from the criminal activity that once occupied the open space. Thus, memory of an un-homely place can encourage the imaginary of a type of neighbourhood that people want to have for the creation of new memories. Aligned to my argument, this neighbourhood and its new memories are created as a product of the practice of creating the community park. The socio-ecological benefits of this park, such as a place for social gathering and a habitat for bees and birds, bring the local people closer to nature. In addition to increasing biodiversity of plants and animals, community gardens help improve air and soil quality and decrease water run-off and flooding.

The design of Sithathu Park is unpretentious, with simple landscaping; it offers a space that allows one to feel at home and connected to nature. Among the indigenous trees and flower beds, which are demarcated by disused old tyres, concrete benches<sup>31</sup> provide seating for visitors. The soil surrounding the trees and flowerbeds are covered with mulch to conserve water, especially during the current drought-stricken months. The indigenous trees and flowers, which are predominantly species of fynbos,<sup>32</sup> attract biodiversity to the area, including birds and bees. The main man-made feature of the park is a large labyrinth made of recycled bricks and a combination of wood chips and pebbles. The purpose of walking a

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<sup>31</sup> Concrete was the chosen material of the benches by the Street Committee because it is more difficult to steal than wooden benches.

<sup>32</sup> Fynbos is a type of hardy and shrubby vegetation that is endemic to the Western and Eastern Cape regions in South Africa and is characterised by diversity and richness of species.

labyrinth is meditative. It provides a platform for one to reflect and contemplate on one's life, relationships, aspirations, and memories. The geometric pattern can be considered as a metaphor for the journey of one's life. The community members who walk the labyrinth can reminisce about their lives and think about the future that lies ahead of them. Although the park is situated in an area that is busy with vehicular and pedestrian traffic at certain times of the day, the design of the park caters for those who want to stop and reflect. See Figures 26 and 27 below for before and after images of Sithathu Park.



**Figure 26: The Beginning Phase of the Development of Sithathu Park (April 2016)**



**Figure 27: The Final Phase of the Development of Sithathu Park (September 2017)**

The progression of the work in the park can be looked upon as a memory from what the space used to look like to what it looks like today. The space of the park and the negative behaviour it once attracted are a distant memory to those who remember how it was. Such memory reminds people of the park's value in order to encourage the maintenance and care for it. Barthel et al. (2015, p. 1325) talk about the management of such a space being evoked by "social-ecological memory". They suggest that the combination of knowledge, experience, and practice of preserving an ecological space are "captured, stored, revived, and transmitted through time" (Barthel, et al., 2015, p. 1325). A local resident shows the practice of maintaining Sithathu Park through his memory of gardening that he learnt from his grandfather.

Koko (male, 30s) lives in a house along Zwelitsha Drive, opposite Etafeni. Together with the park caretaker, he is responsible for the development and maintenance of Sithathu Park.

After many days of my observing his work, he agrees to an interview. I ask Koko why he wants to work in the park and engage in gardening. He responds:

I like plants, and even my grandfather liked plants, and if you plant a plant you can even talk with the plant. A plant is like a human, it also breathes. It also gets upset when you treat it badly. That's why I like plants.

An environmental awareness that Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) describe as the connection and closeness to a plant that enables an awareness of what the plant looks like and how it functions in its place in a garden, permeates from Koko. He tells me, "Come to look at the flowers! These flowers are beautiful! I love working in this park!". I sense that he has developed a deep connection with plants, one that is almost spiritual, as he reminisces about his grandfather's influence on him. His knowledge and experience of being with nature show in his dedication to the park. The ethic of care that evokes an "emotional as well as rationally-informed concern for and connectedness to distant others" that Pallett (2017, p. 6) talks about is revealed during my interview with him. I see it when he shows me the new leaves sprouting from one of the trees and tells me that the tree is healthy because he waters it and talks to it. Moreover, Koko's connection to the natural portrays environmental concern (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002), which enables him to recognise times of struggle in the plant and the ways in which he could help it.

As he expresses his wish for more parks in Nyanga he describes what he has learnt from working in Sithathu Park and exclaims, while opening his hand, "The flowers go PEW!... they are opening [in the sun] in Themba and Koko's park". I receive his description as a sense of ownership and feeling of belonging to the park. When I ask him what the environment and beauty in a place where he lives means to him, he answers:

The beauty of the place is where you can't see a person throwing a paper and not picking it up. You can't allow someone to throw litter in the park. The park must always remain clean.

I continue with his concept of beauty and probe why litter is a concern for him:

Some people don't like a clean place. Some people like a dirty place. Even when I go to the park late I see things are not right. I talk to you,

this thing is not right. Some people need to be taught about what we are saying because from my home I know, I was taught to clean my yard. So, I cannot just throw a paper, because I have got to clean it again. So, they don't have anything to do, they just throw and someone else will clean it up. It's not good. The thing is they've got to be taught how to treat their environment. Last night in the park I saw a person pee in the park. Another person see him do wrong but they don't stop him, why? But don't pee here; find another place, because you are going to kill my plants.

I realise that Koko has embraced his embodiment of the natural by re-enacting his awareness and experience with nature. Aligned to Kollmuss and Agyeman's (2002) idea about how one's emotional connection to the environment emerges, Koko's environmental action stems from his knowledge about how to act because of his personal connection to his natural environment. He knows how to nurture the natural environment and connect with it at a deeper level. I hear the connection he has to the natural environment in his emotional response to the people he sees polluting these spaces, where his frustration and anger are revealed. I sense he feels responsible for the park now that he has made a connection to it. Seemingly his nurturing responsibility extends beyond his home; it's an extension of his home into the park. Koko's innate responsibility to the park speaks to Comstock et al.'s (2010, p. 435) view that community gardens connect people to place because they require "action, responsibility, and nurturing". Koko's action, responsibility, and nurturing of the park are, therefore, a contribution to the sustainability transformation of the local area.

The element of responsibility to and continuous engagement with the environment and to people are also placed in a home, a garden, and a church, by a man in his early 60s called Basil Booyesen. He has lived in Nyanga for 55 years, as a result of the displacement of his family from Retreat under the apartheid regime. He tells me that he retired at the age of 60 after working hard for most of his life. His spare time resulted in his being involved in many community projects, such as the gardening at the old age community centre, called Monwabisi, across the road from his house. In addition, he involves himself in the gardening and handy work at the Holy Cross church in Nyanga. Basil is a man who firmly belongs in his neighbourhood and one who has welcomed the responsibility of working hard to transform the area through community garden projects.

Basil's passion for gardening is a product of his mother's love of flowers. He reminisces about a flower patch across from his house when we speak in his lounge. He tells me that he made it himself, and that his mother loved picking the flowers, usually for the church. He explains that the patch was full of weeds and on the weekends, he would clean it, plant flowers, and look after them. This became a place where he could show off his hard work and his love for gardening. This place had its challenges, he says, as people in the area told him that he couldn't use the patch of ground for planting flowers. He explains:

Why? I am keeping the environment clean. That's what I do, because if you drive here most of the people have washing poles [on these spaces] but my washing pole is at the back. I am keeping the environment clean by planting flowers here. That's what I told them. They respected that, but African people don't like flowers;<sup>33</sup> that's one thing. The children will walk past here and pick the flowers and throw them on the floor because they don't know what a flower is.

Over the years he has tried to maintain his flower patch, which has attracted some people's interest. He was approached by the man who runs Monwabisi, who asked him if he could plant flowers in the grounds of the community centre to help uplift the place. Basil tells me that he was also able to plant vegetables on a space given to him in the grounds. His vegetable garden has kept him busy for the past five years during his retirement. His intrinsic sense of responsibility towards "keeping the environment clean" and making "the place look beautiful" comes out strongly during our interview. He takes me across to his garden. His genuine desire to enhance his surroundings is evident when I see the design of the garden at Monwabisi. Each vegetable plot is demarcated with disused tyres and bricks that he found and cleaned himself. The rows of cerise flowers provide a colourful buffer between the sections of plots too, seen in Figures 28 and 29 below.

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<sup>33</sup> This is a claim that I heard on multiple occasions from people living in Nyanga, mainly from males of various ages. I was told that young men in the township don't like to buy their girlfriends flowers because of the stigma of appearing feminine amongst other men.



**Figure 28: Basil's garden in front of the Monwabisi community centre, showing the buffer of flowers between plots (11 October 2016)**



**Figure 29: Basil's garden in front of the Monwabisi community centre (11 October 2016)**

In addition to the gardens near his home, Basil helps with the maintenance of the gardens at the Holy Cross church in Nyanga. He explains:

You see I must divide myself because the church is also waiting for me to do something there, like now I come from the church. Sometimes the church don't buy their flowers, they pick them out of my garden and I decorate them myself.

The outdoor space of the church that Basil has embraced as his responsibility, as an extension of his home, has become a place that unintentionally portrays examples of sustainability. For example, Basil has assisted with planting a vegetable garden, making compost, installing rain-water tanks, and providing a safe open space with trees and flowers (as illustrated in Figures 30 and 31 below). Such sustainable practices are enacted primarily because of Basil's sense of responsibility towards caring for and uplifting the environment. He doesn't get paid to maintain the gardens or for the gardening advice he offers to people who work at the church. In addition to keeping him active and busy, his connection to the gardens is a means of keeping the memory of his mother alive. The memory of his mother is strongly associated with her love of flowers, which he is representing in a place that others can share. In a way, he is offering a place where others' memories of gardens can be prompted and shared. Basil and a few other local people are maintaining the responsibility of caring for the space for the benefit of fulfilling memories for the people who visit it. The gardens also offer a homely environment for the beneficiaries who visit the church for a daily meal. They are able to see where the vegetables they eat are grown.



**Figure 30: Sustainable Food Garden at Holy Cross Church (25 November 2016)**



**Figure 31: The Open Grounds at Holy Cross Church (25 November 2016)**

My assertion that the memory of home influences practices that imbue sustainability is, therefore, reinforced in Basil's story. It sustains my argument that the practices happening in Nyanga that have sustainable outcomes are a result of one's connection to home. Basil's home has been in Nyanga for 55 years, and he has made his mark at other places in the township to extend his imaginary of home beyond the boundaries of his dwelling. He has done this through sustainable practices that are a product of memories of his mother and his childhood. Moreover, Basil's involvement in gardening in his community gives him senses of empowerment and achievement. Stone (2011) argues that community garden projects give volunteers such senses that they may once have had before the deterioration of their neighbourhoods, thus, associating memory from a happy environment. Moreover, older residents in the community participating in gardening projects bring an element of education to youth (Stone, 2011) and a means to connect with the younger generation. This is depicted in the opening poem, where a boy makes a garden as a result of his mother's influence and teaching. The boy and his mother have a common connection to each other and have created common memories of gardening. Similarly, Basil, as an older member of the community, can educate and influence the youth with his knowledge about gardening, and ultimately form a common connection amongst them.

Practices that connect people through embodiment and integration with the natural can be symbolised in remembrance rituals<sup>34</sup> that connect people to an elder who is buried at home. Taylor and Lovell (2013) refer to ethnic practices of preparing and consuming food, traditional spiritual and healing practices, and neighbourly reciprocity, which all may represent a continuation of a former way of life, as practices that imbue respect for nature. A remembrance ritual is one such ethnic practice, which I had the privilege of witnessing.

The remembrance of people who have passed away can be enacted through ritual using elements from the natural environment. There is an intrinsic appreciation of natural elements by those people who practise traditional ceremonies. Through a remembrance ritual, nature is used to connect to the person being remembered or celebrated. The ritual involves the sacrificing of livestock and the burning of herbaceous plants, and happens in

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<sup>34</sup> "Xhosa-speaking peoples observe transitions through life stages from birth, to death, to being brought back as an ancestor through the means of cultural rituals. Rituals are considered essential in maintaining the connection between ancestors and the living. Despite modernization and urbanization, many of these rituals continue to be seen as sacrosanct" (Cocks, et al., 2016).

the home of the person performing the ritual. I attended a remembrance ritual in Nyanga in September 2016, which was conducted over two days. It was organised by a young man to remember his father who died a few years earlier. The purpose was to bring his father into the home environment to connect with him again and praise him for being his father. It is an expression of maintaining a relationship between a father, who is buried at the family home in a rural area, and son, whose home is in Nyanga. I describe my experience from the field notes in my diary as follows:

*Old hostel, cold bedroom. Wondering stares.  
Anticipation is all that bears.  
Friendly people, father's photo. Eager faces.  
Intrigue is what embraces.  
Burning herbs, dedicated prayer. Silent room.  
Concentration is deep amidst the plume.  
Nervous goat, dazed chickens. Close my eyes.  
'Is it over yet'? My mind cries.  
Clean surfaces, skilled cutting. Successful sacrifice.  
Relief all round as the men entice.  
Curious children, hanging carcass. Chatting women.  
The preparation of the feast is now the mission.*

The importance of ritual to communities in Nyanga means that the natural elements used in specific rituals require availability and accessibility. Therefore, I argue that the practices involved in ritual that use natural resources in the township, including plants and livestock, and are safeguarded for people's access to nature in urban environments, thus, have sustainable effects.

Eating the animals that have been sacrificed and slaughtered is a major aspect of the remembrance ritual. Food evokes memories from past lives. The type of food and the style in which it is cooked are influenced by memory. At this ritual, the offal of the goat is braaied<sup>35</sup> and eaten by those who attend the sacrifice, usually family members. On the second day, when friends and neighbours attend the celebration, the slaughtered chickens are boiled and served with rice and vegetables. The meat of the goat is also boiled and served in chunks with boiled bread after the main meal. A delicacy to some people is the feet of the chicken, which are boiled or braaied, and seasoned. A neighbour explains to me that he eats chicken

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<sup>35</sup> A South African term of cooking meat on a grill over a fire.

feet because they remind him of his grandmother's cooking. The taste of the delicacy brings him home to his childhood when he was raised by his grandmother. He admits that he longs for her cooking and misses her spirit.

Such longing for food that provides memories of childhood or places of origin is perhaps indicatively reflected in the meat market at the corner of Zwelitsha Drive and Sithandathu Avenue. It is a place that is run solely by local women and spans at least two generations, according to a 15-year-old girl working at one of the stalls. She tells me that her mother taught her how to clean the intestines of the sheep. Her older sister is responsible for cutting the meat and cooking it on the braai, while attending to customers. I get the impression that their mother is still involved in the trade when I visit the stall one day, as it appears that she is enquiring about stock to her younger daughter over the phone. The younger daughter shouts to her sister, "Is there enough meat today? You talk to Mama". I imagine that the sisters' mother was taught the trade by their grandmother.

I imagine a memory of local and informal meat trading spanning lifetimes that emerged as a result of connecting people to their rural homes through the food and style of cooking they prefer. The meat market provides a consistency in people's lives and a constant memory for people in an ever-changing urban environment and fragmented society. I associate the consistency and memory that urban dwellers strive for in their contemporary lifestyles with the words of Roberts (2003, p. 94), who says, "Every city in the world has a village in its heart. You will never understand the city unless you first understand the village". In other words, in order to understand the behaviour and practices of people in an urban landscape such as Nyanga, it is important to get a better understanding of the people living in such an environment by delving into their life stories about the places from which they originate.

I see this thinking at the meat market, where people are engaging in an old production and consumption practice that stems from home. In order to understand and appreciate this sustainable practice, it is important to understand where it comes from and what it means to the people selling and consuming the meat products. I will delve into details about the meat market in the next chapter about livelihood. Moreover, I will describe in the next chapter how home influences the sustainable livelihood practices that exist in Nyanga.

## Chapter 5

### Hustling for Home

#### *Purpose*

*While others wakeup and search for jobs*

*Others started their own income generating by selling meat on the street*

*“Bagxotha i-kati eziko” getting rid of poverty*

*They understand what they are worth*

*Creating their own dignity and independence*

*Living poorly but with a rich mind and soul*

*Striving by taking initiatives into their own hands*

*By feeding, teaching, and future educating their generations to tertiary level*

*Through hustling they created a cultural micro industry in the street of Nyanga*

(Nhlakanipho,<sup>36</sup> early 30s, male resident of Nyanga)

Hustling is the type of work that is systemic to townships. It is precarious work that, as Thieme (2017) explains, “emerges through diverse forms of making do, distribution and accumulation that turn devalued or invisible practices into meaningful though perhaps unorthodox social and economic experiments”. It is associated with informality and the creation of livelihood. Through my ethnographic engagement in Nyanga, I have found that sustainability is predominantly practised through activities performed to make a livelihood. Such practices include recycling, selling organic produce, and caretaking in a park. This chapter identifies networking, innovation, and opportunity as factors that enable these sustainable livelihood practices to occur. In this chapter I provide evidence to support my argument that livelihood is a useful tool for understanding the concept of home. Through my observations and interactions with individuals who perform the above-mentioned practices, I argue that the ways in which people are making home and connecting to home, by means of livelihood practices, shape sustainability in Nyanga.

The chapter is structured according to three themes. I will start with discussing the informal market trade in more detail to provide a clearer picture of its purpose in the township. I will show in this section how networking is a dominant theme in informal trading. I will then

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<sup>36</sup> Nhlakanipho is an artist whom I met at Etafeni. The programme coordinator discussed with him the prospect of painting a bench in Sithathu Park, but it didn't materialise. During one of my visits to Etafeni he told me about the poems he writes. He wrote this poem for me.

discuss in the following section the significance of innovation in livelihood practices, and will complete the discussion with the notion of opportunity in the negotiation of the everyday hustle.

The opening poem speaks about the hustle of informal trading, specifically the meat trade, in Nyanga. It describes the purpose that some people have adopted in their lives to sustain a livelihood. It is a lifestyle that not only generates income, but also creates a sense of dignity, purpose, and opportunity to people committed to making a home in Nyanga, as well as in distant places of origin. It is one that is deeply embedded in dense networks and social relations. I identify such a lifestyle with that which is described in the following extract about African urbanism:

“In order to survive in the city, you have to make sure that you create and invest in certain networks, which are no longer the networks of the household, maybe, or of your ethnic group or your village, but different kinds of associations, different kinds of groups of cooperation. You constantly have to invest, be present, exchange, and constantly be in touch with others. In order to survive in the city, you have to know how to do that” (Filip de Boeck cited in Rao, 2010).

The survival in the city that de Boeck expresses relates to making a livelihood. It is about forming and sustaining social networks through the hustle of everyday life. It is about living through networking, hustling, and exchanging. One can exchange thoughts, ideas, and knowledge, but ultimately, it's about exchanging produce, materials, and services. I argue that livelihood, which encompasses such factors, resonates with practices of home-making and imaginaries of home, and that this in turn can shape more sustainable communities.

Spatial organisation plays a key role in the hustle of informal trading to produce a communal economic landscape in Nyanga. A balance between communal social life and competitive economic existence is an important feature of sustaining a livelihood in the daily routines of its communities. However, the competitiveness that comes with economic trade at the meat market isn't visible to me. Rather an environmental and social synergy exists where people and material items encourage a hub within an economic microcosm with its own special rhythm and character. This economic hub describes the hustle and its informality. Thieme (2017) alludes to informality as exuding:

all modes of urban practice from infrastructures that are centrally unplanned but locally cobbled together into makeshift arrangements of provisioning, to the diversification of income opportunities being a matter of everyday common sense and risk mitigation.

