



**The Role of Quality of Governance:
Co-production Processes and Well-being in
Informal Settlement Communities**
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

Abbrevia- tion	Fully written
BLI	Better Life Index
CAP	Community Action Plan
CAPS	the Cape Area Panel Study
CBD	Central Business District
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FDG	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT4D	Information and Communication Technology for Development
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
ISSP	Informal Settlement Support Program
KfW	German Development Bank
LDP	Local Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PWI	Personal Well-being Index
QoL	Quality of Life
SLA	Sustainable Livelihood Approach
SNAC	Safe Node Area Committee
SANCO	South African National Civic Organization
VPUU	Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading

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Executive summary

Scholarly research on informal settlements underscores issues of social inequality, inadequate housing, deficient service provision, and contested planning processes, as well as the agency, social capital and creativity inherent to informal settlement communities. The present report proposes an alternative perspective: It foregrounds enhancing quality of life and well-being through community agency and co-production, civic engagement, and supportive governance. The research provides empirical evidence from an informal settlement in Cape Town and employed an inductive, qualitative case study methodology to (1) investigate community participation in the co-production of social infrastructure, (2) assess its effects across multiple well-being domains and (3) offer actionable recommendations for fostering participation and governance to elevate quality of life.

The study is based on experience from the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) program as a central case study. The VPUU's integrated, area-based approach fosters improvements in quality of life and well-being within informal settlement communities. It also seeks to implement core governance principles—responsibility, accountability, transparency, and effectiveness—in close collaboration with community members. The study examines co-produced social infrastructure interventions implemented in the context of the VPUU program to identify the impact of these interventions and their co-production processes on the perceived quality of life and well-being of residents.

This study provides insights into residents' perceptions of life satisfaction. It thereby particularly gives attention to their priorities and aspirations. Unsurprisingly, the findings underscore the central importance of economic stability in shaping well-being. But what needs to be noted is that respondents see improvement here not only related to material aspects of income and capital but also raise the role of social capital (to access services) and human capital (for skill development), thereby highlighting the significant contribution of social relationships—including community cohesion and support networks—to quality of life. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that the VPUU program and its co-produced social infrastructure exert a positive influence across numerous quality of life domains. Notably, substantial benefits are observed in education and skills development, civic engagement, and the enhancement of social connections within the community.

This research further identifies five key drivers that shape quality of life and well-being in South African informal settlements, organizing them into five interconnected categories: (1) eudaimonic, (2) altruistic, (3) relational, (4) formative, and (5) material. Eudaimonic factors include a sense of purpose, fulfillment, personal growth, and belonging. Altruistic drivers pertain to community well-being and mutual support. Relational aspects focus on trust and social capital. Formative factors encompass

human capital, skill development, and safety, while material drivers refer to economic opportunities and enhancements in physical and environmental conditions. Results from the study suggest that incorporating non-economic drivers—including eudaimonic, altruistic, relational, and formative drivers—is essential for developing a more comprehensive and holistic perspective on quality of life and well-being. Especially in contexts largely excluded from economic opportunities and marked by a high degree of informality, it is important to recognize that while improving material conditions is a primary concern, these efforts are deeply interconnected with non-economic drivers. This study highlights the significance of social relationships, which are strengthened through co-productive approaches, as key drivers of positive change.

In addition, the research results underscore the key role of intermediaries as catalysts for such a co-productive approach. They strengthen horizontal connections between stakeholders and facilitate vertical communication between local actors and higher-level governance entities. Sustained commitment and trust-building are crucial for successful co-production as disruptions can undermine progress and damage relationships. It is essential that hybrid governance models are acknowledged as valuable assets and supported beyond short-term funding to encompass institutional backing and capacity-building. This approach acknowledges the long-term impacts of governance on quality of life and well-being.

Finally, this study highlights the importance of developing a comprehensive, context-sensitive research agenda that incorporates multifaceted approaches. Such an agenda is essential for identifying locally relevant factors shaping quality of life and for effectively addressing the complex, evolving dynamics characteristic of informal settlements.

