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Introduction

- The city landscape of post-apartheid Johannesburg is a conglomeration of disowned, reowned and contested public spaces. Yet there are places in the city where citizens voluntarily act in ways that are consistent with the ideals of the good city and how it should function. This research aims to show that while public space does not necessarily lead to improved citizen relations, it can provide a backdrop in which people can engage socially and where the encounter with the 'other' is not something to be feared.
- The formation of community and assimilation into community through social ties established in the park is investigated. An attempt is made to show how these social relationships are maintained through the mutual trusts that are a result of the daily interaction between the park users. The concept of what constitutes a community and in what way the term 'community' is relevant to the park is analysed. The tenuous distinction between inclusion and exclusion is considered as it is not always just the overtly marginalised that are excluded from public space. Lastly, the issue of the 'right to the city' and social justice will be examined and how this plays out in the public arena of a neighbourhood park. This research aims to contribute to the knowledge of social dynamics, practices and interactions between various population groups within the context of post-apartheid Johannesburg. It will show how social relations are established and maintained between strangers, despite gender, ethnic or age differences, and how this contributes to a sense of identity, community and citizenship.

1. Locating the park

- Parkhurst was originally laid out as a neighbourhood in 1903 but was relatively undeveloped until the 1940s. It is bounded on the west by the Braamfontein Spruit and to the east, north and south by the suburbs of Parktown North, Greenside and Craighall respectively, with two main arterials forming the eastern and southern boundaries. Due to its geographical location and suburban layout it forms an enclave in the older inner city Johannesburg suburbs. Until the 1990s the suburb was mainly a lower middle class area, but its desirable central location close to the Johannesburg, Rosebank and Sandton CBDs resulted in gentrification, which significantly altered the economic and demographic profile of the residents. The urban policy development favouring residential densification of the 1990s resulted in a middle class social trend for smaller properties with lower maintenance costs and higher security benefits (Rule, 2002). Substantial capital investment was made by private individuals in the upgrading of the properties. Today it is one of the most sought after suburbs for professionals to live in. The historically middle class nuclear family that used to inhabit Parkhurst has been replaced by professional couples and singles (Rule, 2002).
- 4 The land for Verity Park was acquired by the Johannesburg City Council in 1937. The Parkhurst Ratepayers association requested in 1941 that the park be named after H.H. Verity, the Deputy Mayor, who had an interest in providing parks and open spaces in the city.
- Verity Park forms part of the greater recreation centre and is a two block area. The recreation centre consists of tennis courts, a pétanque piste, community clinic, swimming pool, library and recreation hall. The focus of this research is the field adjacent to the recreation centre. It is not an expansive field but despite its obvious lack of size it is well frequented by residents of the neighbourhood. The perimeter of the park is fenced by a wire fence with two pedestrian accesses and one vehicle access gate. Access to the park is unrestricted and there are no visible security measures controlling movement within and through the space. The park is used mainly by residents of the suburb.
- Despite the fact that the park itself is nothing more than half a city block in size, it is a popular meeting place for local residents. The park is used mainly by local residents to walk their dogs. In 2007 a user's group was formed for the maintenance of the park. Voluntary contributions paid for the erection of signs (Fig. 1) and the wages of a cleaner see to the cleanliness of the park. The fund also paid for the erection of soccer posts, cricket wickets, additional benches and on-going maintenance. Contributions are made annually on a voluntary basis. Not all users contribute but none are discriminated against or barred from using the park.

Figure 1: Sign put up by the park users. This sign was sponsored by local businesses and endorsed by Johannesburg City Park (2012).



2. Research Problem

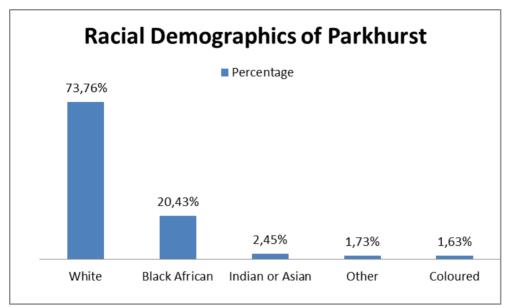
The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of how Verity Park frames various discourses of inclusion and community. Most research on urban Johannesburg has been done in the context of the inner city and how communities act and interact with public space (see Bremner, 2000; Simone, 2004; Bunn, 2008; Murray, 2008). Research on suburban Johannesburg has been largely confined to the establishment of gated communities and the emergence of shopping malls and districts as places of urban spectacle and consumption (Landman, 2002; Fabiyi, 2006; Dirsuweit, 2007; Dirsuweit and Schattauer, 2004; Hammett and Jayawardane, 2009). Very little has been done with regards to the use of public space, in the true sense of the phrase, in suburban Johannesburg.