Informal marketing in townships is a consumer-oriented form of trade and, therefore, is demand driven, and supplied according to people's needs (Karaan & Myburgh, 1992). Soper (2008) argues that in today's fast paced societies, food is often fast food, eaten on the run, and consumed in solitary and preoccupied moments. Food production and consumption should create its own "intrinsic value in structuring time, fostering human exchange, and providing food for thought as well as bodily renewal" (Soper, 2008). However, she sees this value as being lost in society today. In my findings, I see the social integration of food production and consumption offered at the informal markets happening in Nyanga. I see a thriving shared and convivial event for local people. I will describe my experience at an informal meat market next to illustrate this type of situation and the networking that goes along with it.

### **Home away from Home**

The meat market experience offers a meeting place to local people who feel at home in the informality of the market. I feel intimidated by the women who seem to closely manage the hustle of the trade. After all, it is their livelihood that they are guarding. I find that access into the trade is difficult and possible only by performing within the networks themselves. I decide that the best way to get an idea of the workings of the trade is to play the role of a customer. The following extract is from my diary and describes my experience:

*Each stall is similar in appearance. Corrugated iron and wooden structures, sandy ground, pieces of lamb piled on make-shift counters, braai drums, and smoke. I decide to approach the one closest to my car. Safety is always in the back of my mind. I choose the four pieces of meat I want and ask for them to be cooked. I am asked if I want pap<sup>37</sup> or a loaf of bread to go with my pieces of lamb, which I decline. "R40", I am told, which I pay in cash. I see that there are two benches and a table at*

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<sup>37</sup> A South African staple ingredient in the diet of mainly black African people, which is a starch and made from maize.

*the back of the stall, which is where I decide to sit and eat. This is where I meet a young woman cleaning the intestines of a recently slaughtered sheep. I ask her where she learnt the skill.*

As explained in the previous chapter, the informal meat stalls in Nyanga are managed by generations of women (see Figures 32 and 33 below). The familial networks involved in the trade provide income security to the families of these women. The strength of such networks is shown through the longevity of the trade in Nyanga, as well as through the respect towards these women. I am told by a local resident that the stalls are never robbed, despite the constant and lucrative cash flow into the hands of the traders. I find it difficult to engage with the women when I visit the market, but the young woman I refer to above shows willingness to talk to me. She is 15 years old and explains to me that she was taught how to clean sheep intestines by her mother. Her older sister is responsible for cutting the meat after the slaughtering of the sheep and cooking it on the braai that is positioned outside the stall. Therefore, at least two generations of women are involved in the running of the stall, which is essentially a family business.

It is a business of sustainable production and consumption that provides a livelihood for family members and their homes. The domestic home, thus, extends beyond the dwelling and into the meat market where the opportunity to earn a livelihood in order to maintain home is created. In a way, such a form of production is also sustaining a standard of living that would otherwise be lost or marginalised over generations due to “advanced” standards of living seen globally today (Soper, 2008). Soper (2008) argues that sustainable consumption is not to sustain or provide for future generations the current standard of living, but to consume differently now in order to be able to provide them with the goods and sustainable labour practices that are declining today. In line with Soper’s (2008) argument, instead of conforming to a globalised standard of living, the needs of the people in Nyanga are being provided for through the local meat trade. The trade is preserving people’s possible enjoyment of this type of meat consumption for future generations. It is also sustaining the livelihood possibilities it creates for such generations.



**Figure 32: Women Cooking and Selling Meat (5 December 2017)**



**Figure 33: Women Cooking and Selling Meat at the Meat Market (29 March 2017)**

I learn from a local resident about the supply chain of the meat product, from the delivery of the sheep, the slaughtering process, to the selling of the product at the market. She explains how the meat trade in Nyanga is a sustainable process of production and consumption. It supports local sheep farmers in Philippi, a nearby township with farmland, and creates employment for generations of local women. The process accounts for little to no waste, as every part of the sheep is consumed in various ways. Moreover, the meat is sold in one day, so that it is edible for consumption.

Each day starts with the production cycle from the beginning with the early morning delivery of live sheep that are slaughtered in the vicinity of the market (see Figures 34 and 35 below showing live sheep placed in a pen, and the start of the braais by the women traders. Both the sheep and the women wait, but for different reasons). One sheep costs between R1800 and R2000. Only men are permitted to perform the slaughtering process, after which the women traders cut up the meat in preparation for its sale. As compensation for his hand in the slaughtering of the sheep, the man gets R50 and the sheep's legs. The head of the sheep, locally known as "intloko" or a "smiley", is sold at the stalls and is considered to be a delicacy by the local residents. One of the customers tells me that his favourite part of the head to eat is the tongue because it is the tastiest. Another delicacy, which is the most affordable part of the sheep, is the intestines. After the rigorous cleaning process the intestines are seasoned and cooked on the braai. A customer with whom I shared the table at the stall I visited purchased his monthly share of cooked intestines together with a loaf of bread. With few words he explains to me that he treats himself to this delicacy once a month.

Meat left over at the end of a day is consumed by the traders. Scraps of meat and bones are fed to the scavenging dogs. Interestingly, I learn that the blood of the sheep is dried and either fed to the dogs or used to make fertiliser. Thus, every part of the sheep is consumed in various ways. The sustainable production and consumption in the informal meat trade also has an inadvertent environmental effect on the behaviour of its consumers. The localised and central position of the market allows for residents to have easy access to it without requiring any form of transport. Not only are consumers purchasing fresh and affordable meat, they are also saving on cost and time that they would otherwise spend to get to commercial retail outlets that are located on the outskirts of the township. Moreover, the meat is served on a sheet of newspaper and, therefore, uses minimal packaging. Consumers choose to purchase the meat for various reasons, such as convenience, affordability, taste preference, and a sense of connecting to home. Therefore, home-making, imaginaries of home, and connecting to home through this type of livelihood practice depict a form of sustainability in Nyanga.

The meat market offers a place of familiarity and meaning for both the traders and their customers. People can form place attachments, which are emotional bonds to a physical environment, to create meaning to their lives and inform a sense of their identity (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014). By creating connections to the environment means that people can

identify themselves or where they come from through a place that has familiarity. Easy and affordable access to traditional and familiar food in Nyanga was an important aspect of adapting to a new lifestyle for newly settled migrants to the area. For male migrants from the Eastern Cape seeking employment in Cape Town in the 1940s onwards, food was an important element of home-making and feeling at home in an urban environment.<sup>38</sup>

Blunt and Dowling (2006) describe newly settled communities in times of colonisation as having familiar domestic appearances and household routines that were provided by the women and “lay at the heart of the settler community’s reproduction”. The reproduction of communities from the Eastern Cape in Nyanga occurred through the reproduction of familiar food. As I discussed in the previous chapter, traditional food evokes memories of home in the Eastern Cape, and creates a sense of belonging and identity in an urban environment. However, for the meat traders, it also provides a livelihood for home-making in such an environment. Therefore, meat and the way it is prepared and cooked are a reminder of home and a means to feel at-home, as well as a source of livelihood to create a home. A local male resident (late 30s) explains this notion to me, “We eat this food because it’s food like home. My grandmother cook it for us here in Nyanga. She cooked to make money”.

Harvey (2000) suggests that humans have the ability to “modify environments in ways that are conducive to our own sustenance and reproduction”. The ability to transform and adapt, and ultimately connect to people’s environments is important in an expanding urbanised environment where the connection to rural homes is difficult for some people to achieve. To adapt to the urban, where a lack of resources and over-consumption are common, requires social networking and a transformed method of connecting to home. The meat market is an example of a place where such adaptation exists. It is also a means of cultivating a relationship with food. Eating locally can create a knowledge about how food is grown and where it comes from, and, ultimately, a relationship with food and the cultivators of food.

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<sup>38</sup> During my interactions with local people, traditional food was often referred to as food from home. The referral was an affirmation of where people came from.

I note that there is literature that argues against the environmental aspect of the informal meat market in Nyanga being sustainable. A study<sup>39</sup> was conducted at the time of writing this thesis that measured significant levels of air pollution in the vicinity of the market from burning firewood. An additional finding was unwanted offcuts and waste of the sheep being discarded into nearby stormwater drains. During my fieldwork I did not observe such polluting practices into stormwater drains and I was not informed of such by the local people with whom I engaged. Rather, my findings illustrate a sustainable supply chain process (including economic, social, environmental, and cultural aspects of sustainability) that offers people a source of protein that they are otherwise likely to only get from highly processed meat.<sup>40</sup>



**Figure 34: Waiting Sheep on the Corner of Zwelitsha Drive and Sithandathu Avenue  
(29 March 2017)**

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<sup>39</sup> The abstract of the study can be found here:

[http://www.epse.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image\\_tool/images/363/News/2018/Cover%26AbstractRissaN%20PhD.pdf](http://www.epse.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/363/News/2018/Cover%26AbstractRissaN%20PhD.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> Polony is the popular form of processed meat that is cheap and most low-income people consume. According to a demographic and health survey, 29.8% of urban South Africans are anaemic, and nationally 32.2% of black south Africans are anaemic: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR337/FR337.pdf>. Therefore, iron deficiency in South Africa is high and offal is a key protein and iron source that is supplied at informal meat markets.



**Figure 35: Waiting Meat Traders on the Corner of Zwelitsha Drive and Sithandathu Avenue (29 March 2017)**

Halpenny (2010) describes place as a spatial location that is assigned meanings and values by society and individuals, and its significance and meaning vary between individuals, groups, and cultures. The different ways in which meaning of place is expressed can develop in relation to the contexts of geography, culture, economy, and other factors (Wolf, et al., 2014). Connecting to a distant home through livelihood is apparent at a micro business placed at the same hub at which the meat market operates, which is the intersection of Zwelitsha Drive and Sithandathu Avenue. The business is run by a man, Josiah (mid-30s), who fixes and sells fridges and microwaves (see Figures 36 and 37 below). He is from Zimbabwe and is a self-taught electrician. He fixes kitchen appliances to make a livelihood for himself, but primarily to send back home to his family in Zimbabwe. He tells me, “I do this to support family at home and also so that I can go home one day, as home is best”.

Josiah has been living in Nyanga for one year and runs his small business with a man from Rwanda. Although he misses home, he has adapted to township life where unemployment is widespread. He has made a place for himself at the micro-economic hub that has meanings

of livelihood and home. More specifically, his business means that he can have a livelihood that enables him to support his family back home. He has established a network of customers so that one day he can expand his business to other areas. In order to make a livelihood, he has had to up skill himself to compete in the job market. By fixing and then selling kitchen appliances, he has innovatively created a sustainable job opportunity that has unintentional environmental consequences and connection to a distant home.

When I speak to him, I realise that the environmental effects of his daily working practice are largely invisible to him. I ask him if he knows that he is reducing waste and recycling appliances that would otherwise end up as landfill waste. He does not. His response is focused on making money for his family rather than localizing and connecting the environment to his everyday practice. In line with Hitchings et al. (2015), Josiah is preventing appliances from becoming waste by diverting them away from the waste stream, also known as divestment. The authors refer to inadvertent environmentalists practising divestment in the sense that the contexts in which they live are encouraging them to perform daily practices sustainably without them knowing the sustainability consequences of such practices (Hitchings, et al, 2015).

From a practice theory perspective, the meaning of Josiah's livelihood practice relates to his home in Zimbabwe and the family he is supporting financially; the material that is the crucial element of his practice is the re-used and recycled appliances that inadvertently reduce the consumption of new appliances in the township; and his skills to execute the practice were self-taught. The elements of Josiah's livelihood practice support and co-exist with other practices, such as his family being able to live in Zimbabwe, customers buying appliances at a more cost-effective price than new items, and being upskilled to perform other repair practices. The entanglement of practices further provides a means of home-making for family members, customers, and other entrepreneurs. The social and economic connections between the entanglement of home-making practices and their inadvertent environmental effect, therefore, elicit a form of sustainability in Nyanga.



**Figure 36: Josiah's Recycled Fridges and Microwaves for Sale on the Corner of Zwelitsha Drive and Sithandathu Avenue (29 March 2017)**



**Figure 37: Josiah and his Recycled Fridges and Microwaves for Sale on the Corner of Zwelitsha Drive and Sithandathu Avenue (29 March 2017)**

## **Innovative Bread Winning**

The outdoor market place may be grounded in economic transactions, but it is more than just those transactions. It's a social space that meets the needs of the people, such as food security and employment; and its products have environmentally ethical meaning. Such meaning relates to ordinary everyday consumption with the effect that is ethical (Gregson & Ferdous, 2015). Thus, people aren't necessarily consuming the way they are for ethical reasons. Rather, they are consuming as they always have done in their daily routines, with unintentional ethical consequences. The market is a place of hustling that exudes a sense of liveliness, commitment, and opportunity for meeting friends and acquaintances. A practice theory perspective of the market shows us that the roles and responsibilities of traders and customers are not separate, and that the sustainable livelihood practices there support or challenge existing (problematic) needs, and how they can enable innovative co-management opportunities. It shows the interconnectedness of all elements of practice, insofar as the material infrastructure of the items being traded and the space from which they are sold, the knowledge of the materials being sold and to whom, and the social meanings of the customers who need the materials and of the traders who need the income, all play a role in the sustainable trade.

The economic hub of sustainable, innovative trade, and unpretentious marketing at the intersection of Zwelitsha Drive and Sithandathu Avenue articulates the hustle of everyday life in Nyanga. It is also a place where home-making practices occur that allow for the independence and dignity that comes with the ability to earn a livelihood. As the opening poem depicts, "getting rid of poverty" is a purpose for informal traders who strive for "independence" and "dignity" to earn an income. Williams (2005) relays this by saying:

Self-sufficiency could generate a sense of dignity and pride in a community of the historically neglected and excluded, transforming ordinary people at the grassroots level into active citizens, directing and shaping their everyday lived experiences, congruent with the principles and ethos of the post-apartheid constitution of creating a caring and sharing society. Being self-sufficient enables people to be contracted for services needed in the community. This approach will

be incremental where gains are made maybe at a small but steady pace.

The self-sufficiency to which Williams (2005) refers is evident in other micro businesses that I encounter. At the intersection of Zwelitsha Drive and Sithandathu Avenue, the economic hub for local passersby, there are two traders selling recycled kitchen appliances. They are positioned at two different corners and are not competing with each other's products. One trader sells fridges and microwaves, whom I introduced above, and the other sells kettles and irons. Each provides a specific service for the needs of the community. They offer an affordable alternative to purchasing new appliances at retail outlets, and they fix such appliances that no longer work. This kind of service is counteracting the unsustainable practice of planned obsolescence,<sup>41</sup> which lures consumers into repurchasing and replacing products that may still be functional. Either because the product is perceived as being unfashionable or because the product loses its functionality too soon, the global consumer trend is to discard the product and purchase a new one. Rather, these traders are providing a sustainable method of acquiring material goods that would otherwise be unused waste material.

Both traders are conveniently positioned across the road from the hustle of the meat market. They are visible and easily accessible; so, it seems that marketing themselves with the use of signage is not necessary. These informal structures, which are an integral part of the African way of life, serve both an important financial and social function. They generate an income for the traders, and they provide a necessary service to the local community. Such informality is representative of the historical lack of provision of services by the apartheid government, as well as emerging poverty and increasing urbanization, to disadvantaged black communities who had to find ways of resisting the impact of apartheid by establishing mutual self-help societies (Taylor, 2010). The temporary nature of informal trading markets was integral in making and maintaining a livelihood when there was no guarantee of long-term or permanent residence at that time (Lee, 2005). Such trading allowed people to afford to set up homes, albeit temporary, in townships, and also send money to distant homes. Home-making through informal trading in Nyanga has, thus, become a way of life for some people and is dependent on the immediate availability of resources. Waste is one such

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<sup>41</sup> European countries, such as France, outlaw built-in obsolescence of electrical products, making it a criminal offence (Wieser, 2016).

resource that is readily available in cities that people in Nyanga have used to recycle and sell as a way of making a livelihood.

Similar to Josiah's business, an elderly man repairs and sells irons and kettles on a different corner at the microeconomic hub. A local male resident (early 30s) explains the story of this sustainable entrepreneur, whom he calls Madala.<sup>42</sup> He tells me that Madala originally fixed cassettes, copied music onto them, and sold them at the same intersection he occupies today. This was during the late 1990s before the compact disc (CD) took over the music industry. He suspects that Madala wasn't employable because of a physical disability, and was, therefore encouraged to seek other ways of making a livelihood. When the cassette was no longer viable as a sustainable business product, Madala changed his trade to fixing electrical appliances. This business has been sustained until today due to the demand of the local people of Nyanga and nearby townships for affordable appliances. I ask how Madala transports his tools and stock of kettles and irons to his corner of the hub (see Figure 38 below). The resident tells me that Madala cycles there with his bicycle, which has a crate and a basket attached to it on either end that carry his supply. Interestingly, the environmental benefit of his trade is symbolic of the sustainable livelihood that he practices, which is shown in the mode of transport he uses.

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<sup>42</sup> Madala is a respectful Xhosa name for old men.

To note, I tried on several occasions to meet Madala and interview him, but each time I went to the corner he was not there. Thus, the local resident provided me with the useful information.



**Figure 38: Recycled Kettles and Irons for Sale on the Corner of Zwelitsha Drive and Sithandathu Avenue (29 March 2017)**

Another innovative and useful service provided by a few people in Nyanga is the supply of recycled bricks. This trade highlights the innovation and imagination of people making a livelihood for themselves. It proved very useful for the new park at Etafeni, as the labyrinth was built using approximately 800 recycled bricks (See Figure 40 below showing the beginning phase of building the labyrinth). During the building phase of the labyrinth, I got to know about these traders. There are open pieces of derelict land just on the outskirts of Nyanga where building rubble is dumped. Three individuals have strategically positioned themselves along a main road so that they have a fair distance between each other. They

have each piled a tower of bricks on the pavement to display their goods to customers (see Figure 39 below). The driver for Etafeni chooses where to stop the minibus based on the appearance and quantity of the bricks on offer. The trader tells me that the price of each brick has increased by R1 since last year, and now costs R2. Further down the road one of the traders is sitting in the open space and is chipping away at a used brick using a sharp instrument until it is clean of concrete.



**Figure 39: Recycled Brick Trade (25 November 2016)**



**Figure 40: Building the Labyrinth (30 November 2016)**

As a result of a few people seeing the potential of making a livelihood out of an environmental risk, concrete bricks are being re-used. Instead of an accumulation of building rubble waste on public open spaces and in wetlands, the innovation of some people has cleaned up the environment, albeit to a small extent. It also provides homes for people either earning a livelihood through the trade, or for people constructing homes.

This recycled brick trade is useful to the local residents of Nyanga who aspire to expand their homes. Building work at people's homes is common in the township. Often a gradual process, boundary walls or additional rooms are built on properties using these affordable bricks. The gradual pace of building work can be a result of budget constraints, or because of the availability of these bricks. The process of building the labyrinth in the park with bricks and a combination of pebbles and wood chips experienced delays at some points because of the wait for new stock of the recycled bricks. The demand for such bricks is, therefore, high. This sustainable process of recycling bricks to make a livelihood informs my argument that the forms of everyday livelihood practices that have sustainable effects result from people's connections to and imaginaries of their homes. Such connections and imaginaries encourage people in Nyanga to earn a livelihood through innovative methods that have sustainable consequences.