Introduction

Much of the well-being literature is reflecting on more well-off contexts which not only represents a significant knowledge gap in terms of disadvantaged communities, but also perpetuates systemic inequalities by reinforcing their invisibility in policy and research. Insights from informal settlement contexts can thereby contribute to a more comprehensive understanding and challenge dominant well-being concepts. This effort to move beyond conventional paradigms and place the more socio-economic disadvantaged communities at the center aligns with the "leave no one behind" principle of the Sustainable Development Goals (Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2015), emphasizing the core objectives of reducing inequality and social exclusion in both scholarship and policy.

To effectively address these challenges, a transdisciplinary methodology is required (Pohl, 2010) –one marked by collaboration across diverse disciplines and sectors, as well as by the integration of individuals' subjective assessments of their own well-being on a qualitative basis (Tonon, 2015). By building upon principles of inclusion outlined above, such an approach not only enriches traditional indicators and methodologies but also brings to the forefront the lived experiences and perspectives of those most affected by systemic disadvantage.

Building upon these foundations, the present research advances a people-centered, transdisciplinary framework that actively identifies individuals' and communities' agency to address emerging challenges. Specifically, in contexts characterized by resource scarcity, social networks, placemaking and civic engagement combined with supportive governance are recognized as influencing factors of improved quality of life, enhancing well-being independently of resource consumption (UN-Habitat, 2013; Ley et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, although the importance of civic engagement and governance is acknowledged, their specific contributions to quality of life and well-being remain insufficiently explored. Moreover, there is limited empirical understanding of the factors that motivate citizens to actively pursue civic engagement, such as participation in co-production processes. To address these research gaps, Task 4.4 of WP4 focuses on investigating the interconnections among civic engagement in co-production processes, governance, and well-being within informal settlement communities in the South African context.

Research question and objectives

The present research analyses governance arrangements in the case of Monwabisi Park, an informal settlement of Cape Town, South Africa. It examines in particular how mechanisms providing social infrastructure and basic services may be

enhanced through collaboration with, and co-production by, marginalized communities residing in informal settlements. It is situated within the broader theoretical discourse on civic engagement within co-production, governance, and well-being, with the following objectives:

- (1) investigate community participation in the co-production of social infrastructure;
- (2) assess the effects of co-production and governance arrangements across multiple well-being domains; and
- (3) offer actionable recommendations for fostering effective participation and supportive governance arrangements to enhance quality of life in informal settlement contexts

Structure of the report

This research report comprises two parts. Part I situates the research within the theoretical concepts of governance, co-production and placemaking, and quality of life and well-being research approaches. Its aim is to further provide a contextual background to the research focus and clarify the research problems addressed in this study. Building upon this, the second part delineates the research objectives and methodology employed (Chapters Two and Three), preceding the presentation and discussion of the results (Chapters Four and Five). The report concludes by offering recommendations aimed at fostering supportive governance arrangements and enhancing co-production to improve quality of life and well-being, with particular emphasis on residents of informal settlement communities.

Part I – Theoretical and Contextual Framework

1.1 Governance, co-production and their impact on quality of life and well-being in the context of informal settlement communities

Well-being research has long aimed to inform and guide policymakers, practitioners, and scholars in steering development towards greater productivity, equity, sustainability, and inclusivity, while addressing complex socioeconomic challenges (see, e.g., Diener & Suh, 1997; Stiglitz et al., 2009; Rojas, 2019). When focusing on disadvantaged communities, the structural aspects of freedom and opportunities, as emphasized in the capability approach (Sen, 1985), become especially important. Increasingly, integrated frameworks recognize the interplay among personal, social, and structural factors.

However, translating these concepts and frameworks to informal settlements is challenging, as these communities primarily face the immediate hardships of their living conditions. This requires first capturing residents' own definitions of well-being, then understanding how they create meaningful lives under specific constraints, and finally analyzing the structural barriers or opportunities for participation and having a voice in governance. This last aspect holds particular significance for South Africa, where a considerable portion of the population has historically been excluded from political participation and decision-making. Thus, the imperative for inclusive governance is both urgent and sensitive for improving quality of life.

Equally relevant is the pursuit of inclusive strategies to proactively confront deeply entrenched inequalities, especially in contexts characterized by high levels of segregation and spatial injustice. These challenges are particularly pronounced in Cape Town, South Africa's second largest city (Turok et al., 2021), which serves as the geographical focus of this study.

