



## Scaling deep - Centering resistance and desire in transdisciplinary coproduction of NbS in Cape Town

Patience Mguni

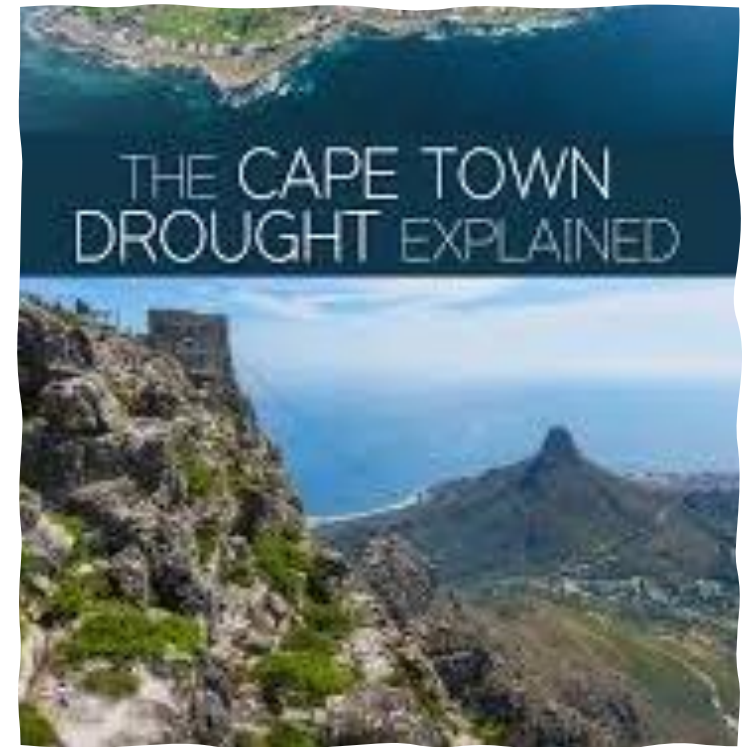
**University of Copenhagen, IGN** – Patience Mguni,  
Lise Byskov Herslund, Marina Bergen Jensen

**University of Cape Town, Future Water** - Kirsty  
Carden, Neil Armitage, Amber Abrams, Craig  
Tanyanyiwa, Julia Mclachlan, Rachelle Schneuwly,  
Sansha van der Merve, John Okedi, Jessica Fell