Recycling is a global activity and a predominant sustainability practice, particularly in the global North. As discussed in the literature review, one of the reasons people do it and the benefits of such are related to people's individual values and altruistic behaviour. Scholars, such as Barr and Gilg (2006), have shown that across a range of environmental actions, those individuals who showed altruistic behaviour, which is acting for the benefit of others, were more likely to engage in pro-environmental behaviour. However, recycling in Nyanga is done for the purpose of making a livelihood. I see this when an individual (male, late 50s) who engages in recycling on a daily basis invites me into his home and shows me his stockpile of plastic bottles sorted into different hessian bags. The following extract from my diary describes the encounter:

*I find myself following Themba down a narrow passage between an agglomeration of shacks and old houses. The path to the yard is muddy; I don't see any greenery. I am hesitant to just walk into someone's living space. Themba is insistent that I follow him though. The conversation we had earlier about recycling must have triggered his determination that I meet the person who lives down this passage. We get to a tiny yard where three men are chatting next to two huge hessian bags filled with plastic bottles. The oldest is the man I have to meet. Themba explains to him my interest in his recycling work. The man invites me into his home to talk about it.*

He tells me that he has been recycling for two years, because, “I don’t have money, so I do it for money to eat and to wash my clothes, and for my family.” I ask him if people bring the plastic bottles to him or if he collects them himself. He says:

I pick it up myself every morning and late in the evening, the bottles and everything like broken [plastic] baths. I make it clean here.

He explains that when the hessian bags are full, which is normally once a month, he phones someone in Tafelsig<sup>43</sup> to collect the bottles. He tells me that the amount of money he makes depends on the weight of the plastic, so the person from Tafelsig brings scales to weigh the amount collected. He says that one bag can be exchanged for between R50 and R70, and bigger bags can amount up to R300.

Although this particular recycler acknowledges that his effort is cleaning the environment, I sense that the image of nature in Nyanga depends on social needs. Authors say that people tend to interpret environmental issues in different and unpredictable ways (Redclift & Benton, 1994, quoted in Blake, 1999). Moreover, people tend to select particular features of nature to focus on, ignoring those that don’t suit their particular interests or needs. The reason could relate to spatial and social inequalities of the area, where the uneven distribution of ecological space and services determines how natural resources are used (Dobson, 2003). The recyclers I have encountered focus on collecting items that they find to be easily exchangeable for money. Other waste is seemingly ignored. Similarly, home gardening in Nyanga is an example of an environmental feature of the township that is sometimes implemented purely for the purpose of making a livelihood. For some people, growing vegetables for income is more essential than doing it for the purpose of enhancing the natural environment. I discuss this form of livelihood next.

### **“Starting down and going up”: Finding Opportunity**

The opening poem says, “Taking initiatives into their own hands”, and this is what local people are doing by creating opportunities for themselves and others to earn a livelihood. For some people, their hands are used literally by preparing soil, planting vegetables, and harvesting.

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<sup>43</sup> An area on the Cape Flats.

The three-day training workshops at Abalimi Bazekhaya provide theory lessons, intensive practical training in the garden, and the necessary resources to start up one's own vegetable garden, either for feeding one's family, or to sell to the community. The Abalimi garden centre aims to promote the empowerment of marginalised people living on the Cape Flats through its urban agricultural training workshops. Therefore, once one is equipped with the knowledge of farming and the necessary resources from Abalimi, one is empowered to start a business of growing and selling vegetables. In fact, Abalimi is itself a business for local farmers to earn an income through selling their organic produce at an affordable rate to local people. The garden centre in Nyanga was established primarily to supply produce for the demand of affordable food in an area characterised by unemployment and low income. It is a piece of land that has created jobs for two people in particular, Mama Bokolo, who maintains the garden and attends to customers, and Vathiswa, who runs the training workshops. Both women earn an income to sustain their own homes, and simultaneously provide sustenance to other homes by selling organic produce and by empowering others to grow their own food.

Orsini et al. (2013) argue that urban agriculture represents a significant opportunity for increasing food production, improving individual health, stimulating the local economy, encouraging social cohesion, and ultimately, providing a sustainable environment. Urban agriculture is a form of sustaining a livelihood in Nyanga and people's aspiration to earn a livelihood through such form is evident during my participation in the training workshops. This is where I learn about why people want to establish vegetable gardening businesses.

Vincent (male, late 30s) is unemployed and his sole purpose of growing vegetables is to sell them as a way of generating an income. He tells me:

Gardening is a source of income. Gardening is where you are able to put food on the table. I don't have to go and buy. I just have to stand up and work and be able to eat every day. It means a lot.

He intends to return to the Eastern Cape because of the lack of employment opportunities in Cape Town. He would like to teach others how to farm there so that they too can earn a living. The best aspect of the training for him is not only learning how to transplant seedlings, but also meeting new people:

This idea of going back to the Eastern Cape came out here. We gather and talk, meeting new people, then we discuss now let's go back home where we can have this co-op thing. It was not in my mind before I came here, but now that I am here, I have got that idea.

The imaginaries of income generation through gardening at the garden centre are indicative of the social networking and the hustle of Nyanga. People's imaginations and innovation sprout at any given opportunity. The garden centre is a space to share business ideas, form networks, and make deals with strangers. During two separate training workshops, I experience the spontaneous and opportunist actions of two individual women. One of them takes out a large bag of biscuits and calls for any buyers. She is selling it for R60. The other woman reveals a stash of boxes of Clicks' panty liners in a plastic bag and gives a box to Vathiswa. She asks the class if anyone else is interested in the deal, which piques much interest from the females. I realise that in Nyanga, where there is a will there is a way.

Nobesotho (female, late 30s), who is originally from Umtata in the Eastern Cape, wishes to develop the city by providing employment opportunities through farming. She explains to me her intention: "I want to make money and be a farmer. I also want to develop at Umtata and collect women so that they can learn how to farm so that they can avoid poverty." Her desire, therefore, is to create a city that is self-sufficient so that people don't have to migrate to big cities, such as Cape Town, for employment opportunities. Moreover, she wants to create the opportunity for women to create livelihoods for themselves.

Establishing an entrepreneurial initiative with gardening is not only an aspiration of the trainees, but also one that Mama Bokolo wishes to pursue. She tells me that she has been working at the Nyanga garden centre for ten years, primarily because of her passion for gardening, but also for a source of income. She relocated to Nyanga from the Eastern Cape in 1989, but yearns to return to her land:

My vision is I want to open my own project, that's why I'm sure in 2017 it will be my last year [here] to open my own project in Eastern Cape, Umtata. I have a big land [there]. It's waiting for me. Using the chickens and pigs and planting gardening.

Mama Bokolo's intention is to sell the produce she cultivates on her land for income. To her this is obvious, because why else would she farm on a big piece of land? She expresses this

to me in no uncertain terms, “[I will] sell it; I don’t eat a big land, I am not a cow or a pig. Must sell it!”

Part of the training at Abalimi involves Vathiswa explaining how to cost the resources for individual projects, which seems useful to those wanting to start their own businesses. It entails valuating the amount of soil and compost that is needed relative to the plot size. The number of seedlings to plant per plot is based on the length and width of the plot, while keeping in mind the distance needed between each seedling, which the trainees were shown in the garden. Some of the trainees make notes about this for future reference.

Other participants of the training, however, are learning about gardening to grow and sell their own vegetables at a smaller scale. Sibongiseni (female, late 30s) is a seamstress and is attending the training to learn how to grow vegetables so that she can sell them to her neighbours. She explains to me:

As a mother or a care-giver I would love to be a farmer to plant crops and to grow chickens to sell so that I can feed my children because I am a widow.

It seems, therefore, that she intends to benefit from farming by producing her own food and by generating an income locally to support her family.

Each conversation expresses a sense of opportunity that something prosperous will come from the training. Opportunities such as the improvement of individual lives through saving money by growing vegetables and making compost; eating healthily; and keeping active by gardening seem possible. Predominantly, however, there is the opportunity for the improvement of individual lives through starting a business and earning an income. Quality of life at a local level can be referred to as “individual concerns focused around employment, crime, and local environmental quality” (Barr, 2008). The people I encounter strive to improve their quality of life through an employment opportunity while simultaneously, and often unintentionally, improving their natural environment. Thus, I maintain my argument that practices of making home by producing a livelihood in Nyanga shape a form of sustainability through enactments, such as gardening.

A further example relating to (un)intentionality of sustainable behaviour in Nyanga is trading vegetables for electricity. I meet an older woman, Florence (mid-60s), who has a

thriving vegetable garden in her yard. She is a beneficiary of Etafeni's nutrition programme that builds vegetable gardens for local people. I ask her why she plants vegetables:

Because they help me a lot. I'm a grandmother here and I am always with my garden and I sell to the people for electricity<sup>44</sup> and I buy bread sometimes.

Florence shares her house with 15 other people. As the matriarch of the home, she has sought the opportunity to provide for her home in a way that is enjoyable to her. The opportunity to learn how to make her home vegetable garden came when a neighbour informed her of the gardening programme offered at Etafeni. The practice of gardening became an enjoyable part of her daily routine. She tells me:

Yhu! It keeps me alright. I wake up early in the morning and I am happy in my garden and always say hello, good morning. I like my vegetable garden.

Therefore, the opportunity to provide for her home through the exchange of vegetables for electricity is not only out of necessity, but also for enjoyment. The practice of gardening enhances Florence's life in more than one way. She earns a livelihood, provides for her home, and creates a homely natural environment for herself. Her home represents the quality of life that she has made for herself. Agyeman et al. (2003a) talk about sustainability as a need to ensure a better quality of life for all people, equitably, and living within the limits of natural resources at present and into the future (Agyeman et al, 2003, cited in Whitehead, 2007). For Florence, sustainability is a by-product of her intentions to attain a good quality of life. She is living within her means and making home for all the people who live in her house by doing an activity that she enjoys. The fact that the activity is an example of sustainability is an additional benefit to her and the community.

I meet another community member, who also trades the vegetables he grows for electricity. Mr Thomzako (late 50s) tells me that he doesn't have a job and is not yet a pensioner, and therefore, does not have money to buy food and electricity. He explains that he saw an opportunity to learn how to grow his own vegetables at Etafeni in order to help his financial

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<sup>44</sup> This participant is referring to pre-paid electricity. It entails a system whereby a pre-paid voucher code that is purchased from certain retail outlets is entered into an electricity meter box in the residence to top-up units of electricity for the household.

situation. By exchanging his vegetables for electricity, he is not only providing his family with food, but also the electricity that keeps the home safe. The safety that he refers to is not only about lighting for surveillance, but also a way to avoid the use of paraffin for cooking and heating. In township areas where people use paraffin instead of electricity, incidences of fires are common. The informal housing structures in which some people live dictate the use of paraffin, as the infrastructure for electricity is unavailable.

In addition to trading his vegetables, Mr Thomzako recycles glass and plastic bottles, which he takes to a recycling facility in Bellville South<sup>45</sup> in exchange for money. Furthermore, I notice in his yard a shack<sup>46</sup> that he rents out to a Somalian man. This shack is self-constructed from recycled building material, which can be a combination of timber boards, corrugated iron sheets, polywood,<sup>47</sup> plastic sheeting, and old, disused advertising boards. Therefore, Mr Thomzako has sought the opportunities and resources that lie before him to use to his advantage, which have positive environmental implications.

The opportunity to make a livelihood in Nyanga is prevalent when one is innovative and creative. Opportunity is ubiquitous in the hustle of making a livelihood. For some people it is their main purpose of waking up each day. When an opportunity to generate some sort of income arises, there are resourceful people in Nyanga whom avail themselves for the task.

I realise during the development of the park at Etafeni that the concept of volunteering is an unknown one to the local community. Rather, to work means to be paid. This becomes a difficult issue to deal with, given that Etafeni, as an NGO, lacks the resources to pay people. Moreover, during the planning phase, the community demanded that its members should do the work rather than outsiders. It becomes clear to me that in order to build a community park in Nyanga, local labour must be sourced and compensated in some way.

After much negotiation with community members wishing to help with the development of the park, Etafeni agrees to provide lunch and a R100 stipend to the workers each day. One of the workers suggests his desire to manage the park during and after the development periods. He suggests that Etafeni pay him for his management capability. His suggestion is seemingly for a source of income rather than a willingness to clean and protect a community

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<sup>45</sup> An area in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town.

<sup>46</sup> An informal housing structure.

<sup>47</sup> Polywood is a building material made from recycled plastic and is designed to look like wood.

space. In Nyanga, the negotiation and hustle to earn an income instead of volunteering one's time and effort for a community project are accepted as a way of life. In other words, by dealing with social and economic problems first, the environmental opportunities and benefits will follow. This is how the community park was successfully established.

Although making opportunities to earn a livelihood by some people of Nyanga prevail, there are also missed opportunities that I acknowledge during my encounters. I am told by Etafeni's nutrition programme manager (female, mid-30s) that about 20% of the home gardens that Etafeni provides are neglected. She explains that the neglect is a result of the people losing interest in gardening, even though many of the resources are provided to them by Etafeni, such as compost, seeds, and tools. When the resources are not available due to insufficient stock or lack of donations and sponsorship, the interest and commitment of the gardener seem to decline. The dependence of many people on Etafeni to provide gardening resources is almost counter-productive, since the aim is to equip those people who show interest in gardening with the skills to sustain themselves. Part of the skills training involves making compost, but one individual expresses his distaste for making his own compost, saying, "It stinks in my yard! I don't want to have a stinking yard". So instead, such a person relies on being given compost, which is most unsustainable. Similar to the sentiments in the previous chapter, I am told by the vegetable gardening project coordinator (female, late 30s) that this kind of attitude comes from the younger generation mainly, and that it is easier to work with older people, who generally show more interest in sustaining their gardens.

I see a contrast between the behaviour of people who learn about food gardening at Abalimi and those who learn from Etafeni's nutrition programme. The training offered at Abalimi is facilitated by a local community member. It requires a fee in order for people to attend the three days of training. The resources that each trainee gets after the training are included in the fee and are a once-off supply. When more resources are required, they have to be purchased at the garden centre (rather than be freely provided). At Etafeni, community members approach the vegetable gardening project coordinator for assistance to make a home garden. She is not from Nyanga and requires a local person to accompany her to people's houses at all times for safety reasons. She teaches people individually how to build their gardens at their homes. Her work and the resources she takes with her come at no cost to the community member. If more resources are needed by the home gardeners, they approach Etafeni to get supplies at no cost.

Consequently, the incentive to maintain the gardens is seemingly diminished when the gardener does not pay for the resources. There is an obvious dependence on Etafeni for assistance in building food gardens and in acquiring resources. When both are not available, some people seem to lose interest in maintaining their gardens, as discussed above. My encounters with people suggest that this could either be because of a poor attitude or because of economic hardships. When people have to pay for their garden needs, they tend to show more commitment in garden maintenance. However, people such as Florence, whom I introduced earlier in this section, maintain their gardens for their livelihoods, as well as for an improved quality of life. Although Etafeni provides compost, for example, to Florence she makes use of the resource for the benefit of her hustle.

When I talk to Etafeni's nutrition programme manager, she makes a point: "How can people live sustainably and care about their gardens if their basic needs aren't met?" She says that if people cannot care for their children, which is a challenge that she encounters in her job, then how can they have the capacity to care about gardening? Neglected food gardens are a consequence if people are financially unable to maintain them. The economic hardships that people face in Nyanga are the reason for Etafeni's assistance in providing garden resources to people at no cost. However, she alludes to people's attitudes that cause the missed opportunities in acquiring some kind of livelihood in Nyanga when she expresses:

The empowerment of people and the motivation to do things are lacking in the area. People in this community know what to do because they are relatively educated, but they don't seem to have any motivation to use the eight hours a day that they are not using for work, to do something for themselves.

One frustrated community member (male, early 60s) has a similar view and explains his thoughts about the situation to me, "This community is in denial and they lack motivation to want to improve their lives". He thinks that very few people in the community use the facilities and services that Abalimi Bazekhaya and Etafeni offer. The view of this community member adds to the challenge of missed opportunities to which I refer. The consequence and cause of this challenge are that people in such an urban society are less connected either to place or to other people than they were in the past (Taylor, 2010). I see this same lack of connection in the discussions in the previous chapter about the youth and the disinterest in

gardening. The younger generation's sense of place is lost when the connection to rural families and homes is severed. Moreover, families in cities are fragmented and often dysfunctional due to unemployment and substance abuse. Therefore, many members of the younger generation in Nyanga are lacking a sense of belonging in their communities. The networking, innovation, and opportunity that come with making a livelihood in the ways that have been discussed are, thus, absent for many young people.

People's attitudes and behaviour towards the natural environment are influenced by their external or situational constraints (Blake, 1999). Blake (1999) says that such constraints can enable or prevent people to act in a certain way towards their environment. In Nyanga, the predominant constraint is financial. Financial constraints impact on the way some people prioritise their duty to care for the environment, which is what the employee of Etafeni alludes to above. Such constraints impact on the availability of the resources that enable people to act sustainably. If electricity is unaffordable, then paraffin or wood from trees will be used as sources of energy. If living space is lacking, then people's yards or green public open space will be used to accommodate people. This doesn't mean that the value of nature is absent to some people, however. As Steg et al. (2014) note, individuals could strongly value nature and the environment, but not see themselves as a person who acts pro-environmentally. They suggest, for example, that some people may not acknowledge environmental problems, as they are either physically removed from such problems, or because they do not believe that these problems could or should be mitigated via individual actions (Steg, et al., 2014).

Additional missed opportunities I encounter include the unused spaces along streets in Nyanga that are left as dumping sites. Such spaces would be ideal for landscaping interventions. Even at people's homes, most yards appear to be spacious, but either prioritised for parking of cars or simply left concrete<sup>48</sup> and litter laden. In line with my earlier discussion about the demand for recycled bricks, there is a common aspiration of home-owners in Nyanga to expand their houses. Large spaces in their yards may remain unattended to for many years until finances allow for building work or renovations to commence. Those who have vegetable gardens in their yards position their plots to

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<sup>48</sup> To remove building rubble from home to landfill site costs money for the hiring of the vehicle and the fee into the dumping site. Therefore, rubble is often left in people's yards for long periods of time because of the financial implication to remove it.

accommodate the future expansion. Space for future building work is seemingly an unquestionable feature of most people's yards. Upon asking some of the people I meet about why they don't use the derelict space for gardening in the meantime, I am either left with a confused stare or an abrupt exclamation, "it's for extension!"

The examples that Steg et al. (2014) discuss above, thus, echo in the case of Nyanga, as they are consequences of prioritising livelihood and home-making over environmentally sustainable actions. The ignorance and disengagement of environmental problems by some local people result from the proliferation of social and economic problems in the township. Hence, the mindset of some local people is to prioritise their needs. The implication is, therefore, that environmental problems cannot be mitigated by individual actions of behaviour change because people do not have the financial means to do so.

My findings in Nyanga, show that economic factors, such as financial barriers, could also decentivise behaviour change whereby the cost of an action far outweighs the benefit. An example of a financial barrier that may prevent behaviour change in Nyanga is the maintenance of food gardens in households of lower income status. In some cases, constraints may even be so severe that behaviour change is very costly, and motivations make little difference in the behaviour of even the most ethical individual (Steg & Vlek, 2009). However, the innovative people I have introduced in this chapter use the financial gain of livelihood practices that ultimately influence sustainable outcomes in their everyday lives. Instead of considering the high costs of behaving pro-environmentally, local people are making livelihoods out of their everyday, ethical, and sustainable practices. Furthermore, the hustle of people's daily routines to which Thieme (2017) refers, "encompasses an assemblage of everyday struggles, dealings, and opportunistic practices in the absence of formal institutional support of any kind". Thus, the forms of sustainability that people in Nyanga are practising are used as economic gains rather than constraints in the everyday.