3. Literature Review

The public park is one of the few places which is accessible to anyone, regardless of any predetermined social categorisation, where people can interact with strangers (Thompson, 2002). Iris Marion Young proposed that the ideal of city life was openness to unassimilated otherness and that as such interaction between strangers, despite any inherent group differences, was desirable in social relations (Young, 1990). Due to Apartheid, South African society was stratified through town planning mechanisms, displacements and segregationist policies. This has led to a level of mistrust and

apprehension between different ethnic groups. At the end of apartheid barriers for movement and residence were removed. This resulted in the opening up of the cities to different segments of society. The population demographics of Parkhurst still reflect this societal stratification.

Graph 1: The population demographics of Parkhurst clearly show the societal stratification that is a result of historical exclusionist policies.



SOURCE: STATISTICS SOUTH AFRICA, 2011 CENSUS

- Low (2000) proposes that the publicness or democracy of space can be assessed on five levels: access, freedom of action, entitlement, change and ownership. Public culture is socially constructed at the micro-level and is produced by the everyday social encounters in public spaces. It is through our right to and use of public spaces that we form a sense of identity and community and define the image of the city (Zukin, 1995).
- Identity and space are embedded in and constitute social relations, which have implications for identity formation, differentiation and how it is maintained. People identify primarily with their surroundings and it is a source of meaning and experience (Castells, 2010). Individual identity is organised around a primary identity that gives meaning to it and can be self-sustaining across time and space (Castells, 2010). This space creates a dislocation in the process of identification that is constitutive of group and individual identity and is not the result of some prior essential identity which is bound by space (Tajbakshs, 2001). Poststructuralists argue that the socially constructed categories of race, gender, nationality and sexuality that produce identities are a result of hegemonic power. It is through these categories of difference or otherness that a social system of differentiation, which is subject to the interests of hegemonic power, is produced (Natter and Jones, 1997). In South Africa, cultural identities are frequently shaped by the divisive discourses of race and ethnicity, often within the framework of language distinctions.
- The politics of public space is furthered by the theories of the social production and construction of space (Low, 2000). Fundamental to our understanding of how space is conceived, perceived and utilised is Henri Lefebvre's views on the production of space.

According to Lefebvre, space is an integral part of our lived experience of the world (Watkins, 2005) and represents the political use of knowledge (Lefebvre, 1984). Every society produces its own space and spatial practice with its own rhythms and centres of engagement. Social spaces contain the social relations of reproduction, the relations of production and labour power and the reproduction of the social relations of production. These representations ensure that social relations and social cohesion are maintained through the interaction of the social relations of production and reproduction. This is the conceptual basis for the spatial triad to define space (Lefebvre, 1984).

12 Lefebvre's spatial triad encompasses logico-epistemological space, spaces of social practice and spaces of sensory phenomena (Watkins, 2005). Thus place becomes representative of the type of space that defines people's lived experiences, which is a fundamental locus of identity and expression of belonging (Hubbard, Kitchin and Valentine, 2004). Space and place are also the arenas of multiple intersecting social, political and economic relations, conflicts and tensions. The boundaries of place are permeable. Therefore place can be seen to be experienced and understood differently by people in that places and spaces that are contested, fluid and uncertain entities which are shaped by institutional forces and social relationships (Hubbard, Kitchin and Valentine, 2004; Massey, 1994).

There is a sociality that results from gathering in public spaces. Amin (2006) refers to this as the sociality of urban life which he sees as a form of urban solidarity. This is envisaged as a sociality that arises as a result of particular meetings in public spaces which form a part of public culture. It is within these spaces of interaction that the combination of pleasure and everyday diversity and heterogeneity are negotiated, and civic behaviour and ownership are measured. Urban sources of civic sociality are the visible expression of citizenship and are the sites of civic promise (Amin, 2006). This raises the issue of ethics and how it is incorporated into the everyday life of the park. Ethics is based upon human reason and agency which Levinas describes as arising from our fundamental responsibility to the other (Popke, 2003). Poststructuralist critical theory posits that fundamental to ethics are the concepts of identity and difference (Barnett, 2005). Essential to everyday life and the maintenance of a participatory democracy is the culturally and politically charged public places (Low, 2000).

The concept of parks for the public consumption of open space was formulated during the 19th Century in England where parks were seen to be a vehicle within which social relations, social equality and democracy could be established and maintained. Public spaces allow for the mingling with and negotiation of strangers (Zukin, 1995; Thompson, 2002). In the post-modern world the park has been replaced by the emergence of private public spaces such as shopping malls, mixed use business developments masquerading as community villages and pseudo public spaces where access and behaviour are highly regulated by the owners and stakeholders of these places. In many respects these places have replaced the public park and village high street as places where social relations are forged and maintained (Gottdiener, 2000; Dirsuweit and Schattauer, 2004; Low, 2006; Mbembe, 2008; Hammett and Jayawardane, 2009). The neo-liberalist erosion of public space in contemporary urbanism has re-characterised the principle of free association as an intragroup activity frequently played out in the arena of the spectacle of urban consumption (Zukin, 1995; Gottdiener, 2000; Amin, 2006; Low, 2006). This however does not inculcate social relations among strangers. Urbanism has always been politically charged, but the erosion of social capital has negated the notion that it stood for citizenship, good governance and civic behaviour within a perfect public realm. It is within this framework of urban isolationism that inhabitants of a city negotiate everyday diversity and heterogeneity, highlighting the challenges that class, gender, racial and ethnic differences give to negotiating urban space (Mitchell, 1995; Massey, 2005; Amin, 2006).