Thematically, this research is positioned within the ongoing discourse on the capacity of communities in marginalized urban areas—particularly informal settlements—to actively participate in enhancing their quality of life and well-being. This process is facilitated by intermediary organizations and reflects efforts to foster "new forms of

democracy and democratic practice" (Mitlin, 2008). Rather than idealizing the contested context, the study seeks to emphasize individual agency and the value of co-production within these communities, while critically acknowledging the complexity and challenges inherent in their circumstances.

To achieve these aims, Part I of this report provides an overview of key aspects of governance theory. It then gives contextual information regarding governance at the national (South Africa), municipal (Cape Town), and local (Monwabisi Park informal settlement as study site) levels. Building on this foundation, Part I subsequently examines fundamental approaches to co-production and placemaking, exploring their connection to enhancing the quality of life and well-being. Finally, it underscores the importance of contextualizing well-being research to ensure a sensitive and nuanced response to specific circumstances.

1.1.1 Governance theory – actors, frameworks, principles and modes

In the field of governance theory, the concept of governance is defined as the coordination of collective action by a diverse array of actors, including state institutions, private enterprises, civil society organizations, traditional authorities, and transnational entities such as international aid agencies (Kooiman, 2003; Rhodes, 2007). These actors engage within frameworks shaped by both formal regulations and informal norms, as well as established institutional practices that both constrain and facilitate decision-making as well as transformative action (Ostrom, 2010).

Governance, as an analytical concept, can be distinguished by various operational modes. Vertical or hierarchical governance is characterized by top-down authoritative control. Self-governance refers to actors regulating their own behavior independently. Horizontal or co-governance involves collaborative engagement among public, private, and civic sectors. These modes often coexist in hybrid configurations and may be complemented by market-based and network-oriented approaches (Kjær, 2011).

Governance modes are further influenced by normative principles that establish benchmarks for assessing their quality and legitimacy. Central principles include transparency, accountability, the rule of law, and efficiency (The World Bank, 1992; Pierre & Peters, 2005). In addition, operational principles such as participation and adaptability play a crucial role—particularly in determining the capacity of governance systems to manage change and uncertainty (Duit & Galaz, 2008). This is especially significant in informal settlement contexts, where frequent changes in settlement patterns and precarious living conditions prevail.

1.1.2 Governance of South African municipalities

South Africa's governance structure reflects its complex history, resulting in the formation of local self-governance systems that are central to the country's socio-political environment. Under apartheid, most South Africans, especially those classified as Coloured and Black¹, were systematically marginalized and excluded from governance. Their socioeconomic interests were often neglected. After the 1994 democratic transition, emphasis shifted to decentralized, participatory local government, as set out in the 1996 Constitution and the White Paper on Local Government (Republic of South Africa, 1998A). This people-centered approach originated in township civic organizations as part of the anti-apartheid resistance. In 1992, they united as the South African National Civic Organization (SANCO), which has played a key role in local government reform and continues to influence urban development (Seekings, 1997). However, in the post-apartheid era rather hierarchical organized civic structures such as SANCO decreased in their role as they were co-opted in institutional frameworks such as development forums. At the same time, new grassroots social movements emerged supported by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Ley, 2010). Similarly, the vertical arrangements in governance by the state underwent tremendous changes with the end of apartheid. Local government was newly defined with more decentralized and developmental responsibilities (Ley, 2010).

Municipalities in South Africa represent one of the three distinct spheres of government: local, provincial, and national. Within the local sphere, municipalities operate autonomously while remaining interdependent and interconnected with the other two spheres. This interdependence is managed through intergovernmental collaboration in policymaking, budget coordination, and program implementation (CoGTA, 2025) and often characterized as limited decentralization or “embedded autonomy” (Oldfield, 2002). Crucial legislation, including the Municipal Structures Act (Republic of South Africa, 1998B) and the Municipal Systems Act (Republic of South Africa, 2000), defined the responsibilities and the representative and administrative frameworks of municipalities.