### **Bringing it Home**

My findings in Nyanga show some truth in Kennedy et al.'s (2015) argument that affluence does not mean that sustainability is necessarily likely to result. They argue that those with higher incomes tend to consume more, own larger homes, and travel more frequently, and suggest that other contextual factors may have more influence on people's ability to live sustainable lives than affluence (Kennedy, et al., 2015). Other contextual factors refer to my

argument of the significance of livelihood and home-making being best suited as determinants for different forms of sustainability in Nyanga. The unevenness of resources in the city of Cape Town with which people from the urban periphery have to cope, reinforces such factors.

By understanding that a city is an agglomeration of “rhythms; flowing goods, people and services constantly moving and being moved in complex networks of exchange and power” (Ulia Dantas e Sa, 2010), I can see that the social networks that are in Nyanga are benefitting its communities and urban landscape. Although recycling and micro-enterprises that have sustainable effects may not be the ultimate solution for urban living improvement in Nyanga, they are worthy for social transformation and improved well-being by contributing to making a difference in urban life and creating cleaner and more sustainable communities. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that recycling as a practice of sustainability is a source of income generation in Nyanga. More noteworthy to my research is that this livelihood opportunity is likely to be a sustained practice, given that people financially depend on it.

The opportunity to create a livelihood through the informal food market is evident in Nyanga. Yet, as Battersby (2011) argues, the significance of the informal food market sector has been neglected in research and policy documents within South Africa. People’s dependence on the informal food market for livelihood in Nyanga highlights the significant contribution to sustainable production and consumption processes and practices in the urban area. My findings support what Battersby (2011) recommends, which is that more attention to and understanding of the informal food market is necessary in order to build sustainable communities. Such attention and understanding can come from the use of the concept of home in the context of sustainable development.

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the stories and experiences of some of the people in Nyanga who are making a livelihood with sustainable consequences. Furthermore, I sought to show through their stories the ways in which the type of informal work and the environment within which it occurs are characterised by networking, innovation, and opportunity. This chapter expresses that the experiences of those making a livelihood by networking with people from distant homes, as well as their customers in Nyanga, provide a sense of familiarity and continuity in their urban lifestyles. In an environment where

competition for work is high, people are often required to be creative in their job-searching strategies. This chapter shows that those seeking to commit to home-making in Nyanga find innovative ways to make a livelihood through recycling. It reinforces my argument that people in the township create a livelihood for themselves through networking at the informal markets that function sustainably. Furthermore, the opportunities which result in environmental benefits provide the means to create a livelihood.

Missed opportunities to make a livelihood with the resources available are also presented in the chapter. Thieme (2017) talks about “the acute confluence of austerity, diminishing public welfare, and fragmentation of formal employment” in cities of the global South, which has reshaped work opportunities for many of the working population, particularly young people. Such budget constraints cause a sense of uncertainty amongst youth, in particular (Thieme, 2017). However, through networking, innovation, and opportunity to navigate insecurity and uncertainty of the hustle, livelihood creation can transpire in townships like Nyanga. I argue that the hustle of making a livelihood is an everyday lifestyle to all people (male and female; young and old). There is a deeper meaning to the hustle in Nyanga, a meaning that emerges through networking, innovation, and opportunity; one that has a connection to home.

As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the older generation blames the youth for the social ills that are invading the township. Therefore, community life and communal ways of living have been affected. Although the means of making a livelihood I describe in this chapter show convenience, the ability to provide, and sustainability, the social and relational fragmentation that is expressed in some of the participants’ stories so far portrays a disconnection from family and home. Some people’s desires, priorities, and aspirations are seemingly influenced by the modern and urban lifestyles common to society today. My findings align with Bell’s (2009) argument that is, “Individualism of modern life has weakened the ties of community. We try to buy a feeling of community in the goods we purchase for ourselves and for others”.

The ways in which individuals and communities are relating to each other are aspects of home that are important to sustainability research. When sustainability is thought of as a consequence of changing social practices where the dynamics of transformation and innovation occur, understanding the elements and reproduction of (un)sustainable

practices is crucial. As Dobson (2007) says, “The idea is that resource problems are best solved by bringing points of production and consumption closer together”. This idea is illustrated in this chapter in the various sustainable livelihood practices, but I intend to show it in the ways in which people are brought together by connecting to their neighbourhoods and community. Therefore, I turn to my third theme in the next chapter, which is about social relations and how they shape sustainability in Nyanga.

## Chapter 6

### Contestations of Home

*Ikhaya Lami*

*“Alikho emhlabeni ikhaya lami qha  
Nginguye ohambayo ngizulazula la  
Ikhaya lami nanto, lisezulwini ha!  
Alikho la elinje nalodwa*

*Khaya lam', lihle hle!  
Muzi wam', muhle-ke!  
Ikhona sizohuba sithi: “Haleluya!”  
Bheka le, buso bam'!  
Yizwa-ke ndlebe yam'!  
Ikhaya lami nanto phezulu.”*

*My Home*

*“Not available in my home world  
I'm the one moving around this  
My home and nothing, it's in heaven!  
There is none like this*

*My sister, it's fine!  
My friend ', good-for!  
There we will cry out: "Hallelujah!"  
Look at this, my face!  
Hear, then, my ear!  
My home is too high.”*

(Lyrics by Worship House<sup>49</sup>)

Home is shaped by everyday practices, lived experiences, and social relations (Blunt, 2005). The social relations of people living in Nyanga are ambiguous. They consist of a combination of communality and contestations. On the one hand, people discuss their commitment to and support for each other in addressing the social injustices of the township, and on the other, people allude to the social exclusion that is apparent in the area because of crime. In this

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<sup>49</sup> From the album: Project 6 – Ikhaya Lami, released in 2011. This praise song was sung at the opening of Sithathu Park.

chapter I discuss how the communal and contested nature of everyday life is dictated by the concerns of crime and the social injustices from the past. I argue that as a result of such concerns, the social relations of people living in Nyanga are a strong factor in determining the types of everyday practices happening in the area that ultimately have sustainable effects.

The communal way of living that is characteristic of African urbanism is evident during my field work in Nyanga. The two community organisations, Abalimi Bazekhaya and Etafeni, show this through their sustainable urban agriculture and greening programmes that aim to empower the local community. Notwithstanding the sustainability effects that come from such programmes, individual community members stand out as innovators, leaders, and caregivers who create the sense of community that exists in some areas of the township. Such people contribute to this sense of community either because they seek to help and support those who are suffering injustices from the past, or they commit themselves to community projects in ways that seek to address crime. I see this sense of community in the creation of a community park and in practices of sustainable urban agriculture. Dobson (2007) talks about the practicality failure of ethics relating to the natural environment and says that some scholars perceive that not enough attention has been paid to the “practical intentions and relations among people, and between people and their environment”. I seek to address this failure in this chapter by highlighting the empirical social interactions between people in Nyanga that consequently shape the particular forms of sustainability happening in the township.

In this chapter I frame a picture around the stories of people who express their sense of community in Nyanga, and also the social contestations that exist there. Within this picture the issue of crime is interwoven. It determines how people relate to one another, as well as the natural environment in community gardens, within their particular neighbourhoods. I show that people are connecting to each other and to home because of the crime and, ultimately, the communality and social contestations that it causes. Through these social relations, practices with sustainable outcomes emerge. The first section illustrates this in the discussion about the development of Sithathu Park. The tensions and communality associated with home gardening are discussed in the second section. Lastly, people’s attitudes towards Nyanga are revealed, as well as different ways in which people are addressing past and current social contestations.

## **If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together**

There is a need to document and acknowledge urban growth impacts on residents' sense of place and community identity (Slemp et al, 2012 cited in von Wirth, et al., 2016), given the rapid urbanisation and migration rates happening in cities in recent times. Such impacts cause a scarcity of resources and an increased human dominance over nature. In a township that is already under-resourced and over-populated, how might the people in Nyanga live sustainably? During my research visits in the township I observed people living a communal way of life that portrayed a sense of community and homely environment. I saw these people living unintended sustainable lifestyles that they created by connecting to each other and their wider community.

When I delved deeper into the field by engaging directly with people, I realised that a sense of community was not always present, however. I am told by a City of Cape Town official (male, early 30s) at the early stage of my fieldwork that the Nyanga community is known to have “inconsistent and transient leadership”. This description stays with me during my time in the township as I get to know the various role-players that impact their communities. Research into cities of the global South shows rapid socio-spatial transformation, with visible consequences, such as segregation of people, urban structures left decrepit, and large public spaces left physically and environmentally under resourced and degraded (Inzulza-Contardo & Cruz-Gambardella, 2014). I see such consequences in Nyanga that could be a result of such inconsistency and transience, but I also see social cohesion and efforts to improve public and private spaces through working with the natural environment. When there is change, positive or negative, in a neighbourhood such as Nyanga, this creates opportunities for other practice elements (material, knowledge, and meaning of the practice) to adjust and realign in ways that potentially meet the objectives of the community.

The community park that was initiated by Etafeni has the potential to blend space, people, nature, memory, and imagination. It was implemented through a socio-ecological design process in response to current urban social and environmental challenges in the township. The environmental transformation of the park resonates with Gandy's (2006) idea of New Urbanism, which is influenced by sustainability and nature-based formations in urban design processes. He talks about urban design being an extension of beauty in nature by being reflected in “the geometric arrangement of space or the embellishment of urban life

through gardens” (Gandy, 2006, p. 66). I learn about the proposal and design of the park that reflect the needs of the township community when I meet the local community leaders of that time<sup>50</sup> at a Street Committee meeting.

At one of the Zwelitsha Street Committee’s monthly meetings I am introduced to the committee members, who allow me to sit in on the meeting. The agenda includes the project to build a community park in this section of Zwelitsha Drive. It is at this moment that I realise that there are different communities within Nyanga. It is a socially divided and dichotomous township. Zwelitsha is one of the oldest areas of Nyanga, but its name means “new land”. Gang violence and violent crime make it one of the most dangerous areas of the township, yet it is an area where communities play an active role in managing it. This particular part of Nyanga that is in the vicinity of Etafeni has various street committees. They are a form of governance that meet regularly on behalf of all residents living in the individual streets to discuss neighbourhood concerns. Decisions are made by the committee and relayed to the Ward Councillor of Nyanga to formally address and implement them. I realise that these meetings are important for the communities, especially as they are platforms for community members to voice their opinions and ideas.

The development of the park is a multi-stakeholder project, but the needs of the community are at the forefront of the design and implementation processes. I see this project as similar to the one that Orsini et al. (2013, p. 711) describe as a “co-management model” that involves collaboration between municipalities and urban communities in gardening projects with the intention to:

Recover marginal lands that would otherwise be illegally occupied or become landfill; and to increase family aggregation and social inclusion... (Orsini, et al., 2013).

Across the road from Etafeni, a derelict piece of land that is usually used for anti-social behaviour is identified by all parties (City Parks, Etafeni, and the Zwelitsha Street Committee) as the space for the new park to accommodate the elderly in the area. The plan is, thus, to recover and revitalise the land for the new park and design it according to the

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<sup>50</sup> It is interesting to note that over the period of my fieldwork the leadership changed due to divided views in the community about who was, in fact, voted to lead it. This very much resonates with the views of the official I spoke to from the City of Cape Town.

needs of the elderly. A partnership agreement is finalised by the parties, and the fundraising process by Etafeni begins. City Parks says upfront that its budget can only provide plants and trees. The first and most important item that the Street Committee requests from Etafeni is a palisade fence. Crime in the area dictates that a fence be erected to protect the various components that make up the park, on which I will elaborate shortly.

During the erection of the fence by an external company, conflict arises from local community members. The community is adamant that it should be involved in the work and not only an external company. The scale of this contestation is aligned to sense of place attachment and place meaning. According to Kil et al. (2014), empirical research suggests that place attachment and meanings influence environmental concerns such as the acceptability of recreation settings (over housing developments, for example), which is indicative of the Sithathu Park project. This community has come to an agreement to develop the space into a community park, and therefore, has shown interest and attachment to the imagined space. It also relates to the livelihood opportunities discussed in the previous chapter. The high rate of unemployment in Nyanga places people in a position to seize upon work opportunities when they arise. Community members see that outsiders (employees of the fence company) are making money from their place, a place that they are protecting and uplifting for the sake of their community. Thus, the meaning behind the erection of the fence extends beyond place protection, but also an opportunity for temporary employment. This trajectory of meaning towards a practice is indicative of practice theory.

Moreover, this place-protective behaviour represents social exclusion and is symbolised by the fence. I see the fence not only as a physical barrier to unwanted people, but also an emotional one. It evoked hostile emotions on the day that it was supposed to be erected. It was also a significant feature in the planning phase of the project, where the Zwelitsha Street Committee requested that it be placed around the park. The concern of criminal activity and undesirable people in the park by the committee meant that it became a feature that was impossible to ignore. The practices of everyday life that are place-protective in the form of erecting a fence, for example, demonstrate adaptiveness and inventiveness in planning and transforming current situations, such as criminal activity, when the elements of practices are realigned. In this case, erecting the fence means a safer space that people can use and perform other practices, such as socialising and playing, and one of opportunity for employment.

At this juncture in the development process I am awakened to the idea that this park is for the community by the community. The tension alleviates through engagements between the stakeholders and the assurance that the community is involved in all processes of the development of the space going forward. I learn that one of the community members, Whitey (male, late 30s), is guarding the fence overnight, as he fears that parts of the half-built fence would be stolen. He expresses:

The people who steal are on Tik<sup>51</sup> and don't care about the park. They and their children will use it, but they will steal from it. They don't understand the importance of it.

Whitey is demonstrating the community commitment to a common cause in Nyanga of building a place that would become meaningful to the people living in the area. In addition to the emotional connection to a place, increased knowledge about a place increases the likelihood that individuals will demonstrate place-protective behaviours (Halpenny, 2010). Thus, residents with higher levels of neighbourhood attachment are more likely to fight against attempts to negatively change the social and physical nature of their neighbourhood.

The issue of crime is again brought to my attention later in the building process of the park. The labyrinth is made of over 800 bricks, and between the rows of bricks is a combination of pebbles and woodchips placed over plastic lining. There is hesitation by the caretaker to lay the lining, pebbles, and woodchips before all the bricks are placed and the design is finished. His concern is that people will see the unfinished design and think it is neglected, and the bricks will be free for the taking. It interests me that even though there is a fence and locked gate, there is still a fear of vandalism and criminal activity in the space. In the literature, Kuo and Sullivan (2001) suggest that in urban neighbourhoods, vegetation might introduce more surveillance on the street by increasing residents' use of neighbourhood outdoor spaces. Battersby and Marshak (2013, p. 452) support this suggestion by saying that gardening and gardens have the potential to decrease crime in an area and create a "defensible space".

Both suggestions speak to household sustainability that includes the living and non-living elements of the neighbourhood. The idea is that sustainability practices that inspire social

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<sup>51</sup> A local version of methamphetamine.

interventions to improve the aesthetics of neighbourhoods, such as gardening, can potentially improve the safety of the area. The idea of transforming an outdoor open space, such as the space of this park, is reflected in Gandy's New Urbanism (Gandy, 2006). I see how the design of the park makes use of nature as an attempt to both change the urban landscape aesthetically and try to gain an element of social order. However, the response by the caretaker makes it difficult to imagine the possibility of this park being a space that is no longer marred by crime. The tension of place-making here is symptomatic of the social contestations relating to crime that is evident in the neighbourhood.

The duration of the work done to complete the park spans a period of 18 months.<sup>52</sup> During this time, noteworthy interactions emerge. The commitment of a community member (male, early 50s) working in the park during the planting phase culminates with his commitment to planting a garden at his home. He explains to me that he learnt so much from working in the park and wishes to replicate the practice at home. Similarly, a female (early 40s) community member walking past the park echoes the desire to make a garden of her own at home. As the plants start to flower, more community members show an interest in the park. A male individual (early 40s) comes to the park one day to specifically ask about the name of a ground covering plant that has pink flowers. He explains that he wishes to buy such plants to grow in his own garden. The characteristics of practice, such as desire and imagination, and knowledge and meaning, are evident in these examples of interactions with community members and culminate in the practice of gardening in other contexts.

Additionally, the design of the labyrinth piques a lot of interest, as it looks like a "game". It appears that some people know how to walk it and others don't. I realise that it may be because the bricks haven't been laid correctly, causing dead ends in certain places. I see this as a unique characteristic of the park that is symbolic of Nyanga, where people come across dead ends in their lives, but continue to persevere in life, sometimes on different trajectories, with commitment and support from others. However, commitment towards completing the park at times was absent. Interestingly, all stakeholders played a role in this lack of commitment.

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<sup>52</sup> Although my fieldwork covered a nine-month period, I visited the park periodically until its completion. I did this mainly out of interest to see the project through to the final product.

At times members of the community who agreed to work in the park fail to arrive. Over time it seems that the interest in the park by the Street Committee fades. At a Street Committee meeting I am told that people have other concerns to deal with, such as leaking roofs that need attention after a storm. In fact, the meeting itself is poorly attended; so, it is difficult to properly understand why there is this gradual loss of interest in the development of the park. An elderly male individual suggests that the community is “in denial” and that people “lack motivation to want to improve their lives”. He blames the rampant use of drugs in the area for making it unsafe and explains, “People in the area are robbing their own facilities and resources from their own people”. I am also told that some people see parks as crime hotspots, so people don’t like them. The ambiguity and tension of place-making is evident in this encounter where the space of the park is one that represents belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, and desire and fear.

On a separate occasion, a young man (early 30s) who grew up in Nyanga and has since relocated explains:

Nyanga is different [to other townships] because people have an attitude here where they don’t care what the place looks like outside their yard.

In this case, place-making does not extend beyond the home. This man sees the lack of motivation in people to improve their neighbourhood, which resonates with what the elderly man mentions above.

I see a lack of motivation in the park caretaker at Etafeni, as he too fails to pitch for work on the days we agree to meet. There appears to be no sense of urgency to complete the development of the park. Funding into the Greening Nyanga programme also seems to dwindle, which adds to the lull in commitment and work ethic. The delay in completing the park is also influenced by City Parks. It seems that there is a constant battle for community members and Etafeni to get the assistance they require in the park from the City officials. Either because of budget constraints or lack of equipment, the delivery of the trees and compost, and the installation of the water connection by City Parks are put on hold over a period of months. This is a plausible contributing factor to the jaded response by Etafeni and emanates the social contestations that are present in the area.

On a different note, the park is seen as a meeting place for people to initiate positive interventions. Where once community events and ceremonies had no physical home, this site has become one of civic and community importance. The month of December in South Africa sees “16 Days of Activism”, a campaign against abuse of women and children. It was in this month that a banner advertising this campaign was placed on the fence of the park. Domestic violence in Nyanga is illustrative of the negative ideology of home. As Duncan and Lambert (2004) assert, the notion of home as sanctuary is at times dampened by the knowledge that private homes are places of domestic violence. When the park is viewed as an extension of home that is a place of sanctuary, the fence, then, is a structure that is used to secure the park from potential criminal activity for the women who might feel vulnerable using it. The structure also serves a purpose of bringing people together at such a central point through the display of an important cause to the people of Nyanga. The banner that is attached to the fence advertises the details of a march that is set to start at the park, where many people can gather.