15 Johannesburg is a third world city in the grips of capitalist first world hegemony. As such there are bound to be confrontations when disempowered, disenfranchised and poverty stricken sections of the population transgress the normative order of the city in order to claim their stake as citizens. According to Jacobs (1996) the relations of power and difference occur spatially. It is simultaneously a politics of identity and power that is about space and is articulated through space. Beyers (2006) states that city infrastructure can be seen as the backdrop to urban space. This is where the inherent processes of governance, everyday life and the related ethics of the city occur. It is within these spaces where the politics of identity are formed of which ideas of race, class, community and gender are dominant. Fundamental to the construction of identities and boundaries is the identification of 'others' and 'otherness' (Jacobs, 1996). Alterity is the systematised construction of classes of people in which the other is deemed inferior (Johnson, no date). This is defined by the prevailing discourses and ideologies which establish power relations (Pieterse, 2002). The rules of participation and exclusion are determined through the classification of difference and privilege (Jacobs, 1996, Howard, 2003, Napier, 2004). The narrative of urban South Africa is constructed upon the discourse of social polarisation, whereby distinctions are now drawn based on the more sharply differentiated differences between the haves and the have not's in a neo-capitalist economy.

Henri Lefebvre (1996) put forth the idea of the 'right to the city' as a means by which inhabitants of the city have a right to all that the city has to offer. This would not only give them access to the facilities of the city, but would also act as a force through which the underlying power structures of the city would be renegotiated. Harvey (2003) suggested that Lefebvre's notion of the 'right to the city' was not just a right of access to what was already in existence, but also implied a right to modify, change and lay claim to these attributes. Current theorists have expanded Lefebvre's view to focus on diversity within cities based on class, gender, ethnicity, age and residential status, regardless of their legal status in the city. Through an understanding of Lefebvre's spatial triad we can comprehend how space can be decoded through the process of signification and appropriated and owned by the society in which it occurs.

The city is the basis of social and political struggles and it is in this context that citizens challenge existing spatial and social forms and demand alternative social orders thereby claiming their 'right to the city' (Mitchell, 1995; Simone, 2004; Portaliou, 2007; Marcuse, 2009). Mitchell (2003) proposes that the right to the city is dependent on public spaces to give form to social justice. The 'right to the city' or social justice is fundamental to a democratic society and implies the right of access, participation and appropriation to all the city has to offer, including its public spaces. In recent years, public attitude has changed from expecting conformity to accepting that there is diversity in society.

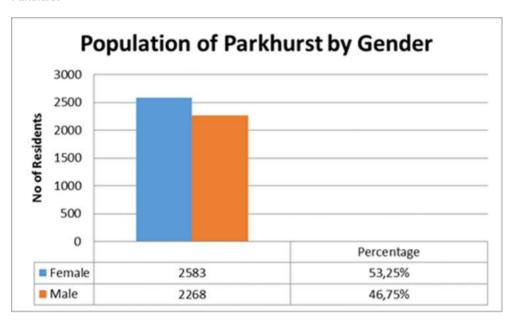
Amin and Thrift (2002) propose a new way of looking at the urban. They propose that cities should be seen as constantly evolving interconnected networks where places are replaced by encounters. The city should be seen as a machinistic entity wherein categories such as the social, biological and technological are intermixed with systems

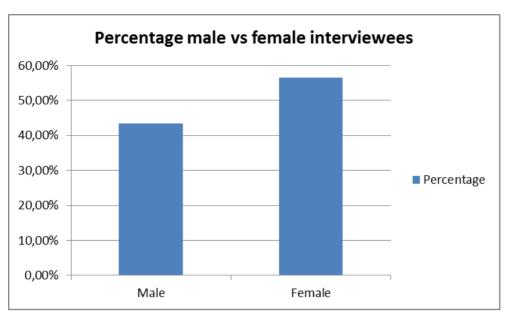
and networks. These networks and systems are the hidden mechanisms through and by which society functions (Amin, 2006). Amin and Thrift (2002) suggest that the city's geographical and social boundaries have become fluid and permeable and the ability to define the urban as a concrete and discrete concept has diminished. Sandercock (2000) proposes that the new urban society has to take into consideration the multiplicity of contemporary cities. She argues that the right to difference is paramount and supersedes any other rights.

4. Methodology

19 Research was done in 2011 and total of 23 people were interviewed. The selection of the participants was done in order to reflect the demographics of the park users.