# Cape Town – The post-colonial (Mother) City

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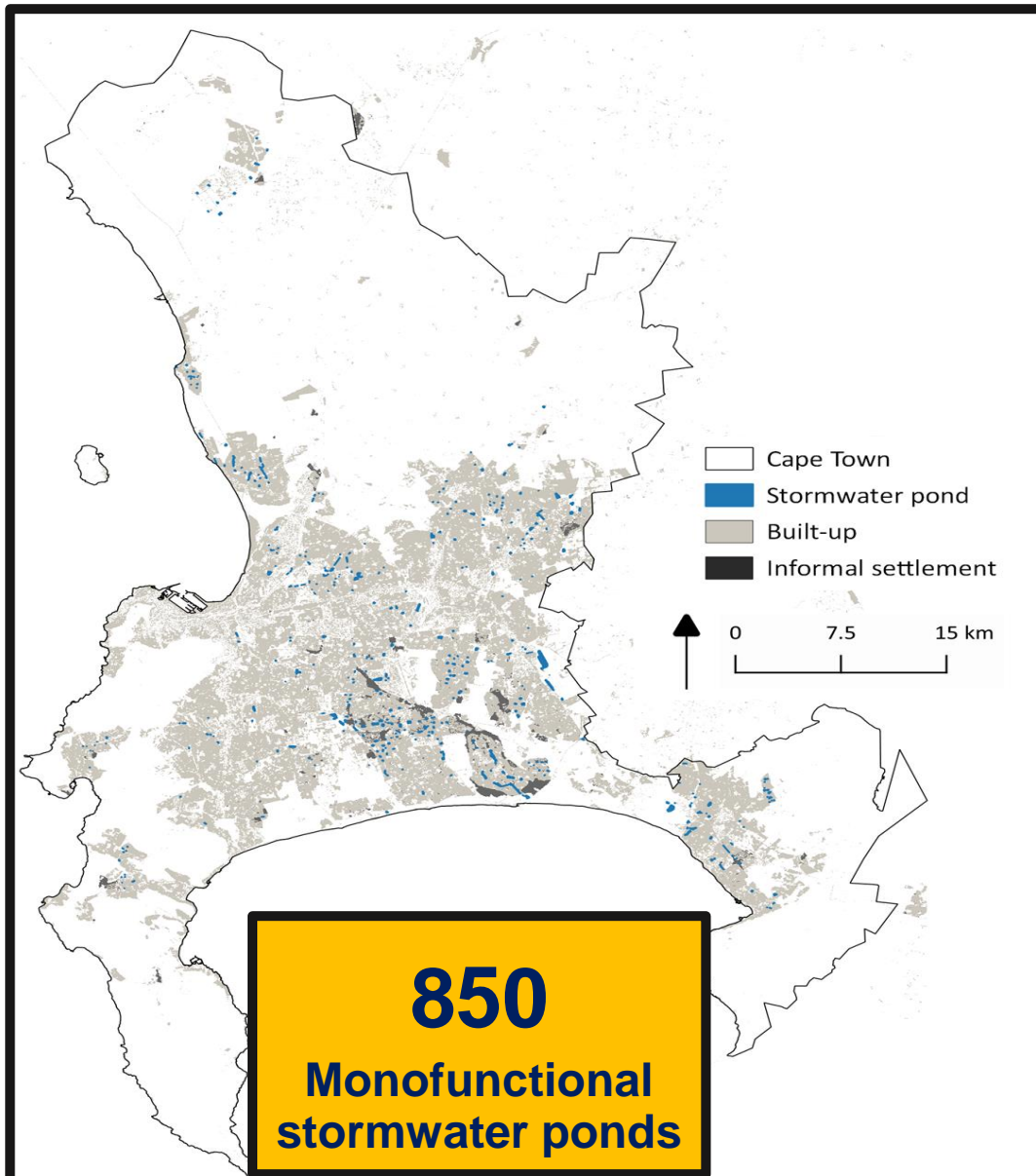
- Diverse and complex post-apartheid city with history of inequity and segregation – ‘Deep unresolved difference’ (Watson, 2009)
- High standards of governance with some resources (though limited)
- Facing Infrastructure deficits in WASH, housing etc along with climate change impacts, biodiversity loss, rising inequality
- Features on many climate action international networks e.g. ICLEI, C40, 100 Resilient Cities
- Dynamic policy landscape and open to experimentation with climate solutions such as Nature-based Solutions (NbS) to address flooding, drought, food insecurity
- But ...NbS are not necessarily virtuous
- Results can range from green gentrification to more transformative outcomes