In addition to providing a space for people to meet for a common cause, the park also acts as a safe space for mothers, grandmothers, and children to use the space to meet and share stories about their daily lives, and stories and imaginaries of distant homes. In instances where the home is a violent and hostile space, the park can be a space of comfort where women and girls can (re)connect. Story-telling, in Madden’s (2010, p. 37) opinion, is “framed by the theme of connection or lack of connection to place”. In African culture built and natural landscapes are remembered and imagined through symbolism and social space that have been used to describe the layout of African settlements (Beinart, 2000). As a natural landscape within the township, the park provides a social space for story-telling and daily conversation among generations of women. It brings closeness among residents and families. In the present day where daily conversation is directed through technology and lacks personal connectedness, story-telling can promote an ethos of participation and interaction amongst people.

The official opening of the park sees a memorable celebration among a close-knit community. A group of women of varied ages and dressed in stylish African dresses gather in the park in song and dance. The opening lyrics of this chapter are part of a verse of the song they sing. It is a praise song that expresses that home is in heaven. The women voice their appreciation of the park through the song and express that the park is their home in a

heavenly space. During the performance of song and dance, I think of the prayer songs that the trainees sing on each day of the training at Abalimi's garden centre. Singing and dancing are acts of showing happiness and praise in traditional African culture. I see that the park is a happy place for these women that brings a community together through the practices of song and dance. It provides a sense of home for people in the area, who would otherwise not have a space outside their own homes to experience this feeling.

By enabling a sense of place and identity that facilitate positive place-making and the celebration of important social activities, such as the opening of the park, and civic institutions, such as Etafeni, social tensions subside. Thus, the park is not only an environmental asset that provides a home to various species of fauna and flora, but the park is also an important social and homely feature in the turbulent township setting. It is a "new land" that offers new memories, activities, and meeting spaces.

In keeping with this desire to create a new homely and natural setting, a woman from a nearby community, Siyo Square, approaches me one day to tell me that her area also needs a park. The social influence that Sithathu Park is creating is apparent, as people are seeing the potential of such a feature in their neighbourhood. She explains to me that there is a crèche in her area that needs an outdoor space for the children to use, and that the only other play area for the children is too far to walk to. This gives me the idea to organise a workshop for those community members living near the open space to discuss together their ideas about what kind of park they need and most desire.

Kil et al.'s (2014) study about the meaning of place concludes that there is a growing interest in place-based planning that incorporates people-place connections into natural resource management issues and decision-making. I am interested to see if the workshop is a way of empowering the community to take ownership of the space that they seem to value. If this community values the space, would the effect of protecting it be apparent if the community members design it as the most suitable and desired park for the community? At a meeting with the Siyo Square Street Committee one evening, I clarify to the members what the workshop entails. One thing that strikes me at the meeting is the hesitation from the members to include communities from other streets in the workshop. I am told that they are worried that those people from outside Siyo Square might ask for something different for the space that is not aligned with what this community will want. This discussion illustrates

another example of the divided communities within Nyanga, showing that areas are seemingly socially divided even when they are a mere few streets apart.

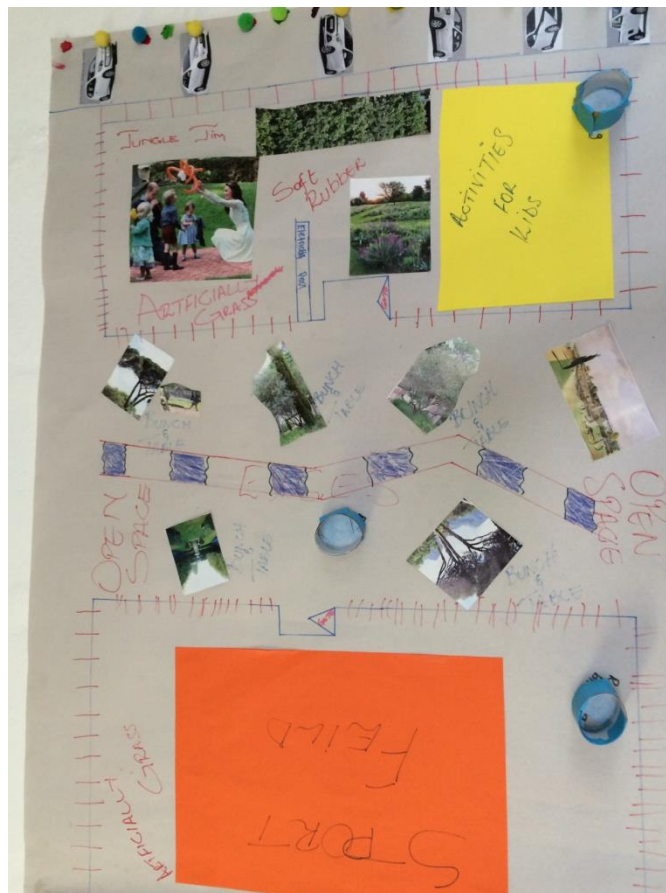
A mix of 18 participants attends the workshop, including young adults and old, and males and females. Each individual participates in the activity, which is to design the most suitable park in the shape of the open space in the Siyo Square area. The commitment to the task is evident in the group work of putting together their posters (See Figures 41 to 43 below). Furthermore, the commitment of the group members to encourage other groups about what is needed for the community during the presentations of the posters is interesting. Debates about what is needed in the space to mitigate crime are central in each presentation. Since crime is a common concern among community members, most of the debates are centred on having a fence erected around the space. The symbol of the fence, again, highlights the notion of social exclusion among the different communities in Nyanga.



**Figure 41: Planning and Pasting the Posters in Groups (10 November 2016)**



**Figure 42: Planning and Pasting the Posters in Groups (10 November 2016)**



**Figure 43: One of the Posters Presented at the Workshop (10 November 2016)**

Landazuri et al.'s (2011) research shows that there is a relationship between neighbourhood appearance and perception of physical and social disorder.<sup>53</sup> They argue that safety perception depends on the use of the surrounding physical environment, including the possibility of social interaction among residents (Landazuri, et al., 2011). Trudeau (2013) suggests that certain social conditions are necessary to support sustainable, orderly behaviour, such as social interaction within community gardens. I see during my engagement with the Siyo Square community at the workshop that social interaction in their desired park could also provide for a sense of belonging when residents and neighbours look out for each other in times of stress. The idea of creating order in the park comes from one group, which believes that a fence would prevent littering and “any person doing what they want” inside the park. There is deep concern from another group about the fence stopping emergency vehicles from entering the space, forcing them to park next to the road, and making them vulnerable to criminals. A response to this concern is:

As community members we know to protect such vehicles, including ambulances, so the vehicles should be able to park closer into the park. We always need to think about safety first.

The consensus at the end of the debate is to have a fence with two pedestrian gates and a big gate to allow emergency vehicles into the park. Concerns about vandalism within the park are raised by those who propose to have benches and outdoor gym equipment. The suggestion is to have concrete benches, “because wooden benches might be found in fires in winters”. Someone concurs, and says:

We mustn't forget that we are living in a naughty community, so without a fence the bins will be stolen and we won't have a tap, even the artificial grass might be gone when we wake up; the children's equipment will be gone and some kids we don't know might vandalise the park and we wouldn't know where to find them to shout at them.

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<sup>53</sup> Disorder in the community refers to social (illegal or questionable behaviour, social conflicts) and physical (litter vandalism, abandoned houses, and lack of maintenance) conditions that exist in a given location (Landazuri, et al., 2011).

There is, again, an indication that outsiders are not committed to protecting the park. In fact, I notice an element of social exclusion towards people who are not from the Siyo Square community and sense that outsiders are not welcome to use the park. There is concern that if children who are unknown to the community use the park, there might be incidences of vandalism committed by them. The contested nature of the park is highlighted when presenters reiterate the need for the fence. I realise, however, that such contestation is because of the protection of and attachment to place that the community call home, which is, ultimately, what shapes the types of practices in the area that have sustainable outcomes.

During the workshop, I am struck by the knowledge that some people have about particular practices in the park that have sustainability effects. The environmental awareness that is portrayed in this design of soft landscaping is an interesting feature of one of the group presentations. At the time of this workshop, Stage 3 water restrictions<sup>54</sup> had been implemented by the City of Cape Town in response to the drought that the city is currently experiencing. The group expresses its concern about using grass in this time of drought and proposes the use of artificial grass in most of the play areas. Also, the concern for conserving water is presented by a male group member (mid-20s), who proposes to have a bucket put under the tap. He says:

I have learnt we are going through a crisis as a country with drought,  
so it is better to use a tap and a bucket to irrigate the grass.

Furthermore, his proposal is to include three recycling bins in the design for plastic, cans, and paper, and explains, “We are missing one for bottles because glass is dangerous in the park”. Once again, the concern for safety emerges, either because broken glass can unintentionally injure people, or it can be used as a weapon in violent conflict. By realising the particular practices that the group proposes, Jones and Murphy (2010) argue that such focus can also help to identify inadvertent or improvisational activities of people, and determine the sustainability implications of their practices. Although some participants portray knowledge and understanding of the desired types of practices and those that are

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<sup>54</sup> Stage 3 water restrictions mean, amongst others, that no hosepipes are permitted to water gardens and parks, wash cars, and fill up swimming pools. Such activities are allowed only when buckets or watering cans are used. In addition, residents are urged to limit their watering of gardens to mornings and evenings.

undesirable for the park, most participants imagine them based on their sense of belonging and familial connection to the area.

A common social element in the designs by each group that expresses sense of belonging and familial connection is to incorporate an area that would be used for events and performances, such as for the seemingly popular activity of drum majorettes. I see this in line with Battersby and Marshak's (2013) study, that community gardens can increase commitment and involvement in neighbourhood activities. The authors suggest that community gardens are important "social centres where people can come together for social events, make friends and discuss problems and concerns or new ideas" (Battersby & Marshak, 2013, p. 452). In the workshop, the groups accommodate in their designs seating areas where parents and other members of the community can sit together to support and watch such performances. One person suggests that the proposed space could also be used for special holidays, such as Youth Day on 16 June, as such public holidays are celebrated by this community and usually take place at venues that require transport to get to. Moreover, participants propose that the seating areas should be used for events that are culturally important to the community, such as funerals. There is consensus that community gatherings are desired for the area and that a communal space is necessary for socialising and keeping the community together in times of celebration and in times of mourning.

The coming together of a community for a social need is an example of the kind of practice that happens in Nyanga that has sustainability benefits. Barr (2007) argues that individuals who are involved within a community are likely to be involved in protecting its environment. However, in Nyanga, community involvement is more deeply entrenched in cultural values and relates to the African concept of "reciprocal favours" (Alcock, 2015, p. 139). This concept is about the notion of giving back to one another and sharing resources. Being involved in a community project is a way of giving back to the community for the benefit of everyone. The community involvement also speaks to the notion of communalism in a society, which is a concept in traditional African life, where belonging to a community and involvement in it are the essence of daily life (Venter, 2004). This kind of engagement is described in the concept of ubuntu, which is an integral part of the deep cultural heritage of the majority of the black South African population. Ubuntu is tied to the notions of "group solidarity, conformity, compassion, respect, human dignity, humanistic orientation and collective unity", and is the interconnectedness among humans, animals, and the ancestors, and declares that acting in

an ethical manner is in each person's own interests (Mokgoro, 1998, p. 3). Therefore, it is a cultural base from which people can come together to work towards a common cause, meaning that people have the agency to construct their own practices through ubuntu.

The concept of ubuntu is representative of a joint benefit for all who reside in the area in need of culturally specific social activities, such as those mentioned above. Community parks provide spaces where principles of ubuntu come to life, such as community empowerment through collective, place-based decision-making. In line with Chapin III and Knapp's (2015) argument, the active participation and facilitated dialogue during the planning process of the Siyo Square park, points of agreement that exuded community solidarity and collective action, as well as the contested issues that require deeper discussion are identified.

Therefore, home and gardens extend beyond the private, individualistic, and natural places that they commonly are, to be places of community attachment and purpose. The designing and developing of green communal spaces are creating a sense of social cohesion and communalism in an otherwise turbulent and divided area. However, such kinship is not always easily attained in current times of increasing socio-economic inequality that is prevalent in Nyanga. The next section of this chapter will show the tensions and communality associated with home gardening.

### **To receive the nourishment of otherness**

As discussed in previous chapters about the familiarity of place that Abalimi Bazekhaya brings to people in Nyanga, I see this through the social gatherings that happen there. People visit the garden centre either as customers or as visitors looking for a place to socialise. Conversations about daily life or about gardening are a common occurrence. It is not only a place for people to buy their gardening resources, but also one that offers advice and support to those attending the monthly training workshops that are facilitated by Vathiswa. In fact, as mentioned in the previous chapter, it is a place that urges ideas about setting up businesses after the training through the social interaction and networking that it provides. Each training day that I attend starts with a prayer song by the trainees. It is a way of thanking Abalimi for what it provides to the trainees and also a prayer to ask for good fortune after the training. It is a moment of celebration and camaraderie among strangers who are there for a common purpose.

The training workshops bring people together and offer a place of learning and sharing of information. Community and home gardens represent examples of the neighbourhood environment that connect people to place because they require action, responsibility, and nurturing (Comstock, et al., 2010). Thus, to some people they are representations of home. In the previous two chapters I introduced Nobesotho, who aims to develop Umtata in the Eastern Cape with other women so that they can learn how to farm and avoid poverty. From a practice theory perspective, the imaginary of transforming structural challenges, such as inadequate food provision and livelihood, is demonstrated in Nobesotho's ambition. She expresses her thoughts about the training, "It's the best, the best to learn how to make your own food and feed yourself. My brain is open now". The skills of farming that she learns from Vathiswa and which she aims to share with her community at home are for the purpose of benefitting others, and are an example of the interconnectedness of the elements of practice. Through her skills of gardening, her networks of women in Umtata, and the desire to change lives, such characteristics of practice enable Nobesotho to perform her imagined action of social transformation. The altruistic value of ubuntu is also evident in the practices she imagines by the way she aims to support people through the teaching of sustainable urban agriculture.

Ubuntu is also demonstrated by some people who come to the training with the purpose of being able to provide food for others in their communities. "Umntu ngumntu ngabantu" is a saying in isiXhosa that means, "A person is a person among people", and is indicative of the altruistic values that some of the women trainees emanate. It is a value that stems from familial and communal culture and imbues a sense of community and home. Nombulelo, a young woman (late-20s) from Lower Crossroads, looks after children at her home. Her dream is to have a vegetable garden that would provide food that she can cook for the children she looks after. She explains:

There are kids there at the location you can see are weak. Just because they need care, I can cook for them, and contact them to eat with us each and every day.

In the case of Nombulelo, vegetable gardening is a practice that stems from her cultural values. Through the practice of gardening, she is connecting to the values of her upbringing and familial values. She is connecting to home. The meaning of the saying, "Umntu ngumntu

ngabantu”, resonates with Nombulelo, as her role as a caregiver to children gives her the social meaning of helping her community that she possesses as a person living in her community. The idea that plants can be considered to not only “feed ...communities healthy food, but also to feed their need to be the change agent in their community” (Taylor & Lovell, 2013, p. 5), thus, speaks truth to Nombulelo, and also to Theodora.

Theodora is a 37-year-old woman who tells me that she is self-employed, but her ambition is to set up a soup kitchen in her community. She explains:

Where I stay, I noticed there are some houses they don't have someone who is working there to buy food. I notice that there are some old persons that take their pills and maybe some days they don't have food and you have to have food before you take pills, especially the old peoples. So, in my dream I want to open that for the community and for the childrens.

Social values, such as altruism and ubuntu, emerge from familial values and communality. The compassion and altruism shown by these two women reinforce the social and familial structures of the communal way of living in township areas. These structures, which are an integral part of African life, serve both an important financial and social function. They are representative of the historical lack of provision of services by the apartheid government to disadvantaged black communities who had to find ways of resisting the impact of apartheid by establishing mutual self-help societies. The sense of community identity that is indicative of this way of life is apparent in these acts of kindness, which have been passed down from generations.

The argument that modern society no longer portrays the important social relations or events in people's lives, proposes that people are not limited by local familial traditions (Taylor, 2010). In other words, people are not constrained to particular lifestyles that were once traditional in families and communities. Rather, people are living independently and following contemporary trends and ways of life. The consequence of this scenario is that people in modern society are less connected either to place or to other people than they were in the past (Taylor, 2010). However, the connection to an urbanised place, such as

Nyanga, and the connection of modernised<sup>55</sup> people of a particular place are expressed by young women like Nombulelo and Theodora, who intend to provide for their communities. The altruistic intentions of both women show that an urbanised and modern society still identifies to a place and its people through traditional communal structures. The relationship between urbanised people and their traditions represents an example of the complexity of place and of cities. It shows how social networks that are emerging and fit in to the complexity of some urban areas, are benefitting their communities and the cities in which they live. The complexity of what goes on in Southern cities is characterized in the diversity of culture and the socio-economic constraints that determine the way of life for urban dwellers. The contestations of urban life can, therefore, affect social relations in ways that reflect positive or negative behaviour.

For people such as Nombulelo and Theodora, their positive interventions can provide for a sense of belonging in their neighbourhoods when residents and neighbours look out for each other in times of socio-economic stress. They are contributing to the quality of life that people strive for to “restore and block out the demands and stresses of daily work and urban living” (Landazuri, et al., 2011, p. 127). In the context of sustainability debates, social values can provide insight as to why people take action and contribute to environmental change, how they value things, and what meanings they associate with place and environment (Horlings, 2015a). When people value their community, socially and physically, they are likely to engage in building and enhancing their community through practices, such as gardening. The positive intervention of growing a garden to provide food for their family or community suggests that the stresses and contestations of daily urban life can encourage sustainable actions.

Serving the community is also the reason for Siphinathi’s involvement in the training at Abalimi. At 24 years old he is committed to the natural environment and to maturing as an individual. He says:

Flowers and the trees and the sources of the earth I love. I like and love, love, love. Even Monday to Sunday to wake up about the nature. I love the garden and the nature that’s why I am here, and I don’t have

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<sup>55</sup> Modernised in this context refers to current generation of people who have adapted to a city way of living by the way they dress and the material items they own, such as a cell phone.

the time to go drink and I'm not smoking so that's very important in my life to do my own thing.

Furthermore, he explains that his intention is to serve and build his community through his commitment to and passion for the natural environment. He says:

I am young, and I want to grow myself, to grow up and take this knowledge and get something from this training and put it in my head and then I go far to teach other people.

The practice of gardening that subsequently reproduces practices to transform Siphinathi's community shows the trajectory of change and dynamic nature of practice. His commitment to learning about gardening and the natural environment interlinks with his desire to teach other people in his community the knowledge he gains from the training, and ultimately reproduces new knowledge and skills that people can use to adapt to their specific contexts.