Graph : The gender ratio between the interviewees is consistent with the general population ratio of Parkhurst





SOURCE: STATISTICS SOUTH AFRICA, CENSUS 2011

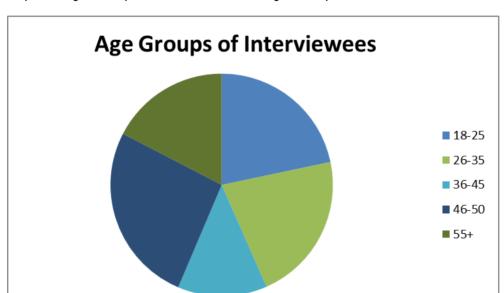
The aim was to ascertain peoples' perceptions of the park, of one another and of other user groups. It investigated the park's contribution to the formation of social bonds and whether that is an important aspect in their consideration to use the park. A qualitative and ethnographic approach was used during the personal interviews which investigated participants' perceptions of democracy, citizenship, identity and social relationships. The interviews were analysed to determine the core issues using a post-modern perspective as a method to understand community development. These were analysed using semiotics, content analyses and critical discourse analysis. Content analysis and critical discourse analysis were used to look beyond the recorded statements to determine the underlying narrative and understand the textuality of the park.

5. The social park

- The park is mainly used for recreation purposes. Nannies bring their own or their employers' children to the park to play on the playground equipment during the day. People bring their dogs for a walk, mostly in the afternoon after work, but there are also some people that come in the morning or during the course of the day. As it is a safe area, people don't feel threatened in the space and you might just see one or two people, very often women, walking their dogs or pushing prams during mid-morning to mid-afternoon. Domestic workers use the park to rest and meet with friends on their way home from work.
- Local children play in the park or ride their bicycles. The children have been seen playing in the park long after dark. Bearing in mind that there is no illumination in the park apart from the residual light from a few street lamps, it points to the relative safety of the park, an unusual occurrence in Johannesburg.
- Youngsters from the neighbourhood come to the park to meet their friends, relax and play a game of soccer. It is also where they include in the smoking of marijuana. Although it is illegal, no one was heard or seen to be interfering with this past time. The youngsters feel that the park is the only space in the suburb where they can just relax and be with

their friends. They said that the park makes them feel part of the community and is a place where they can meet other people and make new friends.

"This is like the only place we've got here in Parkhurst where we can just chill and get out, play soccer. We meet new faces everyday" (Resident, male, black, 20).



Graph: The ages of the park users is reflected in the ages of the persons interviewed.

Users of the park indicated that the park facilitated their assimilation into the community after moving into the area. One respondent said that the park was where she had made friends and was made part of the community faster than would normally be expected in a large city. Other users of the park also confirmed that the park facilitated integration into the community.

"When I first came to Johannesburg I didn't know anybody in this area. I came down here with my dog and I met people and it's made me part of the community. It introduced me to a whole network of friends and from being somebody who was an outsider I very quickly, far quicker than I normally would have in a big city, became an insider" (Resident, female, white, 53).

- There is a group of young soccer players who practice almost every day. Initially they were waiters and staff from nearby restaurants relaxing in between the afternoon and evening meal times. After the soccer posts were erected, it became more formalised. They have become very much part of the landscape and the dog walkers love to watch them play.
- There are a few homeless people who frequent the park. They mostly hang around the area near the children's playground and usually drink or sleep. Until recently it was known that there were one or two homeless people who slept in the park at night. They were known to the park users by sight and were never interfered with. The numbers increased and this became a concern for some of the park users. Due to the fact that there are no toilet facilities that are open at night, corners of the park have become ablution sites, mostly near the children's play area. Apart from the obvious health concern that this creates, it also resulted in a strong backlash by some users of the park to their presence.

- The skateboard half pipe is a very popular area of the park for young people. It is used not only for skateboarding, but also cycling. The skateboarders and cyclists are from the community, but some of them live elsewhere and come to the park specifically to use the half pipe. Often the young kids are seen playing on the half pipe, using it as a slide or to ride their bicycles.
- Users of the park regularly watch the skateboarders performing their moves and engage with them. A group of graffiti artists use the sides of the half pipe and the outside of the toilet facilities as their canvas. The artworks are frequently touched up or changed altogether.
- Over the weekends people use the park for picnics. Domestic workers gather on Sundays and play card games at the table and benches. Special occasions are also celebrated in the park, especially by the dog walkers. Whether it is an engagement, wedding, anniversary, graduation or a birthday, people will get together in the park during normal dog walking time for a drink and some snacks to celebrate the occasion.