WELCOME TO  
MITCHELL'S  
PLAIN  
FILMING  
A 'MODEL  
TOWNSHIP'  
DURING  
APARTHEID



# The PaWS project approach (2019 – 2025)

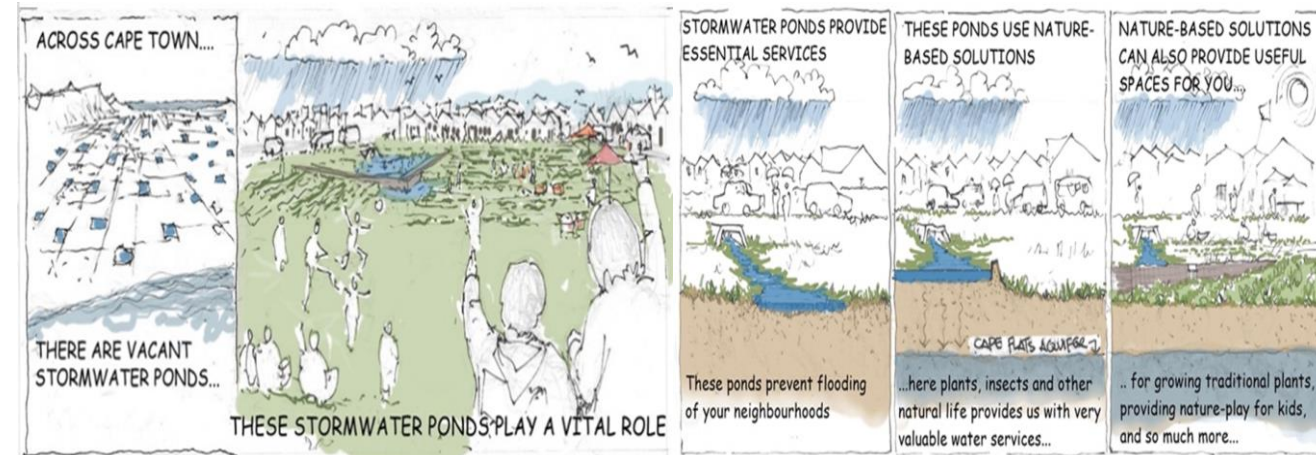


“What are the opportunities for repurposing stormwater ponds into multifunctional NbS in Cape Town?”

Children are using vandalised stormwater ponds as swimming pools in Hout Bay



- Ponds and green spaces prone to invasion by informal settlements - Seen as unsafe spaces to be constantly under surveillance or fenced off
- City's infrastructure development haunted by apartheid legacies of exclusion, dispossession, violence and enduring mistrust between communities and the city
- **RESISTANCE to the PaWS project** from the community  
 Racism, aggression, xenophobia, suspicion  
*"Why are there Africans working at the Pond?"*



## Violent clashes between Mitchells Plain and Sigalo residents

30 people arrested for public violence

2 May 2018 | By Annie Cebulski  
 Brief | Cape Town



**Public information session**

Tuesday, 12th of March at 4-7pm

We will meet at the bus stop adjoining the open space, next to the Leadership College High Park

Researchers from the Future Water research institute (University of Cape Town) and the University of Copenhagen are collaborating with the City of Cape Town on a project entitled 'Pathways to water resilient South African cities'. One of the aims of this project is to look for opportunities to repurpose the open space located adjacent to the Leadership College High Park site in consultation with the local and the surrounding community.

Tonight, we would like to start a conversation about your thoughts on the open space and to discuss possible ideas for future uses. This exercise forms part of a Masters research project being undertaken by Sørensen Egholm (University of Copenhagen) which involves developing a design proposal for the open space using a landscape architecture approach.

Thank you for participating and for giving us the opportunity to learn from you as experts in your neighbourhood.

**Agenda**

A. Introduction and presentation of the team

B. Talk and discussion about values, needs, and issues by answering 5 leading questions

1. Do you know this area? (In your own words, and if yes, how do you use it?)
2. What do you think this open space does? (How do you think it should be used?)
3. What does this open space mean to you? (What do you think about it?)
4. To make a choice: If you would be in charge of the open space, what would you like to do and what activities would happen here?
5. What are the main needs of the neighbourhood?

C. Sampling and thank you for today!

Contact information

To learn more about the project in general feel free to contact Emily Carlsen (emily.carlsen@uct.ac.za)

To participate in the survey, further details in terms of the survey form, research dates, etc. please email: soren@futurewater.dk