The trajectory of change relating to the practice of gardening is evident in the intentions of two young men who are attending the training to find out if and how they can plant vegetables in a small space at their homes. Seeing the creative ideas of the small containers used for planting at the garden centre, one of the men says he would like to teach other people about growing vegetables in small containers. Participating in the training and learning about innovative planting ideas enables these individuals to reproduce the knowledge and practice at their homes and to other people. This is the type of response that Vathiswa strives for when she encourages people to share the knowledge that she teaches them with their communities. She expresses the importance of sharing knowledge with the community, so that more learning happens to encourage the sustainability of gardening projects that in turn develop the community. Taylor and Lovell argue that home gardens in densely populated urban areas can be easily visible, and this visibility may lead to the sharing of plants, produce, and information across the garden fence with neighbours or passers-by (Taylor and Lovell, unpublished data). This way of sharing is relevant to Nyanga and has the potential to facilitate ongoing discussions about community needs and improved planning for future sustainability interventions. It is a practice that builds community resilience, solidarity, and sustainability.

The trainees have a strong desire to play a role in the improvement of their communities by sharing knowledge of gardening and the vegetables that they produce. The information I gain from the conversations I have with each person shows that the values and meanings associated with nature are complex. Community gardens provide food resources, giving them utilitarian value and economic value; but they are also places that offer support and avenues of commitment to community upliftment. The social aspect of gardening gives it a humanistic and communal value, which relates to ubuntu, discussed above.

At the end of one of the training workshops, Vathiswa initiates a discussion about what the trainees have learnt from the workshop. The most interesting remark to me by one of the trainees is the description of the training as providing “the social injection and healing” that their communities need. The restoration of a degraded environment has an enabling effect on the healing of communities and social relationships. It offers reconnection to the environment for humans, and a reconnection to each other. Some of the trainees open up about their experience of coming together in a place that taught them a way of coping in their daily struggles. They express that there is hope for communities to share with each other and enhance their lives. Others express their appreciation for learning the importance of being patient with the growing process of their plants, and with each other when working together. For Vathiswa and Mama Bokolo, this was an opportunity to express their concerns about the lack of commitment and support towards gardening and the community in general that ultimately negatively impact on sustainability in Nyanga.

Mama Bokolo says, “Some people throw it [the knowledge] away because if you go outside when the training is finished, people throw away that knowledge”. This sentiment is very much in line with the views of Barthel et al. (2015, p. 1322), who have identified that local knowledge related to agriculture is fading from citizens living in cities, “creating an ‘extinction of experience’ of human–nature interaction and a collective ‘forgetting’ of how to grow food”. Mama Bokolo elaborates on this tension by expressing her opinion about the lack of commitment and community support in Nyanga:

Eish, I can't feel a thing about Nyanga. There is no space. It's a lazy, they want if you talk but it's a lazy. It's a problem. It's the young people. It's a lazy. It's old people [who] run those gardens, but the youth, it's a lazy.

Again, this idea of the lacklustre nature of the youth in Nyanga features in conversations I have with community members. I get the sense that an element of the divided communities in Nyanga is represented by age, where there is a battle of motivation and commitment between the youth and the older generations. There is a serious concern for their community and a sense of wanting to mend the severed relationships between the youth and the older generations. Lungiswa voices her concern and says:

What can we do to change what is happening in our community? I am thinking about this in this training. What recipe to motivate the youth to get a passion. There are lots of men sitting and doing nothing. What can we do as mothers to help our community? You must never sleep until you see the change. The medicine lies with the women. Can we bring love back?

Maria shares her thoughts about her concerns regarding the lack of greenery in Nyanga and the lack of commitment she sees in others towards the natural environment:

I recall a conversation I had with my son when we drove to Makhaza, whereby I saw the washing lines connected to the trees planted on the pavement. So, I felt pity for the municipality as it is trying to bring nature to us, but it seems those people don't appreciate those trees. I notice that the people don't show an interest in trees. I would like to see more trees in Nyanga.

The sharing of such concerns among the trainees from Nyanga and its surrounds, who are essentially strangers at the beginning of the training, has connected them. A number of studies argue that urban agriculture contributes to and promotes community development through the use of shared experiences, spaces, tools, and skills (Battersby & Marshak, 2013). Specific knowledge and skills that are shared also enable the connectedness to one's environment and to live pro-environmentally (Stern, 2000). At the garden centre people feel comfortable to discuss various contestations of their community. However, the deeper contestation that Mama Bokolo and Vathiswa reveal is about sustaining the commitment from people to live sustainably through gardening.

Although the lack of commitment to uplift communities through practices, such as gardening, is perceived to be outside the garden centre, Vathiswa explains that she sees it in the training workshops too. She tells me that people tend to be lazy towards community-run training, and instead are more serious about attending workshops offered by bigger organisations in the city centre, for example. She explains that bigger organisations are perceived to be prestigious and better equipped compared to local community organisations such as Abalimi. Despite the commitment that some people show when signing up for the training, they do not attend it. I experience this on several occasions when workshops are arranged for a particular week with ten or more people signed up, but on the first day only two people arrive. When there are fewer than ten trainees, Vathiswa has to postpone the training because it is not worth her while to teach so few people. I wonder why people suddenly change their minds, as the training that Vathiswa offers is affordable to local people (R35 per person,<sup>56</sup> including resources, the handbook, and lunch), the venue is accessible to all, and the training gives people an embodied experience of the natural elements of gardening to which they would otherwise not easily have access.

Battersby and Marshak (2013, p. 451) note that many NGOs and community “action groups” have adopted the idea that urban agriculture projects can encourage cohesion and co-operation among those involved. When commitment is shown to attend the training, I see such cohesion at Abalimi’s garden centre. The sense of belonging that trainees experience through the morning prayer songs is a homely feeling to some people who may feel nervous or out of place at the beginning of the day. It is a feeling of support for each other, either as individual support during the learning process of the workshop, or as community support from those who have committed to serving their communities. Additionally, the garden provides people the opportunity to voice their concerns about social contestations that exist in their communities. Through the social contestations, as well as the desires to support, serve, and develop communities, which are ultimately part of the motivations for people to visit the garden centre, the sustainability that the garden imbues and teaches continues.

### **Umntu ngubuntu ngabantu**

The idea of support by a community for its community is a topic of conversation on an excursion to Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens and Table Mountain that was organised by a

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<sup>56</sup> R35 was the fee at the time of my fieldwork in 2016.

representative of Etafeni for a young male soccer team from Nyanga. The purpose of the outing is to expose the boys (aged between 10 and 18) to a natural environment and allow them to express their thoughts about it. Moreover, the environment of the gardens provides a neutral and safe space for them to think about any contestations in their home environments. A discussion starts with the coach (mid-30s) expressing his thoughts about Nyanga:

Nyanga is the way that it is because there aren't any leaders or role-models for people to follow in the direction of beautifying and improving the area with things like trees. When someone becomes successful and who could be a role-model to many, he or she ends up leaving Nyanga to live in a better and safer area, and doesn't look back unless there is a reason to return, such as for a ceremony or ritual with family. When that happens, they drive in with their cars with closed windows so to not talk to anyone and let the smell of Nyanga into their cars. They move on with their lives and forget about Nyanga and show no interest in giving back to it in some way.

An individual responds to the coach by saying that the successful people don't owe anything to Nyanga and that it is their choice as to where to live their lives. He stands up to say that it is up to everyone in Nyanga to try to do something to improve the township in their own way or in groups. He points out that the soccer team is already a group that can get together once a week to talk about such issues and try to make a difference together. Furthermore, he suggests that there should be community engagement about the importance of trees to further enhance Nyanga. His idea is to start with groups of people wanting to campaign about the importance of trees and who should wear brightly coloured t-shirts to catch people's attention and urge them to ask questions about the message of the campaign. It is an idea that implies social solidarity for an environmental cause. It is also an idea that speaks to practices of environmental citizenship.

I ask the group if such an idea would work in Nyanga. The group explains that trees, for example, are cut down for firewood "to braai the meat", and for the building of shacks. When small trees are planted to replace them, the wire mesh that would be used to protect them from wind and people would be stolen, as the wire is a lucrative resource. The small trees

are, thus, vulnerable to people walking over them, which makes tree planting in Nyanga futile. Moreover, the group explains that the trees get cut down more often at night and usually by people who carry knives or guns. This is an obvious reason why those who know not to cut down trees do not want to intervene and explain to the thieves that what they are doing is wrong. Once again, crime influences the lack of commitment towards the kind of behaviour and practices towards the natural environment that have sustainable effects in Nyanga. I am told firmly, “In Nyanga, you only look out for your own land”, as crime dictates that. Thus, as Bell (2009, p. 190) says, “How we see nature depends on our perspective on social life”; so, for some people living in Nyanga, a society riddled with crime sees a restricted relationship with the natural. Consequently, practices of environmental justice or environmental citizenship, such as campaigning for trees, are not well suited in an area like Nyanga when social anxieties that prevent social movements prevail. This idea illustrates the point from a practice-based perspective that relationships between different or external practices can have consequences for resistance. So, in instances where practices that have environmental benefits relate to criminal activity, such practices are resisted or avoided by people.

In contradiction to the statements above, Batterby and Marshak (2013) argue that community gardening in dangerous areas and neglected public spaces has shown to be an effective means to improve and transform such spaces. Furthermore, as I have discussed earlier in this chapter, various studies show that there is a relationship between neighbourhood appearance and perception of physical and social disorder, and that safety perception depends on the use of the surrounding physical environment, including the possibility of positive social interaction among residents (Landazuri, et al., 2011). This research suggests that in areas where people appreciate the aesthetics of the environment, the areas are perceived to be safe and people are likely to use and interact in the areas in positive ways. In other words, certain social conditions, such as safety and aesthetics, are necessary to support sustainable behaviour.

Basil Booyesen, whom I introduced in Chapter 4, does look out for other people’s land and has a positive relationship with nature and the community in general. In fact, he is an example of a community leader. He is involved in many community projects, such as the gardening at the old age community centre, and the gardening and handy work at the Holy Cross church in Nyanga. Basil’s community work at the church has encouraged a small group

of men to establish a vegetable garden at the back of the property. The men tell me that they grow the vegetables for the soup kitchen at the church. They are also in the process of making their own compost in an area demarcated by old paving stones behind the church. One of the men shows me two rain-water tanks behind the church and next to the garden (see Figure 44 below). He says that the system functions well to irrigate the vegetable garden, especially since the current drought threatens the survival of their plants. When there is rain, it is captured through the gutter system of the church, flows into the tanks, and is stored. The stored water also benefits the modest nursery that is being established to propagate seeds.



**Figure 44: The Vegetable Garden and Rain-Water Tank at Holy Cross Church (25 November 2016)**

The whole operation that the men are managing has a sustainable effect on the environment and for the people who benefit from it. I was not able to find out whether these men were compensated financially by the church, but Basil supports this group of men by offering any advice they need about gardening. He also plays a role in the maintenance of the flowerbeds and lawn to improve the aesthetics of the property. Through Basil's leadership, other men

are serving needy people in their community. His commitment to the environment of his neighbourhood and his relationship with the community that lives there, thus, emanates environmental stewardship.

Wolf et al. (2014) argue that environmental stewardship can be fostered in an urban environment that has meaning to people. Thus, Basil and the other men are able to practise environmental stewardship because of the meaning and value it has to help needy community members and the church through learned skills and as a system of provision. Basil chooses to support his neighbourhood through his knowledge of gardening and love of the natural environment. By uplifting his neighbourhood through his greening projects, he has created meaning to it that is significant in providing him a sense of belonging and home. For Basil, the Holy Cross church and his vegetable garden and flower beds across the road from his house are extensions of his home. Therefore, his relationships within the community which he serves shape the sustainability of the community.

Another example of such community support that is currently happening in Nyanga is at the community food garden next to John Pama primary school. I see this garden as a place where a meaningful natural environment in an urban landscape can encourage environmental stewardship by residents who are more inherently concerned for people and the environment (Wolf, et al., 2014). I meet Nobathana (female, early 40s), who calls herself a community garden coordinator, at the early stage of my fieldwork in March 2016. I realise that her role extends beyond that of maintaining and nurturing the vegetable garden. It encompasses a deep sense of commitment towards the elderly in Nyanga, which is what keeps her motivated to pursue her gardening skills. She describes to me a reason why she is involved in this community garden, which stays with me throughout my time in Nyanga:

An African man it is harder to carry a dish and queue for food. It's not in our nature. We don't like that. But they went there for the dishes so you can see that this was serious, the poverty.

Her seeing the severe nature of the socio-economic situation that exists in the township has motivated her to do something about it. Nobathana has been cooking for poor and sick people at a church since 2008, primarily to help them with taking their medication. She started the food garden with other people as a result of a shortage of vegetables with which to cook. Unfortunately, the cooking had to end when funding from an external source

stopped, and it became too expensive to pay for gas and electricity. The food garden continued, however, due to her commitment to help the old people who are unemployable. The vegetable garden is located next to John Pama Primary School, where an agreement with the principal of the primary school is in place. Nobathana can use a portion of the school's land under the conditions of clearing the space of weeds and giving the school some of the harvested vegetables for its own feeding scheme.

Nobathana explains that the organic garden employs, predominantly, older men. These pensioners are involved in planting seeds and harvesting vegetables, which are sold to anyone wishing to purchase the produce. Any money earned in a day is paid into a bank account and used to buy seeds and compost when needed. Any of the leftover vegetables that are harvested in the day are given to the men to take home, thereby providing them with a healthy source of food. She explains:

The only thing we can do is let them take a few vegetables so that they can cook at home. The pensioners, who are the workers, are unemployable in the work place, but we work with them to keep them fit and they also eat the vegetables from the garden to keep them healthy.

Nobathana expresses her desire to try to alleviate poverty in the area through the food garden. She explains:

There is too much starvation, that's why we wake up every day to come here; we are trying to fight poverty and we have found out what is causing violence is poverty.

She reveals her virtue of sharing with her community when she tells me, "There are some people who come here to ask for veg and we give them because the poverty and unemployment". Serving her community by sharing resources to people in need is an example of ubuntu, a value that emerges from a sense of communality.

Nobathana also describes how she feels about working in the garden, which is another motivation for her continuous commitment to helping her community:

When I work in this garden, I feel free, I feel like... I don't know [laughing excitedly] but I feel free, fresh.

Her description relates to her embodiment with the garden and the deep connection to a safe place. As our discussion progresses, Nobathana's tone changes when the topic of youth emerges. She exclaims, "Youngsters of today are not interested in working with their hands". I ask her why this is so, and she explains to me:

Because they want to sit on the computer. It's few who help; it could only be 20%. There is so much unemployment, yet they don't want to pick up, yet they want money and food. If we are exposed to the farms and we own them our children will grow up knowing that we don't go to Shoprite and Checkers. We go to the garden to get the cabbage and spinach. I think that can give them something to do. It should be in their minds that at home we farm, and we eat from the farm, and the youngster will learn what to do when they arrive at the farm. That will give them choice, because when I see youth of today, they don't know what they want. There is too much choice; they don't know what they want.

I sense despondency in Nobathana's opinion about the youth in Nyanga. I wonder if she realises that she is an example of a leader in her community with regards to supporting those in need, and indeed a role model to the youth. Furthermore, I wonder if she understands that the support and commitment she gives towards people are also benefitting the environment. She cleans the garden of litter daily, the vegetables she grows are purely organic, and she feeds the soil with fresh compost regularly. The practices of gardening and nourishing the soil are clearly shaped by her sense of community and emotional attachment to the garden that, ultimately, provide her with a sense of belonging and home in Nyanga.

Both Basil and Nobathana play significant leadership roles in helping and supporting their communities by involving themselves in community gardening projects. Svendsen (2009, p. 78) argues that a fundamental element of stewardship and pro-environmental engagement is that they "deepen social meaning and satisfy the human need to matter". Furthermore, Taylor and Lovell (2013) suggest that interacting with and nurturing plants, and also watching plant growth in community gardens can trigger personal growth and transformation, as well as encourage resistance to social and economic exclusion. Both individuals contribute to this idea of encouraging a resistance to social and economic

exclusion. They do so by providing a source of food and employment for community members in need through their distinctive roles within the community, and simultaneously improving the natural environment.

The food gardens provide the opportunity for personal growth and transformation among the people who work in them. The pensioners at Nobathana's garden are given the chance to transform their lives by keeping active and eating nutritious food. The lives of the men working in the garden at the church are transformed and empowered through increased knowledge in managing a sustainable garden project for the benefit of the community. Lastly, young learners from John Pama primary school benefit from Nobathana's food garden for their mental and physical development and growth. They can also tangibly see where their food comes from, which is an element of modern life that is lacking amongst the youth today.

Another school in Nyanga that incorporates vegetable gardening into its landscape is Linge Primary School. The vegetable plots are visible from the street, as they are placed at the front of the school behind its fence. Rasta (early 30s) is the man who maintains the garden and tells me that the vegetables are grown primarily for the children to eat, but he also gets a share of the harvest. He invites me into the school to show me the ornamental garden that he also maintains. Established between the two buildings, the garden is a feature of the school. It includes a few square metres of greenery and rock, and it offers a natural space in which children can sit with and feel nature (See Figures 45 and 46 below). Once again, the relations within the school community have contributed to the natural environment, which is being used positively for the benefit of the community. The school children are being exposed to the benefits of the natural environment and who can influence their parents and caregivers to understand such benefits. It's a case of knowledge about gardens being passed from the school to the children and then to the adults, which can, ultimately, influence the sustainability of the area. The impact of such knowledge is yet to be known, however.



**Figure 45: The Ornamental Garden at Linge Primary School (16 November 2016)**



**Figure 46: The Ornamental Garden at Linge Primary School (16 November 2016)**

In practice, a more balanced, inclusive, and holistic human-nature environment is required in order to measure sustainability standards, and a public sense of place, community, and well-being. In Nyanga, there are examples that I have shown across communities that imbue sustainability and sense of community in human-nature environments. Social engagements that have sustainability benefits give people a sense of thinking responsibly on behalf of the whole community, including the ecological community. Svensden (2009) suggests that such social engagements and projects are an approach that may encourage the type of local community cohesion that is crucial for defending cities against periods of economic hardship, increasing crime rates, environmental ruin, and even neighbourhood segregation and stereotyping. Such social contestations that are characteristic of communities in Nyanga can, therefore, play a role in creating a sustainable environment.

### **Unity in Diversity**

“People’s experiences of, and meanings attributed to the home may differ according to geographical context or setting” (Imrie, 2014, p 156.). This chapter shows the social relations in the context of Nyanga that cause either communality or contestations between people and their communities. It illustrates how such relations play a role in shaping the types of practices that have sustainable outcomes in the form of vegetable gardening, and the establishment of community parks and gardens.

In Nyanga, a communal lifestyle prevails for some people, despite the dichotomous nature of the township. Sharing of resources is evident in the neighbourly interaction between Mama and Robert, which I described in more detail in the previous chapter. The urban agriculture projects implemented by Abalimi Bazekhaya and Etafeni show that they are connecting people to nature, people to people, and also people to urban places. Thus, in agreement with Battersby and Marshak (2013), urban agriculture is viewed as having the potential to enhance people’s sense of place and belonging. The same can be said for the community park projects, which bring communities together with a common language that is uplifting their neighbourhoods.

However, such communality is not without the social contestations that come with everyday life. People fear crime, which influences their choice to use a community park or not, and influences the way in which a park is designed. People are entangled in the ambiguity of their relationships with their communities. Parks are developed to address the environmental

and social injustices of the past and the present. But crime dictates the way parks are designed, which in turn produces social exclusion. Thus, parks provide for social interaction and cohesion, but they are also fenced off to undesirable people. Furthermore, crime dictates people's perceptions towards and relationships with nature. Some people choose to create safe and homely spaces through gardening as a way of escaping criminal behaviour outside their homes. Others use community gardens as places to feel free from hardship and crime.