6. Strangers in a Strange Land

- In his paper, *Collective Culture and Urban Public Space*, Amin (2008) argues that the interactions between strangers are not as predictable as the literature suggests. He points out that attempts to create interaction between strangers are normatively problematic as it is not guaranteed that people will connect with others and the city. Amin also contends that the sociality of public space does not necessarily lead to improved urban democracy, civic and political citizenship. However, it still has the ability to allow citizens to engage socially and there is a collective recognition of the inherent codes of civic conduct and the value of common shared spaces (Amin, 2008).
- An interesting aspect that was a common denominator between the different users interviewed is that they viewed the park and the people in the park as an extension of the community. They see the park as creating a sense of community, and it is through this community spirit that the safe character of the park is created and maintained. People use the park not only to exercise, but also to meet friends and neighbours. The park forms an integral part of the social fabric of the community and it is where friendships are formed, relationships are established and where integration into the community is facilitated. One respondent noted that he had made friends through the park since living in the area. These social contacts were facilitated either through the friendships formed in the park or through the resulting networks. There is a perception among the users that there is a village attitude in Parkhurst and that the park is the heart of the village:

"I think the people in the park have a fabulous common denominator. We love our animals, we like the outdoors, and it is quite a nice combination. It is a complete community in the park. Parkhurst is a community but this just adds to it" (Resident, female, white, 55).

"Socially we've met more people in Parkhurst than we ever met in Craighall Park in 30 something years. Met casually and deliberately through the dogs and the network of dog people. My wife and I have definitely enjoyed coming to Parkhurst because of the village attitude, the village atmosphere about it which is largely based on the field" (Resident, male, white, 76).

The park facilitates assimilation into the community as it is where social bonds are first established for new residents. There is also a sense that what is happening in this park is an unusual occurrence, not just in Johannesburg, but also in South Africa:

"This is the only park that has a real sense of community and I've heard that from other Dogwalkers who have gone up to parks in other areas, but there they are just vast expanses of ground. There's no sense of community" (Resident, female, white, 47).

"I have to say I do feel like that because I come to meet people here. An interesting thing is that my wife's dad was here. He said it was so unusual. He thought it was amazing that all the people from the area get to meet. This is unusual in Jo'burg. He's from Cape Town and apparently it's unusual for Cape Town too" (Resident, male, white, 36).

Due to the sense of community that is prevalent in the park, a wide network of social support has evolved amongst the users. People rely on each other for support and there is a trust that develops between the members of the community through their daily interaction with each other.

"The people are very friendly and you meet them every day. I have been coming to this park for ten years. I know a lot of people in the park but mostly on a superficial level. I also have friends that I have known for years that also come to the park (Resident, female, white, 64).

- The social constitution of trust is dependent on the importance of knowing whom to trust (Schaffer, 1993). Each space has its own rhythms, and it is within these rhythms and the associated social responses, that they find assurances. These assurances are the result of the underlying ethos or trust and therefore they feel safe and unthreatened in the presence of strangers. Consequently the fear and anxiety of the other and the threat of violence is dissipated (Amin, 2008). Doreen Massey (2005) calls this the 'throwntogetherness' of modern urban life. This is a way of negotiating the urban space and involves a familiarisation and recognition of the stranger, but it simultaneously becomes one of a tolerated multiplicity (Amin, 2008).
 - Simone (2004) likens the social collaborations that people form to ensure and maintain their livelihoods to an infrastructure of people. Although he was writing about the inner city collaborations that the poor use to survive in Johannesburg in the face of poverty and a disintegrating city infrastructure, I argue that in much the same way the social ties formed in the park provide a social network of support. External networks of support do not rely on locality, but provide flexible loci for solidarity (Simone, 2001). These networks form the informal ways in which civil society maintains integrity, ethics and social cohesion (Hecht and Simone, 1994; Chabal and Daloz, 1999). In crises situations, like the time when the oldest user, then 81 years old, fell and broke her knee, everyone rallied around and took on different tasks while she was convalescing. People look after each other's homes and pets when the owners go on holiday. Because of the trust already established through their interaction in the park, there is an acknowledgement and understanding between people that their best interests will be taken care of. The trusts that are formed in this park may be a result of the scale. Here one can meet people and really know who they are, whereas in other larger parks there are always elements of uncertainty and danger as one doesn't know who the other people are. In this park everyone more or less knows everybody and this creates a sense of community.

- The term 'community' is in itself problematic as it can be interpreted as an aggregation of identity, the imagining of a shared persona or for categorizing difference. Community can signify both diversity in the city and homogenous clusters based on class, ethnicity or culture. However, this gives community a dual nature of one that while it embraces group homogeneity also rejects difference (Tonkiss, 2003). Communities are social constructions and exist within ideology and histories that produce particular social formations (Butchard and Seedat, 1990). A community's strength is based on its ability to be indifferent to others acting out their differences and this is reflected in social harmony and the degree of interchange (Mingione, 1991; Augé, 1998; Simone, 2001).
- Communities can become the way in which the social and cultural recognition of minority groups can be asserted and mobilized, thus framing a defensive politics of difference. The city can also create a sense of indifference which could provide the basis for sub-cultural formations and new ways of interpreting 'community'. Dalby and MacKenzie (1997: 100-101) define community as:

"community may be better understood as a political and social process rather than a taken-for-granted social geographic entity ... local 'community' ... should not simply be taken for granted as constituted by a population *in situ*."