Website: www.futurewater.dk





**Total retrofit cost: ~ R300 000 (16 500 USD)**



# Multifunctionality as place: The Biodiversity knowledge garden + Mural + Benches



# Fostering literacy on biocultural diversity



# Stimulating stewardship and (re)negotiating roles

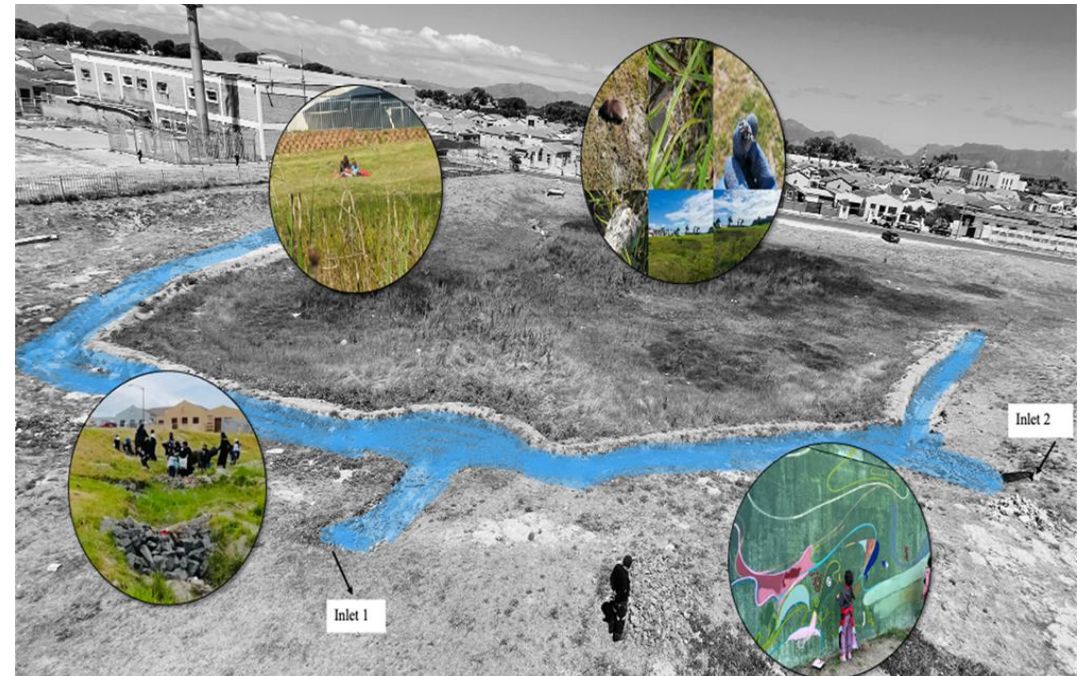


***“When is the work going ahead? People feel more should be happening.”***

# Scaling deep – Centering resistance, refusal and desire in decolonial praxis

- In contexts of deep difference “**scaling deep**” as primary NbS implementation pathway in marginalised areas.
- Allowing research & climate action encounters to be spaces of ‘**resistance & refusal**’ (hooks, 1998; Canãs, 2020). Addressing long standing anxieties about dispossession & extraction
  - A decolonial stance became key to tap into **desires** of ‘marginalised’
- **Problematizing ‘consensus-based’** notion of participation
- Knowledge coproduction and cocreation of multifunctional landscapes a **slow, negotiated** process. Accountability. Failure.
- **Relational approach** – Navigating difference requires prioritizing relations, learning and engagement processes over results. Trust-building, centering values, relations and interests (Chambers et al., 2021; Sellberg et al., 2021)
- Researchers' role as ‘**bridges**’ - intermediaries between different interests. Reflexivity about our **positionality** too. **The margin itself is fluid**
- Giving the landscape and non-humans agency - privileging **material changes**, enhanced biodiversity and amenity
- **Tangible nature-based benefits** – Providing clear value to communities i.e., livelihoods support, amenity etc
- Seeking **restorative environmental justice**
- Inclusion of **diverse voices and ways of knowing** (Trisos et al., 2021)

*We can now tell them (the kids) the reason the (sandbag) wall was built...so that the water stays here, and the council cannot steal it from us.*



# Nature-based Solutions as 'disruptors'?



- NbS disrupt existing people-nature-infrastructure relations (Raymond et al., 2023; Mguni et al., forthcoming)
- Moment of suspending the urban fabric and socio-ecological relations inscribed in it
- May lead to broken promises and reproduction of inequitable processes e.g. green gentrification
- OR allow for reworking of socio-ecological-technical relations towards inclusion and justice
- Or somewhere in-between?
- How do we avoid burdening communities with responsibility without resources and power?
- What are the different roles for managing multifunctional infrastructure?
- It's been difficult to get the community to form a civic group. The margin itself is fluid...
- Transformation remains an emergent...



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COPENHAGEN



**FUTURE  
WATER**

Thank you for listening!