Gardens are also created as a result of unemployment and poverty in Nyanga. People choose to garden because of such social contestations in order to provide food and potential work opportunities to people in need. The socio-economic hardships of daily life for some people in Nyanga are, thus, assuaged in the practice of gardening.

This chapter shows that the complex nature of social relations, and how they are produced and modified by processes of change, such as in times of unemployment and crime, matter in the way people view the environment. The complexity of such urban issues means that the 'wickedness' and 'messiness' that characterise Nyanga, require different forms of expertise and knowledge that are contributed and influenced by different disciplines, temporalities, participants, and communities (Perry, et al., 2018). Ultimately, this chapter highlights how interpersonal relationships, such as kinship, social obligations, trust, and reciprocity in the ordinary lives of people connecting to others to reinforce that they belong to a community, can shape the distinctive types of practices that have sustainable outcomes happening in Nyanga.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

The Nguni African legend says the thorns (of the tree, *Ziziphus*, which are spaced in pairs along a branch, where one of the pair points outward and forward, and the other curves back and inward in the opposite direction) tell us something about ourselves – that we must look ahead to the future... but we must never forget where we have come from (McCallum, 2007, p. 3).

This thesis was framed by the everyday practices that have sustainable effects in the specific urban area of Nyanga. I intended to look at the following questions using the theory of practice: i) What kinds of sustainability in the literature are relevant to cities of the global South?, ii) What are the specific ways in which people are living sustainably in Nyanga?, iii) What are the enablers and barriers of sustainability in Nyanga?, and iv) What key messages from the study could inform policy-making?

In this concluding chapter I summarise my main findings on the specific practices being performed in Nyanga that have sustainable effects and what enablers and barriers of sustainability I found there. I then link my findings to the literature about such practices that are relevant to cities of the global South. I end the chapter by proposing key messages from the study that can inform policy-making and further research, and I describe particular values of the study.

### Summary of Main Findings

My research is positioned at the confluence of urban sustainability and the concept of home. It adds to existing discussions about sustainability in cities, but it also informs more critically the conceptual understanding of socio-ecological processes of everyday life in the global South within the context of urban sustainability. It does this through the concept of home, which enriches urban sustainability theory by providing a nuanced spatial element to it. My study also adds the perspective of the global South to a discourse that has focused primarily on sustainability in cities of the global North. It provides empirical detail about the ways in which Southern urban dwellers are living sustainable lifestyles. My study shows that

ethnographic research in an under-resourced township on the periphery of Cape Town can provide scholars with rich understanding of how urban sustainability is practised in a Southern urban setting. My research, therefore, contributes to new knowledge by connecting the different sets of practices in a township to questions about memory, place making, home, and how everyday practices raise questions about the different discourses of sustainability at different scales.

The analysis of my ethnographic data surfaced three major themes, all of which relate to the concept of home. Chapter Four introduces memory as a significant thematic response to people's connection to and imaginary of home. More specifically, it relays stories of people remembering gardening skills that they learnt from home and family members. Although the setting in which gardening is practised has changed over time, the practice itself has not changed and is performed through memory and imaginaries of home. The chapter reveals that gardening creates a sense of belonging, self-identity, and emotional comfort to those who moved to Nyanga from rural homes, for example. This finding shows the dynamics of gardening as a practice, where the social meaning, values, and symbolism of it adapts to spatial change. Moreover, urban transformation emerges as a motivation for people to practise gardening at home, particularly as it provides a sense of security to people who want to escape the criminal elements of the outside, and to those who grow vegetables for food security. Lastly, gardening portrays a sense of responsibility to some people, who wish to uplift their community by enacting the skill they once learnt and continue to perform as a remembered competency, but in a different setting.

An additional aspect of memory that imbues a connection to home through embodiment and integration with and respect of the natural is in the form of a remembrance ritual. There is an intrinsic appreciation of natural elements by those people who practice traditional ceremonies. By sacrificing certain animals and herbaceous plants, an individual reaches out to his deceased father, who is buried at his rural home, to praise him and ask for good fortune. The ritual is an occasion to remember family members who have passed on, but it also reflects an appreciation for the natural in and for the performance. Many people in Nyanga thus feel connected to home and imagine home through the practice of gardening and ritual.

The second theme views sustainable livelihood as critical to home-making in Nyanga. Livelihood is a conceptual tool that I assert be valuable to theory about home. In Chapter Five, informal trading portrays a significant everyday practice in the lives of people in the township. It is the means to creating a livelihood and making home. I identify in this chapter the relevance of networking to the hustle of informal trading at the meat market. The supply chain of the sustainable production and consumption of the meat trade reveals the important roles of the organic farmers, the men who slaughter the sheep, the generations of female traders, and the customers, who all form and contribute to the network that operates there.

Recycling is another practice that some people have adopted into their daily lives and shows innovation in earning a livelihood. From fixing old and broken appliances to recycling plastic and bricks, people are able to send money to distant homes, as well as to make home in Nyanga. Furthermore, when opportunity arises to create a livelihood, the hustle of township life emerges. By sourcing and cleaning used bricks and fixing old and used appliances, and selling them, people have found an opportunity to earn a livelihood that has a sustainable effect. An additional livelihood practice I identify as contributing to sustainability in Nyanga is assisting with the development of the community park. Assisting with this project proves to be an opportunity for community members to earn an income towards their livelihood. In short, this chapter discusses the livelihood practices that have sustainable effects and are performed for the purpose of making home.

In Chapter Six, I relay the complexity of social relations in Nyanga. By experiencing, first-hand, the contestations of divided communities within the township, and the communality between neighbours and community organisations, I show the significance of sense of place to the people who live there. Through people's stories I reveal the socio-economic injustices that exist in Nyanga and which contribute to the contestations that are deeply rooted there. Unemployment is considered by the people as the leading cause of crime, both of which affect all residents of the township who contest such issues daily. As a result of unemployment, people are committing to sustainable urban agriculture as a source of income and food, and crime is forcing some people to engage with nature in their home gardens as a place of refuge.

Such social contestations are also motivating people to show their social values, such as communality and ubuntu, by growing vegetables specifically for people who cannot afford to buy their own food. Although the variations in people's lived experiences in Nyanga, such as unemployment (where the rate of unemployment has increased over time) have not changed the skill or knowledge of gardening, for example, such variations have changed the meanings of the practices they perform. For example, the practice of sustainable urban agriculture underpins people's values in providing food to those people in need and is imbued with different social meanings to the meaning of self-sufficiency, for example. Rather, communality and senses of belonging and personal responsibility are drivers of such practice, which are, ultimately, aspects of home.

Furthermore, the development of a community park shows the importance of activating spaces to make a sense of place. It portrays how the transformation of people's values towards senses of community and place to address and overcome crime can both resist and support the practice of developing the community park. The contestations embedded in this practice are a result of the social meanings and values associated with the relations of the area. Moreover, this chapter reveals how the role and relations of community organisations shape people's commitment and motivation towards gardening. Ultimately, it shows that the social relations that form in Nyanga as a result of crime and unemployment affect people's imaginaries of home, which in turn determine the practices they perform.

A commonality of all three chapters shows that both Abalimi and Etafeni bring a positive and meaningful reason for these organisations to be working in Nyanga. Both organisations influence community members to think about gardening and eventually to get involved in a gardening project. They both provide social spaces for community members to meet, connect with each other, and remember home. Moreover, they provide people with the skill of gardening, which is a means of making a livelihood.

Two critical threads that emerged from the analysis of my findings and could be interesting for future research include the implication of intergenerational practice on sustainability in Nyanga and the role of women in some of the practices I have identified. The former arose in almost all conversations with older participants and thus warrants investigation. The latter is about the common gendered theme found in the identified practices and home. In

current research about urbanisation and migration in the global South<sup>57</sup>, the role of women is prolific in how they migrate and what meanings they ascribe to moving. Further research on such work would be interesting to incorporate practices that have sustainable effects that are performed by these women. In addition to this suggestion for further study on sustainability in the global South, further investigation on the types of practices that have sustainable effects in other townships is necessary to enrich the findings in this study. Furthermore, interrogation on the connection between the youth and sustainability in townships is critical for me to understand the dynamics of the social relations and sustainability in Nyanga.

In summary, my findings in this study show that the narratives of people's everyday lives matter in understanding the ways in which people engage with their environment and live sustainably. They show richness to urban sustainability research on an empirical level, and they solidify my argument that home is a critical theoretical and empirical element to both understanding and implementing urban sustainability.

I have shown that by looking more critically into the temporal and socio-spatial aspects of home in this Southern context through the practices that some of the people living there perform, *is* a way of understanding urban dwellers' relationships with the environment. Moreover, I add to Shove and Walker's (2010) argument that by focusing on practices, their trajectories, and their interconnections, the engines of sustainability transformation and paths towards sustainable reproduction compel attention from policy-makers, practitioners, and other parties. Linking my findings with the literature in this thesis will validate my arguments, and this I do next.

### **Re-imagining Nature's Place in Society: Linking Findings with Literature**

The everyday interactions between people and their environments in cities of the global South are complex and specific in terms of geographical context, cultural diversity, and socio-economic challenges. Such complexity and specificity determine the ways ordinary Southern urban dwellers live sustainably. In order to understand more about the social dimension of urban sustainability in the South, much of the literature that addresses the

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<sup>57</sup> Kihato, C., 2013. *Migrant Women of Johannesburg: everyday life in an in-between city*. Springer. – domestic space a key protagonist / theme in women's conversations, images, and everyday stories.

socio-ecological entanglement relevant to Southern urban settings include concepts of environmental justice, environmental citizenship, environmentalism of the poor, pro-environmental behaviour, and household sustainability. However, these concepts do not fit entirely with what is playing out in the township of Nyanga in the city of Cape Town. I will show my reckoning for such a conclusion by linking what I reviewed in the literature (Chapter 2) with what I found in my research.

Environmental justice encompasses the expectation to distribute resources of and impacts to the environment fairly, regardless of their viability to a specific context. For example, the argument relating to the concept suggests that landfills should not only be placed in poor and marginalised areas of cities, but fairly distributed to affluent areas too. Similarly, the concept argues that community parks and trees should be provided in both areas equally. However, consideration of what might be the most appropriate action in a specific area should be taken in order to address the needs of the people who would be affected by such resources and impacts.

In the South African context, there are more than just the unequal distributions of environmental resources and impacts, and the consequent responsibilities, to consider. There are equally as important dimensions of sustainability that require consideration, including the social and cultural. Such dimensions encompass, amongst other things, “inclusion or exclusion in participation and procedure, and the provision and protection of the basic capabilities or needs of everyday life” (Schlosberg, 2007, cited in Agyeman, et al., 2016, p. 327). Consideration of historical exclusion and cultural needs are important to the ordinary citizen. Specific to Nyanga, rather than only the fair distribution of resources and impacts, people’s everyday practices that have sustainable effects are in some large measure about attachment to place, a sense of dignity, and stewardship that evoke memories, sustainable livelihood practices, and social relations of home.

Environmental Citizenship regards social connections within communities that foster active citizens and grassroots organisations as having more potential to adopt alternative technologies and create pressure for sustainability transitions in the everyday lives of urban dwellers. Education and outreach programmes that flow from such collective initiatives can develop individuals’ sense of environmental citizenship further, leading them to take on more sustainable practices by forming relationships in their neighbourhood based on

common environmental values and practices within an informal social structure (Kennedy, 2011). In the South African context, failure of collective sustainability initiatives occurs when cohesive relationships within communities are not created and/or maintained due to fragmentation of communities and crime that affects communities, for example. Therefore, when a common vision for sustainability lacks between communities and organisations and between different organisations, a positive impact on society and the environment fails.

When there is a silo effect between organisations, sometimes the common aim of sustainability within the initiatives they offer to people have less of an impact on the greater community than if they shared or had an equal vision. The example from my study is the comparison between Abalimi and Etafeni, where both organisations operate independently. One of the common aims of both NGOs is food security, but it is implemented in different ways and produces different results. An additional mismatch between environmental citizenship and the context of my study is that often sustainability initiatives fail to link sustainability to survival for the most vulnerable in South African society (O'Riordan, 1998). As in the case of my study, some people live sustainably as a means for emotional comfort, food security, and familial connections rather than forming movements for collective environmental action.

Conrad and Hilchey (2010) argue that more information in academic literature is needed about the linkages between communities involved in sustainability projects and the improvement to the environment, including the characteristics of such linkages. I concur that the linkages between community organisations that initiate sustainability projects in urban communities and the impact they have on the environment and on the communities themselves, warrant further exploration. My study shows that even at a localised community level there are differences between the needs and desires of communities that community organisations should account for. In my study I convey that a community organisation, Etafeni, could not implement the Sithathu Park project without close relations and consultation with the immediate community. A learning lesson for an organisation such as Etafeni is to not assume how a community project will transpire or whether it will be successful in the short and long-term. There are critical elements of the community that should be accounted for before the organisation plans a community project, such as crime, social relations, and sense of belonging, for example.

In contrast to the above example, the impact that Abalimi has on the communities in Nyanga is more sustainable because it is an organisation that is largely influenced by local farmers. It offers people the opportunity to either learn how to garden for themselves, or to purchase organic produce, both at a nominal cost. Local women with an expanse of knowledge of both the practice of gardening and the area, are running the centre. Furthermore, they are respected and trusted by the local people. Thus, the needs of the local people are known and not assumed. The longevity of the organisation and the garden centre in Nyanga demonstrates its sustainability. In addition, the trust and respect that the local women receive from the local community enable the organisation to prosper. In contrast, the Greening Nyanga programme at Etafeni has been in existence for a much shorter time than Abalimi's project at the Garden Centre. Since the greening projects of the community are imagined at an organisational level, it is important that the community's trust and buy-in be achieved to enable their sustainability.

In short, the literature on environmental citizenship expresses the concept as a collective movement to transform society into more sustainable ways of living, regardless of government interventions and policies. In the context of my study area, collective action towards improving neighbourhoods is happening by NGOs and community members, but for reasons relating to socio-economic challenges, including food insecurity, unemployment, and crime. The ways in which collective action is often implemented in Nyanga are through networking and informality, both of which are characteristic with the next concept in my review.

Environmentalism of the poor relates to people living in rural areas who depend on natural resources of land for their livelihood and who are often marginalised and excluded from development proposals of such land. The relation of this concept to the practices being performed in Nyanga is reliance on the resources available to the people living there for their livelihood. Livelihood is a key theme that emerged from my findings. It is largely an enabler of sustainability through practices of gardening, recycling, informal trading, and the development of a community park. I do describe in Chapter 5 how the meat market can also be a barrier to sustainability due to the externalities of air pollution and contaminated stormwater it causes.

Reliance on available resources that in turn enable (un)sustainability, is linked to place attachment, as is the case in the concept of environmentalism of the poor. However, this reliance in Nyanga is primarily linked to home-making practices that are culturally and economically influenced in ways that individuals and households create relational networks within a city context of scarce resources. The sustainable resource use of home-making practices operates in the informal economy that is characteristic of African urbanism and is based on social relations. The informal economy is a critical source of livelihood in Nyanga and, therefore, obligates the sustainable use of resources that are available to the people trading there. The social and economic opportunities that come from sustainable resource use ultimately determine the types of practices that people perform and the ways they are performed. The livelihood practices that emerged from my findings reveal sustainable ways of living that are not necessarily influenced by environmentalism of the poor. They are instead motivated by the imaginaries of home and home-making, rendering them fundamentally different to those forms of sustainability found in the literature. Next, I relay the concept of pro-environmental behaviour and its misfit in the context of Nyanga.

The definition of pro-environmental behaviour is about an individual's conscious and mindful decision or choice to do good and the right thing towards the natural environment. It is based on individuals' intrinsic values and moral obligations, but can also be influenced by monetary incentives, government policies, and self-satisfaction. As discussed in the literature review, people's relations with and the ways in which they behave towards the environment ultimately depend on the main elements of practice (knowledge, meaning, and material).

In Nyanga, material infrastructure and economic factors impact or hinder people's ability to live sustainably. The practices, such as gardening, that some people perform from knowledge and skill, interconnects with what the practice means and how it is valued, and the material infrastructure available to make the practice possible. People are not consciously practising sustainability because of moral obligations or political coercion. Rather, they are practising a learned activity from childhood, for example, out of memory, sense of belonging, and imagining home. Some people practise gardening and recycling as a source of livelihood, as discussed previously. Others have the desire to improve their neighbourhood and connect with their neighbours by developing a community park.

Svendsen and Campbell (2008, p. 19) suggest that further exploration of the links between the social act of stewardship in caring for the environment and issues of crime and social cohesion is needed. In this thesis the issue of crime features significantly because of the geographic location of the study area and the socio-economic challenges of the people who live there. My findings show that there is a clear connection to the way people in Nyanga live sustainably as a result of crime rather than behaving with pro-environmental intentions. In addition, the social contestations of the communities in Nyanga are revealed because of crime, which in turn influences the planning and implementation of a community park. The planning and development of Sithathu Park is a good example of the connection between crime and urban stewardship, discussed in Chapter Six of this thesis.

In essence, most practices in Nyanga that have sustainable effects are unintentional, a concept known as inadvertent environmentalism, which contrasts with the foundations of pro-environmental behaviour. It is a concept that Hitchings and colleagues discuss in their work on household sustainability.

Everyday domestic sustainability practices are far more sustainable than relying on people's morality and engagement with policy incentives. The evidence in the literature about the practices that ordinary people are performing, such as re-using furniture and clothing, shows that household sustainability is happening regardless of policy incentives. The ways in which people practise household sustainability depends on social contexts and circumstances.

Household consumption is an element of diverse practices of household sustainability and is dependent on times, places, and social contexts, including household organisation, types of economic exchange, and cultural traditions (Lane & Gorman-Murray, 2011). In Nyanga, domestic sustainability practices, such as vegetable gardening, largely occur because of unemployment and densely occupied households. There are households in Nyanga that feed many people living within the household and community members who do not have the means to pay for food. Therefore, the intention of gardening is for food security in order to provide food for people in need. The environmental benefits of gardening that are consequential, are not intentional. This example relates to the concept inadvertent environmentalism. Cultural practices associated with sustainable livelihoods and gardening,

as well as ritual that happen at the household level in Nyanga are additional examples of inadvertent environmentalism when the sustainability effects are not planned.

Memories of cultural practices and daily life play an important role in people's present less resource intensive lifestyles that they have chosen to adopt in their households, rather than through top-down regulation or moral motivation, for example. Although the physical structure of the household and the material possessions shape domestic practice, the social relations within it which connect to wider social networks and cultural meanings are interesting and fundamental to making a household a home. In Nyanga, home extends from within the household to places of work, such as the informal meat market, and to community parks, such as Sithathu Park, where wide social networks engage. Home in Nyanga ranges in scale from a mental state of emotions, meanings, and memories, such as memories of gardening as a child, to a house and the relationships that it inhabits, to a continent and all the lived experiences and imaginaries of places in distant lands, such as villages in the Eastern Cape.

However, meanings and lived experiences of home in Nyanga are diverse and are represented by paradoxes of home as spaces of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, and desire and fear. The practices that have sustainable outcomes that feature in this thesis reflect two spectrums of social relations happening in the township. Firstly, people talk about the sense of belonging they feel in an urban area with which they were not familiar when they moved to it. Gardening is an activity that radiates such sense of belonging for some people. A sense of community is created at the garden centre, and between neighbours who exchange vegetables for electricity, for example.