- Although there is a sense of community and of belonging to the community amongst the park users, it is not clear what constitutes this community. It is arguable that although they might think they all feel part of the greater community of the neighbourhood, there are in fact several different little 'communities' present in the park and as such it is this smaller community to which they really have an affinity.
- Bauman (2000) argues that the return to the community is a result of liquid modernity. Social institutions no longer serve as the framework for people to organise their lives. They therefore need to find alternative ways of forming social bonds (Wynne, 1996; Macnaghten and Urry, 1998; Bauman, 2000). With the changing roles and diminished influence of institutions in society social situations have become more fluid. It would appear that the park is now used to form those social bonds, network and to create a feeling of being part of a community. According to Coy and Pöhler (2002) it is also an expression of increasingly diverging lifestyles as a result of globalization in which social and economic change has led to conflict and the fragmentation of urban society and urban space.
- The general perception amongst all those interviewed was that there was little or no conflict between the park users, and that the few cases of conflict that have arisen over the years were dealt with successfully. The recent presence of the vagrants and the associated reactions to them speak to social justice in the city. Some respondents were very vocal in their opposition to the vagrants sleeping in the park, in particular one interviewee. When asked whether she thought it was infringing on her rights as a citizen, she responded:

"Absolutely and it is not as if they don't have an option. There are loads of places they can go, but they can't drink and smoke dagga at those places and they can do that here. As one of the 9% taxpayers in the country I feel that they can go and squat somewhere else, frankly." (Resident, female, white, 46).

42 Other respondents were more cautious in their assessment of the situation:

"No that's not pleasant and it is not pleasant anywhere. The problem of vagrants is such that it should be handled by the city and its organisations. It is not really up to the people who use the park to do anything about it, because that would lead to conflict. But it is unpleasant and unhealthy." (Resident, male, white, 76).

"I actually don't know what to say, I feel divided. It is definitely a conflict within the community and I think the voice of most of the people here is that they are definitely not welcome." (Resident, male, white, 36).

- The concerns of the residents may well be legitimate as they do not want the park to fall into disrepair. The way it was dealt with raises some concern about issues of social justice and the right to the city. At the behest of the local city councillor a raid was organised jointly by the SAPS and one of the security companies. A total of eleven people were arrested. What is of interest here is that before the raid some of the park users were very vocal in their disapproval of the homeless people, but after they had been arrested and removed from the park, no mention was made of them. Not one person that I spoke to referred to the police raid or the arrests. It was almost as if the homeless people did not exist and that the whole incident never occurred. The reaction of the park users to the homeless people is indicative of the indifference and erosion of public sympathy to their plight due to the enormity of the poverty and homeless problem in urban South Africa (Murray, 2008). The removal of the homeless from the park is a visible expression of revanchist urbanism whereby authorities have criminalised the behaviour of the urban poor and disenfranchised by removing them from the city landscape to conform to middle-class sensibilities (Bayat, 1997; Mitchell, 1997; Merrifield, 2000; Murray, 2008). This display of power is effective because it defines which rights to the city are legitimate. For the people at the margins of society it further entrenches their exclusion from the legitimate rights to the city (Murray, 2008). The presence of the homeless people threatens the ontological security of the other park users in that those practices which are deemed to be of the private realms are brought into the very public realm of the park. This challenges modern understanding of order, agency and subjectivity (Popke and Ballard, 2004). Boundaries are socially constructed and are the products of society which define our identities and organise social space through the geographies of power (Malone, 2002). This disorder is therefore seen as an indifference to the formal economic, societal and political structures of modern society.
- The presence of the homeless has created a perceived disruption and disordering and a sense of loss over the control of the park (Popke and Ballard, 2004). This disruption is framed within the discourses of disorder, congestion and disease. The homeless are seen as being an obstruction to the 'normal' flow of the park, a threat and are portrayed as being 'unsightly' and 'unhealthy' (Thale, 2007). Disorder causes the breakdown of power relations and control in the spatial organisation of the park and with this there is a sense of a loss of agency.
- The changes to the post-Apartheid city are reflective of the changing dynamics between the 'insider' and 'outsider' groups. The apartheid city was structured on the European conceptions of space in which order, control and ontological security were essential in dealing with the difference of the 'other'. Cities were therefore important to maintain the white hegemony and asserting this difference (Popke and Ballard, 2004). The portrayal of the homeless as 'untidy', 'unsightly', 'damaging to the image of the city' and a 'major eyesore' embody cultural anxieties about the loss of agency and control (Popke and

Ballard, 2004). They are the public face of the dissolution of the boundaries between the self/other and the public/private (Popke and Ballard, 2004). The removal of the homeless from the park is an attempt to regain control over the park and restore social order.