Municipalities with over 500.000 voters, such as Cape Town, are classified as Metropolitan Municipalities. These are further subdivided into smaller administrative units called wards, which function similarly to city districts. A Council, led by an executive mayor elected by its members, governs each Metropolitan Municipality. The Council comprises 50% councilors elected through proportional representation, where voters select a party, and 50% ward councilors elected by residents of each ward. The Council is responsible for passing an annual municipal budget and determining Integrated

¹ This terminology is employed to denote the categorization applied by the Apartheid regime in order to comprehend the racial policies and spatial segregation; it is not being used to discriminate against any person or population group.

Development Plans (IDPs) and service delivery within the metropolitan area. In turn, the municipal administration and its various departments, headed by the Municipal Manager and department heads, are responsible for implementing these plans and decisions (CoGTA, 2025).

At the smallest administrative level, the ward, municipalities may implement a ward committee model. Ward committees serve as advisory bodies and facilitate communication regarding ward-specific issues. Each committee consists of ten elected members who may submit recommendations on matters affecting the ward to the ward councilor or, through the councilor, to the municipal council.

In the context of horizontal governance, participation is institutionalized through the representative ward committees, the mandated participation in the establishment of Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), and various partnership or participatory mechanisms aligned with specific services (Ley, 2010). The primary objective of ward committees is to promote community participation in municipal decision-making processes (Delphus et al., 2025; Silima & Auriacombe, 2013). The Municipal Structures Act of 1998 reinforced this participatory approach by requiring municipalities to create mechanisms for consulting with communities and community organizations during the execution of municipal functions and powers (People's Assembly, 2025).

Despite this policy emphasis on community participation, implementation often falls short at the local level. Many communities face barriers such as poor communication with municipal departments and top-down decision-making (Simila & Auriacombe, 2013). While ward committees and civic organizations such as SANCO are meant to bridge municipalities and communities, they might be exploited by individuals seeking political power, leading to gatekeeping that hampers development (Delphus et al., 2025; Heller, 2003). Academic literature identifies governance factors (such as corruption, political-administrative interference, mismanagement of resources, political instability, lack of accountability and transparency and internal conflicts), together with structural factors (for example, resource and capacity constraints) and systemic factors (such as the historical legacy of apartheid, socioeconomic inequalities and rapid urbanization), as specific contributors to development backlogs (see, e.g. Maile & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023; Mamokhere, 2023; Thusi et al., 2023;). These factors collectively cause persistent challenges in development and service delivery, ultimately affecting the quality of life in South African municipalities and the well-being of their residents. Thus, many scholars claim that institutionalized governance arrangements are inadequate and suggest a more relational mode of governance that takes into account the reality of governance practices (Ley, 2010).

1.1.3 Governance in the context of Cape Town's informal settlement communities

Cape Town, South Africa's second-largest metropolitan municipality, is also challenged with a significant housing and service backlog. The backlog consists of shacks in informal settlements as well as on serviced (formal) sites and backyard shacks (related to densification and overcrowding). In 2022, 19% of households were living in shacks under such precarious conditions (SACN, 2022), and the number of informal settlements is growing while existing informal settlements further expand (Cinnamon & Noth, 2023).

Regarding local governance, Cape Town has undergone long phases of political instability and political competition between different tiers of the state run by different political parties (Ley, 2010) that also took effect on housing and service delivery (Ley, 2019). Furthermore, it was characterized by administrative restricting. Cape Town's Metropolitan Municipality was established after post-apartheid reforms that restructured independent municipalities into a single-tier structure in 2000. It comprises 116 wards, each represented by a ward councilor and committee. Meanwhile, eight planning districts without political mandates function as units for spatial and land-use planning. Wards and planning districts often have mismatched boundaries, creating challenges for responsibility, accountability, and transparency. Such misalignment is widely recognized in the literature as a barrier to good governance. Furthermore, ward committee input is frequently overlooked, as decision-making tends to remain with political-administrative stakeholders (Mamokhere, 2023; Naidoo, 2021; Silima & Auriacombe, 2013).

Another major challenge for local governance in Cape Town is the uneven distribution of informal settlements within the Metropolitan Municipality, reflecting historical racial segregation and settlement patterns with deep-rooted socioeconomic inequalities (Naidoo, 2021; Visagie et al., 2023). Areas close to the city center and along the Atlantic Sea are predominantly characterized by a middle- to upper-class socioeconomic structure, while low-income townships and informal settlements are increasingly concentrated in planning districts to the far southeast of the CBD, referred to as the Cape Flats. These areas, including Khayelitsha and Mitchells Plain, were established before the democratic transition and originated from the forced removals of Black and Coloured communities to the urban periphery (Turok et al., 2021). Today, these monofunctional residential areas remain both physically and economically disconnected from the rest of the city.