Secondly, however, people's stories about gardening and community parks reflect senses of fear, anxiety, and insecurity because of crime and unemployment. For example, the debates about using a fence around a piece of public open space were critical in the design of Sithathu Park, because of the seriousness of crime in the area. Therefore, the design and the sustainability of the park relied on the self-organising social system of stewardship, which was the local community and Street Committee, because it mattered to the people who live there.

Svendsen (2009) argues that urban environmental stewardship amongst community members may play a role in re-establishing critical social networks that were historically

disrupted because of shifts in the demographics of neighbourhoods and significant changes to the built environment. Such insight into her work resonates to that in Nyanga, where many community members moved to the township because of historical disruptions in the country. However, my findings reveal that many of the practices being performed there are shaped by the communality between people and neighbourhoods that is present in the township. I argue, based on my findings, that the future of urban sustainability in the global South is important to think about. I do this next by evaluating my contribution to urban sustainability research and the lessons I learnt from this study.

### **Sustainability begins at Home: Value of the Study**

Cities are sites of social transformation instead of catalysts of environmental degradation (Parnell, 2016).

Situating my research in Nyanga shows how broadly the ways in which sustainability can be enacted in the global South. My findings reflect a complex relationship between people and their environment, and one that is rich with cultural diversity, value, and meaning, as well as practicality, resourcefulness, and innovation. Working alongside people at a community level allows role-players in urban sustainability, such as researchers, town planners, and policy makers, to scale deeper in disentangling the socio-ecological processes that underpin everyday lifestyles. Furthermore, such collaboration at the community level offers experiential immersion and dialogue with relevant people, and ultimately builds trust between role-players. What people are doing on the ground that produces sustainable lifestyles in cities should empower ordinary people to influence the government and the private sector towards attaining more environmentally sound and socio-economically equitable methods of production and consumption.

The various forms of inequality in Cape Town depict the varied practices that have sustainable outcomes happening in one specific area of the city. Many of the practices are performed as a means to earn a livelihood, such as recycling plastic and selling organic vegetables. In doing so, some people are connecting to the natural by deeply engaging where their food is produced and by actively cleaning the environment through removing waste from the waste stream to landfills and reusing it. They are performing sustainable practices in the most direct ways, in ways that encompass their everyday lifestyles. In addition, people in Nyanga, in some large measure, engage with each other in acts of stewardship and through

ritual. By knowing who their neighbours are, people respect and form relationships with each other and their environment and strive towards creating a place in which they want to live. Despite the spatial inequality and social, economic, and environmental challenges that characterise Nyanga, sustainability exists there. It is a type of everyday inadvertent sustainability that warrants attention and recognition in paving Cape Town's way to becoming a sustainable city.

In this thesis I have argued that the concept of home is shaping sustainability in Nyanga. Home is a useful conceptual tool to use in urban design and spatial planning proposals for particular areas in Southern cities. As mentioned above, by understanding how communities function through physical engagement with people, city planning decisions can be more effectively implemented. Designing plans to upgrade a community according to various aspects of home, such as those relating to memory and sense of belonging, livelihood opportunities, and social relations, developers, municipal officials, and community organisations will garner more support from community members and make more sustainable impacts on the neighbourhood than not doing so. Through inclusive design and implementation processes in urban planning and upgrading, knowledge and competency, material infrastructure, and social meanings embedded in sustainable practices and how they are shaped by home can be discovered, acknowledged, and integrated into upgrade proposals in township areas.

The concept of home and home-making practices being incorporated in city planning processes are financially and socially cost effective when compared to potentially high costs of inappropriately designed developments that eventually fail the intended beneficiaries. In other words, to change or upgrade the everyday practices of the ordinary urban dweller that have sustainable effects does not necessarily incur financial and social costs when such practices are shaped by the concept of home. People can remain connected either through existing social relations or memory, and social anxieties can be dealt with by means of community or individual sustainability projects. Moreover, the concept of home does not have to be physical. It can be imagined, thus requiring minimal expense in changing people's everyday practices.

Furthermore, making sustainability goals manageable by accounting for people's imaginaries of home and everyday home-making practices, increases the likelihood that new

forms of practices that have sustainable effects may be appealing. The appeal to some people of new practices increases the chance of long-term success towards sustainable transformation. According to Pieterse (2010), there are three dimensions to an urban agenda for achieving sustainable transformation, namely: infrastructure (e.g. transport, services, and public spaces), people (social movements, engagement through education, sport, and cultural organisations), and power (integration and participation governance – area-based planning for better interaction between communities, municipality, and other actors – suits small scale, community coherent, local area that functions economically, socially, and culturally. Brings together households to understand in practical terms their neighbourhood in terms of challenges, opportunities, resources, etc. to improve quality of life).

I see this agenda through the lens of home. Recognising the fundamental elements of what makes home and what home means to people in the everyday practices that they perform, inclusive engagement towards building a sustainable city with the demands of memory and identity, livelihood, and social relations, can be achieved.

Contributions to this field of study should be produced through work that is thus explicitly situated within the intimate contexts of home. The methodological contribution of this thesis is an integral part of this debate, suggesting that the most fruitful explorations of sustainable ways of living are those which are attentive to the everyday lives of ordinary people. A community centred inquiry into sustainability proved useful, as it showed that community knowledge should be lifted to society as a whole to influence change. It provided nuance to people's relationships with each other and with the natural environment.

By engaging my study at a community level, I was able to identify the connection between home and sustainability in a Southern city. My being immersed in a specific place and amongst everyday living practices, allowed me to sense the connections to home, imaginaries of home, and practices of home-making emerge as critical influencing factors that shape urban sustainability in a Southern urban setting. Since home is a material and a symbolic space that is shaped by everyday practices, lived experiences, social relations, memories, and emotions, it is fundamental in providing knowledge about socio-ecological processes that is lacking in urban sustainability debates.

People are the critical focus of cities in sustainable transformation. Drawing on Parnell's (2016) assertion and my research findings, research requires community level engagement where spaces and places of daily life are visible. The depth of knowledge and understanding of social initiatives, contestations, and interactions at a localised scale can reveal a common thread of some people's place meanings that are commonly associated with home. People's imaginaries of home and home-making can solidify individual and collective visions and imaginaries of sustainable transformation.

A valuable lesson that I learnt from my study in Nyanga is about how sustainability practices are implemented by community organisations. Community organisations that undertake community projects can share the visions and imaginaries of a community's development goals. However, the involvement of local people in the design and implementation of projects is critical for the project to succeed. Community projects should incorporate learning opportunities for community members with objectives to attain permanent, or at least long-lasting, results in the transformation of community situations. The more effortful the learning the more likely self-reliance and eventually self-sufficiency will be achieved. My findings at Abalimi Bazekahya show examples of such learning and people's motivation to become self-reliant.

Development goals of greening projects to eradicate poverty should not be considered as efforts to bring some relief to poor people or to improve their situation in some way. Such efforts tend to cause a dependence on the benefactors, such as the situation happening at Etafeni, because the need for relief does not end. Rather, development projects should aim to free people from the deprivation trap by equipping them with skills to be self-reliant and self-sufficient. Essentially, the people whose lives are affected by a project determine what their needs are, and how best to use what resources are available. Thus, all aspects of people's everyday lives matter in sustainability interventions. I reiterate here the significance of home in realising people's sustainability needs and practices.

Furthermore, I recognise that in the field of sustainability no single approach will or should be seen as the correct one. Therefore, the way forward for sustainability implementation and success, specifically in townships, involves the development of new forms and tools of partnership for creating dialogue between local government and ordinary citizens in line with the concept of home.

## ***Reflections***

Finally, the personal learning lessons and value of this study are three-fold. They relate to each of the three major themes of my study. Firstly, a contestation of contemporary lifestyles is the idea of sustaining culture and tradition in families. My experience in Nyanga proved the relevance and benefit of cultural practices and tradition in urban sustainability. The ways people prepare and cook food, their remembered gardening skills, and the ceremonies that connect people to deceased family members, are the cultural and traditional aspects I identified that all play a role in the types of practices that have sustainable effects being performed there. A reimagining of modern lifestyles is required where culture and tradition are incorporated into urban life and sustainability outcomes prevail. I appreciate more the value of cultural and traditional influences on people's well-being and lifestyles. Just as the Nguni African legend says at the beginning of this chapter, "...we must never forget where we have come from".

Secondly, the livelihood practices identified in this thesis show that sustainability can exist in under-resourced and less privileged environments. The people who are undertaking sustainable livelihood practices in Nyanga may not be living the best quality of life, but they are working towards it with dignity and purpose, and simultaneously minimising their environmental footprint. I was inspired by the innovative efforts to earn modest livelihoods in the township, and I wish to engage further into sustainable livelihood practices that are happening in other townships.

Lastly, I reflect on the personal social relations and communality I experienced in this study. I was welcomed by an array of people and was considered part of the community, mostly when I visited people's homes and spent time in Sithathu Park. I formed relationships with people at Etafeni and Abalimi and was treated with respect at both organisations. My friendships with some community members flourished as a result of the time I spent with them, which I hope will be long-lasting. Thus, my sense of belonging in an area from which I was once disconnected is represented as my second home.

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Appendix A: Extract from Robert's interview

segregation

Geography Not me, but I am just trying to say that we are not standing together. It is very divided. There are some parents that cannot talk the truth to their kids. You know I used to work in Rondebosch [and] I never seen a European kid when he is eating an orange just throw the skin anywhere because there are always bins there. I never seen a white kid try to take that bin off, but in our township nothing can stay. crime

Why is it like that, do you think?

I can't explain everything to you because this generation now they don't sleep. Youth They are smoking drugs from the age of 14. And from the age of 15-16 they are going to the tavern and drinking the whole night. They are passing here all the time. You know what time I am waking up early in the morning to just put water in my garden? 4 o'clock. Some of them I see them. They are passing bad remarks to me, but I take less, I know they are still kids.

What would you like to see in Nyanga in terms of green, gardens, open space, parks? What would you like to see? Trees?

Geography Ja, now in Nyanga there's no more trees now. There were trees here, even here on the road. There's no trees now.

Why do you think so? What happened to the trees? development

Geography they cut the trees because they extend the road. They built Khayelitsha and I think there are more people going to Khayelitsha and Mitchell's Plain, and even there on that road coming from airport to Mitchell's Plain. There were some trees there. When it's hot it's hot. When they built Mitchell's Plain this place it was not so windy. Since now they built Mitchell's Plain the wind goes through. There's nothing holding the winds. In the white area you see there are lots of trees. Even if it's windy you don't feel so much like we feel wind here. Even if you open the windows sometimes you open the door it's getting very dusty. You understand. That's the point. I can say that our township was built in the Apartheid structure. If it is raining it's floods. The drains are so small. But I don't think something can happen in Nyanga. There's lots of things here building for us but we are destroying those things ourselves. There was an art centre there. We destroyed that art centre. I cannot say it's not me because we are all the same here. There is no one that's different to other. But now you can't even walk here late. I used to walk day and night and nothing would touch me, but today, yhu, it's very dangerous. Even now when the taxi it jumped over my grass and crash my fence and go through to that shack there. We phoned the police and they didn't come. } negative

Nyanga  
Crime

If the municipality or the people plant trees, do you think the people will appreciate them?

I don't think so. There were some danger tapes to the bumper and the poles, but the kids of Nyanga they took off the poles. You know when you go to the bumper there's a sign shows you beware there is a bumper there, but they took off the poles! They sell it to scrap yard and they go to buy drugs, Tik. Youth Crime

So if we plant trees, do you think the children will take the trees?

It depends to that area and if people will look after the trees. If it depend to me if I am going to look after that tree. Because that tree in future is going to help me. You know the white house next to

3

## Appendix B: Extract from the Siyo Square workshop

Workshop 1 – Siyo Square Community 10 November 2016

Poster Presentations of Park Designs

Group 1

- one big gate for City maintenance vehicles; one small gate for children to walk into the park.
- children to use park, there is a crèche on one side of the open space
- used tyres to be placed around flower beds; bench; grass and artificial grass.
- natural grass has the benches and shelter so the adults can watch their children play.
- current parks don't have swings [play equipment] because the children break the swings after two months, so training equipment more desirable.
- artificial grass for drum majorettes and in cricket season for cricket to be played.

Questions

Concern over damaging grass by the municipal trucks when they enter the park; so a decision to change the area for the trucks to paving was agreed upon.

Group 2 – "Let's go Green"

- desire to fix up surrounding gravel area for parking with tar; and pointed bollards spoken about too.
- Part 1 divided into two sections; one is for jungle gym and swings for the children on grass; the other has soft rubber mat instead of artificial grass because the thinking was that there would be too much grass. A locked gate [and fence] so that the crèche will not be disturbed, including the drum majorettes when they are practicing.
- Part 2 we have lots of trees, which go with benches and tables. The idea of benches came from seeing another park with benches that they like. In the middle will be a path to divide the park and for the municipal workers to use to work in the park. This space is open [without a fence] to allow for people to get from one side of the area to the other [without walking around the park].
- Part 3 is for a sports field for any activities that the children wish to have there. Not only for children but also for adults to use for any events or activities in the holidays. It's for everyone. There will also be space for older people and a bin section for litter. Artificial grass is desirable because real grass would get run down, and artificial grass doesn't require a lot of water and it lasts. The gates [and fence] are needed to provide security and cleanliness to prevent people from littering and from any person from doing what they want, so it will create order in the park. The keys will remain with the Street Committee members.

Any activities on the sports field would have to be reported to the committee so that they know what is happening there.

*safety concerns for community using the park*

Questions

Concern for trucks to be parked outside the park at a distance because while the workers are working inside the park because of safety because the workers might be mugged or the truck could get stolen. As community members we know to protect such vehicles including ambulances, so the vehicles should be able to park closer into the park. We always need to think about safety first.

The response from the group was that the vehicles would park on the side of the road close to houses and to the gate of the park, so they think it is fair and safer because the vehicles will be close to everything. They are not sure about a truck going inside the park.

The objection is that sometimes two trucks come to work in the space and the concern is that if "tsotsis" come to break into the trucks there won't be a clear vision of what is happening the trucks, so they need to be as close to the workers as possible.

The response from the group is that they want that space for the parents to be able to sit on the benches. The woman who runs the crèche suggests that the committee member with a key who unlocks the gate will be able to look after the vehicles while the workers are doing their work. Also the municipal truck comes once a year so we can't design the park for something that comes only once a year.

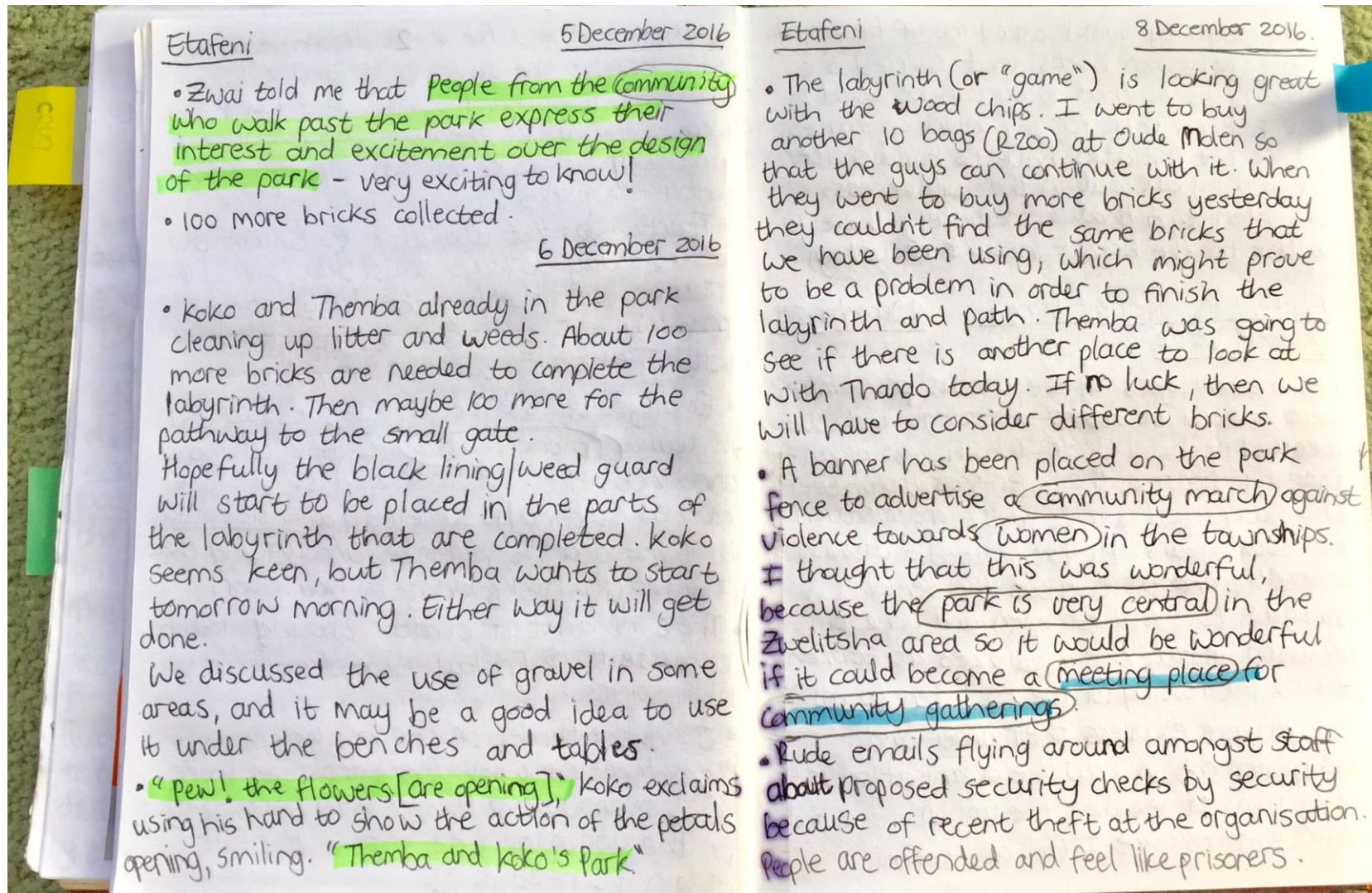
The objection is that the truck will come as many times as is needed. If the light breaks the truck will come and not just once a year.

A suggestion from the audience (Themba) is that the gate be placed nearer to the electricity pole so that the workers don't have to walk so far to get to it. [clapping for agreement to the suggestion].

Group 3

- The desire is for a different park where there would be a braai place, but we are aware that braais produce smoke so that's why we would plant trees along the area so that it give us oxygen.
- a path so that the truck can go inside the park to go to the electricity pole.
- 3 recycling bins for plastic, cans and paper, but we are missing one for bottles because glass is dangerous in the park.
- a tap with a bucket under it, as I have learnt, we are going through a crisis as a country with drought so it is better to use a tap and a bucket to irrigate the grass.
- benches for the community to relax from their stress.
- a swing for the children from the crèche to play with; a gym area for stretching; artificial grass so that if someone falls they fall on a softer surface.
- the existing light will be useful for the whole park for security of people want to use the park at night or if there is any function at night.

### Appendix C: Extract of my field diary



## Appendix D: Example of coding themes