People's identities are internalised and are dependent on social order being maintained. The spatial proximity of the other threatens this order as the social distance between the self and the other is diminished (Wilton, 1998). The notion that the park needs to be cleansed of the homeless is linked to the notion that outsiders and undesirable groups need to be isolated spatially (Popke and Ballard, 2004). The social proximity of what Freud calls the 'unheimlich' produces an anxiety in encountering the 'other' in familiar places. This fear is not because the other is feared, but is due to the recognition that they may not be different enough. Therefore it challenges and disrupts the social order as well as collective and individual identities (Wilton, 1998). The reorganising of urban space in post-Apartheid South Africa becomes the site whereby identity, difference, citizenship and democracy are tested and reformulated (Popke and Ballard, 2004). The contestation of urban space in Johannesburg is a reaction to the fragmentary history of South Africa as well as to globalisation's excesses and the erosion of identity boundaries (Landau, 2010).

What is needed for developing civil society in a multicultural society is tolerance of others, yet prejudice, moral condemnation and exclusionary practices have been the basis of much of the segregation within cities. Throughout history, minorities have been subjected to political and moral contempt and excluded from public spaces (Malone, 2002). Therefore, public space becomes an appropriation of the commons and is a source of private endeavour and social antagonism, rather than sites of civic formation and social agonism (Amin, 2008).

Tonkiss (2003) argues that indifference can give rise to certain rights and freedoms in the city. Cities can foster indifference in that it allows for the capacity to be unseen, to be unexceptional and impersonal in a milieu where difference is not integrated, where alterity becomes the ordinary and anonymity supplants visibility (Tonkiss, 2003). However this dissociation can become a way of dealing with the unknown others by creating a social distance. By default, it becomes a politics of tolerance as individuals are no longer objects of duty, concern, antipathy or curiosity and it diminishes loyalties, antagonisms and solidarities. If indifference is understood as aversion, disregard or neglect it serves to make some urban subjects more invisible and anonymous (Tonkiss, 2003).

Richard Sennett (1978: 264) proposes that civility is required for the negotiation of strangers. He sees civility as:

"the activity which protects people from each other and yet allows them to enjoy each other's company. Wearing a mask is the essence of civility. Masks permit pure sociability, detached from the circumstances of power, malaise, and private feelings of those who wear them. Civility has as its aim the shielding of others from being burdened with oneself."

Bauman (2000) argues that in order for people to act with civility, society must first become civil. This requires the interaction of people in public spaces without feeling the need to express their own personae. In this park there are a variety of different people from different ethnic backgrounds and although everyone is free to use the park, there is not much interaction between the different groups. Groups that have a sense of belonging will more easily share space with those that are deemed to be different to them and this

lessens the sense of threat (Appadurai, 1995; Marden, 1997; Simone, 2001). Civility allows one to acknowledge the presence of others without requiring any engagement. What happens in the park is that there is an acknowledgement of other people but no real engagement occurs. While there is intragroup engagement, there is very little intergroup involvement. The park allows people to interact with each other without feeling that they would be judged or that there are hidden agendas. It facilitates interaction with strangers and also allows one to act as a stranger as the threat of the 'other' has been dissipated. This reflects the discourse of the 'new' South Africa which is that of multi-cultural toleration (Mueba and Seekings, 2010). Social psychologists have found that this is a fairly common occurrence in post-Apartheid South Africa. In other mixed race informal social settings there is very little everyday interaction between different race groups (Dixon and Durrheim, 2003; Tredoux and Dixon, 2009; Schrieff et al., 2005, 2010).

Increased racial and ethnic diversity in suburban areas necessitates an understanding and recognition of the needs and values of these groups in relation to recreation and parks (Sasidharan, Willits and Godbey, 2005). An interesting aspect about this park is that there are a wide range of people here. There is diversity in gender, age, ethnic and socioeconomic levels. Most of the park users interviewed felt that the park was inclusive of all population groups and that there was no discrimination against any particular group. There is a general feeling that the park and its amenities were open to all.

"There are lots of little black kids that live in the area that come play with us. I don't think there is any real segregation other than the financial divide. We see these bums lying here sleeping all day, smoke pot all day, no one seems to mind. (Non-resident, male, white, 27).

This however does not imply that the park is inclusive. Inclusion is a very complicated phenomenon. It is not just about claiming the right to the city or being part of an established community, but it also recognises diversity, requires mutual recognition and some reciprocal obligations among residents (Landau, 2010). One group of people might think the park is inclusive, but others might see themselves as being in the park but on the periphery and for them the park might not be inclusive.

"I think the park does tend to be inclusive, you get the feeling here that it is for the people who live in the area and walk with their dogs." (Resident, female, black, 24).