Furthermore, since lifting of the apartheid laws, the steady influx and migration to metropolitan areas like Cape Town have led to rapid growth of informal settlements in these less regulated districts of the Cape Flats. As a result, these areas face acute systemic, structural, and governance challenges, leaving residents particularly vulnerable regarding quality of life and well-being. A lack of service delivery has eroded trust in the state and fueled (often violent) protests, with the government frequently

perceived as unresponsive or even corrupt. High rates of crime and gang violence further undermine governance efforts (Drivdal, 2016). Since institutional governance frameworks are seemingly deficient or at least lack implementation, other informal governance arrangements and internal leadership structures have emerged (Drivdal, 2016). In light of these realities, strengthening relational governance and community engagement within informal settlements is crucial to foster more responsive governance that acknowledges residents' agency and active roles as stakeholders.

1.1.4 Governance and violence prevention in the informal settlement Monwabisi Park

Monwabisi Park, named after the isiXhosa word meaning "to bring happiness", exemplifies an informal settlement profoundly impacted by structural challenges associated with rapid urbanization. This densely populated settlement is located in the south-western sector of the Khayelitsha planning district. It is characterized by irregular spatial arrangements of shelters dispersed across undulating sand dune terrain. Access is limited to a small number of dirt roads and footpaths. Households lack direct connections to freshwater and sewage services, and – until 2025 - only those in the older section of Monwabisi Park have access to electricity (Brown-Luthango et al., 2016; Ley et al., 2021). This access to electricity was established as a result of a participatory process between the City of Cape Town and the community representatives, facilitated by an NGO (VPUU) as intermediary. Despite ongoing electrification efforts, some households continue to rely on fossil fuels, e.g. for cooking, which contributes to the persistent risk of shack fires (Lefulebe et al., 2014).

Since the initial settlement activities in late 1996, the area has expanded substantially. Old Monwabisi Park originally covered approximately two kilometers in length and 0.5 kilometers in width along the Mew Way access road, but it has since tripled in size (see Figure 1). In 2017, Monwabisi Park contained 6,954 structures. Within seven years, this number nearly doubled: by 2024, a total of 13,479 households had been established, accommodating 43,132 residents with an average household size of 3.2. (VPUU, 2024).