- This is what Amin (2008) calls 'tolerated multiplicity'. Tolerated multiplicity is the implied and involuntary negotiation of anonymous others. This is how difference, similarity, continuity and change are negotiated in public space (Amin, 2008). Multiplicity allows individuals or groups to create new ways of negotiating social space, but it is also through this that the sense of belonging to a community and community building is strengthened (Simone, 2001).
- Spatial ordering is essential to form a public, but it is in this ordering that it becomes a mechanism of social regulation, with implications of control and surveillance inferred. Boundaries and separate spaces, based on the right of access and appropriate use of public space, are created to lessen conflict in public places and to maintain and regulate shared morals and value systems. This serves to keep undesirable groups out and can be seen as a sanitization of space to create internal order and homogenization. The maintenance of these sanitized spaces is based on the assumption that there are common

shared values inherent in civil society (Malone, 2002). In a way this is a sanitised space, as there is a sense of appropriation by the park users. This is evident from some of the remarks such as these:

"We've decided that it is our park to walk our dogs, ... Because we pay, that's why and because we come and the tsotsis are too scared come. That's why, we've pushed them out" (Resident, female, white, 46).

However as Mbembe (2008) argues in the cases of Montecasino and Melrose Arch, exclusion here in the park is more an exclusion based on class than it is based on race. The narrative of urban post modernity is constructed upon the discourse of social polarisation, whereby the cultural politics of race is deactivated. Distinctions are now drawn based on the more sharply differentiated differences between the haves and the have nots in a neo-capitalist economy (Jacobs, 1996). One respondent likened the park to a 'South Park Bart Simpson cartoon that has come to life' and that he found out of touch with the reality that is Johannesburg.

"It's surreal to me. I know it's how the white picket fence suburbia should be, it really is and it works and this is how society should be. And it is a really good example of how society could be. It is just that when you go out into the rest of Johannesburg it doesn't work" (Non-resident, male, white, 43).

- This raises the issue of the right to the city and social justice. There is a body of literature about the decline and lack of public space in the neoliberal city and the problematic nature of the city (Mitchell, 1995; Massey, 2005; Low 2006). What is happening is that relationships between people are becoming more flexible. Although people in the area don't go to the City, they do come to this park and so in a sense this is a city. It certainly is not a city in the way early modernists understood it as being a great metropolis with huge density. However, it is a residential park with a polis of its own. The urban polity here is more of a suburban polity and is probably more uniform than one would find in the City.
- Theorists like Amin (2008) and Malone (2002) say that in the city you are forced to encounter the 'other'. In this park, there are 'others', but the middle class is dominant, so it is probably not a good place to encounter the 'other'. Here you will not get the sense of Amin's argument that the city is a democratic space because the aim is to engage the other. Although there are other groups here, there is more a sense of cohesion than there is a sense of the otherness. Confronting the other should make us more tolerant and open to democracy, as Amin argues, but one would not get that sense in the park. The park has more conformity and is probably more a space of familiarity than of otherness. However the park does have its own polity which is a suburban polity.

Conclusion

Public space does not necessarily lead to improved citizen relationships; however it provides a backdrop in which people can engage socially. Verity Park forms an integral part of the community as it is where relationships are established and assimilation into the community is facilitated. This is the result of the trusts that are formed between people through their daily interaction with each other. The term 'community' is problematic and it is argued here that the community of which people feel an affinity to

is not so much that of the greater community, than the smaller communities that manifest in the park. The way in which the homeless people were dealt with is indicative of the ennui that the larger society of South Africa has with the plight of the marginalised.

In an era of liquid modernity where the influence of the institution is no longer paramount, other ways of forming social ties are sought. The park plays an important role in the formation of these social relationships. Although there are different social groups within the park, there is no real interaction between them. It therefore suggests that what is really happening there is an acceptance of each other's rights to be there and it is the tolerance of difference, or what Amin (2008) calls 'tolerated multiplicity'. This being the case, it is the foundation for good citizenship and for the good city. The politics of difference are altering the shape of the city as geographical and social boundaries have become fluid. This has implications for not only 'the right to the city' but also 'the right to difference'. The new urban society has to take into consideration the multiplicity of contemporary cities in which difference must be acknowledged and accepted to achieve social cohesiveness and civic ownership.

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ABSTRACTS

The use of a public space in suburban Johannesburg, South Africa, is the main focus of this research. The study area is Verity Park, a small park located in the neighbourhood of Parkhurst. The park is used by the residents of the area and the users are from a diversity of genders, ages, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Through an examination of Lefebvre's 'right to the city' and his theories about the production of space, this research looks at how the park contributes to the development and maintenance of community.

L'usage d'un espace public dans un quartier pavillonnaire de Johannesburg (Afrique du Sud) est l'objet principal de cet article. Situé dans le quartier de Parkhurst, Verity Park est utilisé par les résidents du quartier et par des usagers d'âge, de genre, de statuts socio-économiques variés. À travers une analyse du « droit à la ville » de Lefebvre et de ses théories sur la production de l'espace, cette recherche vise à saisir comment ce parc contribue au développement et au maintien des liens sociaux entre les habitants du quartier.

INDFX

Mots-clés: espace public, banlieues pavillonnaires, Johannseburg, inclusion

Keywords: public space, suburbs, Johannesburg

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