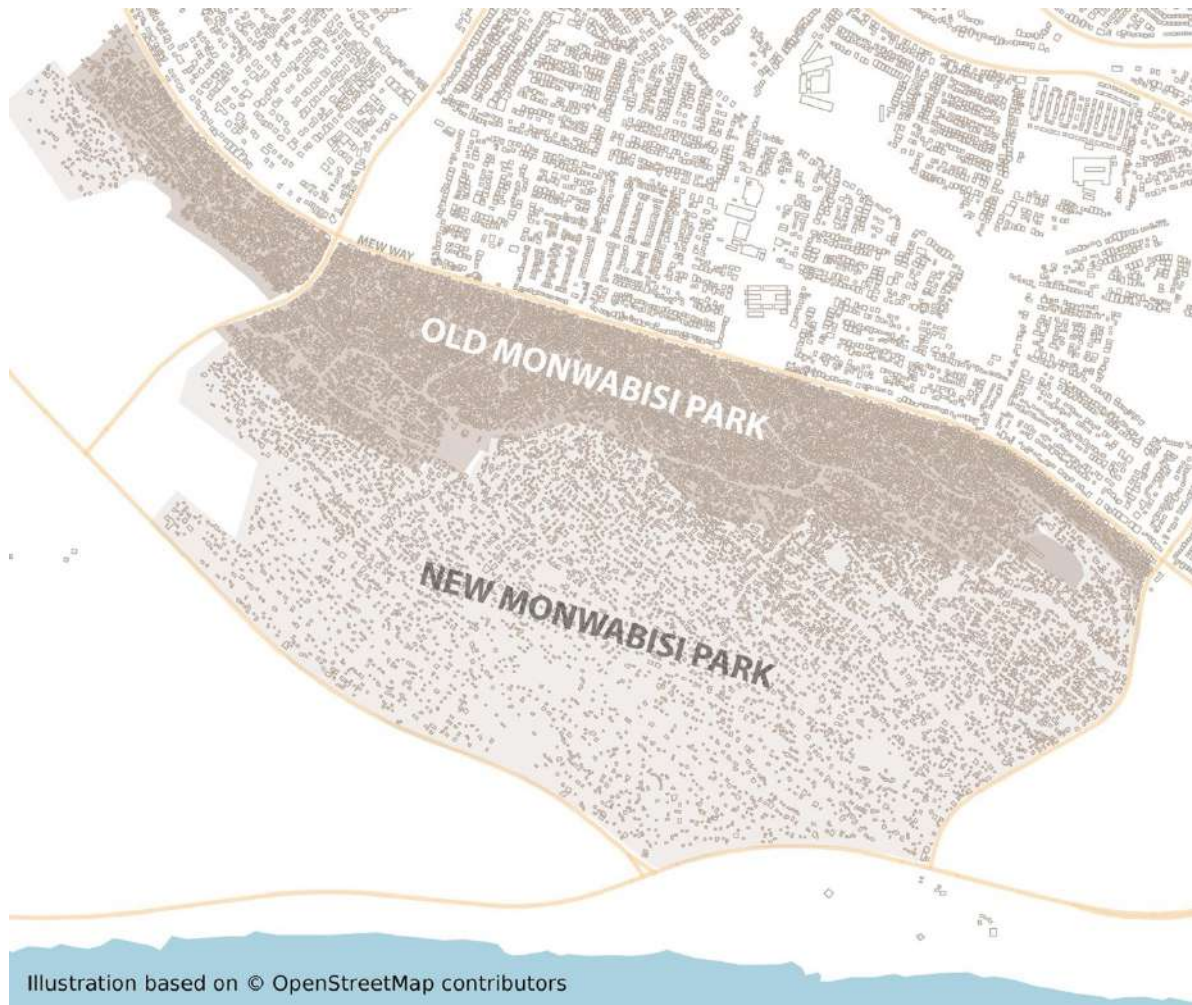


Figure 1. Expansion of the informal settlement Monwabisi Park. Source: the authors, 2025 based on © OpenStreetMap contributors

This expansion is partly due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced individuals into informal housing after losing income during pandemic-related shut-downs (see e.g., du Plessis, 2022; Smit, 2021).

The most recently developed section, New Monwabisi Park, was significantly impacted by the lack of formal connections to essential services such as electricity. However, during the Covid pandemic, the National Government and the City of Cape Town responded by quickly installing emergency public water connections—elevated water tanks regularly refilled by tanker trucks—and providing chemical toilets to address urgent needs. While these measures were essential for Covid relief, both the water tank system and chemical toilets were costly to maintain. After the emergency funding ended, the City of Cape Town incorporated the elevated water tanks into the regular water reticulation system and installed permanent communal water taps. However, sanitation in the area still depends on expensive chemical toilets. As of

2025, New Monwabisi Park is also being electrified, following participatory consultation processes facilitated by the intermediary VPUU.

Both the Old and New Monwabisi Park communities compete for limited resources to improve their infrastructure. This competition emerged in 2023–2024, when residents of Old Monwabisi Park demanded the same level of sanitation services—specifically, chemical toilets—as those provided to New Monwabisi Park. The socioeconomic situation of Monwabisi Park’s residents is as challenging as their spatial constraints. Approximately 84% of community members struggle to support themselves and their families on incomes below the poverty line (Brown-Luthango et al. 2016). Many residents have limited access to employment opportunities and experience persistent social and economic marginalization (Ley et al., 2021).

Monwabisi Park has, just as several other parts of Khayelitsha, been identified as an area with high levels of violence (Matzopoulos et al., 2020). A persistent lack of income opportunities for residents contributes to this violence. In response to these challenges, the Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) program was established in 2005. The program is grounded in an understanding of various types of violence—namely social, situational, and institutional violence (Krause et al., 2014)—and follows the theoretical framework of Galtung, which acknowledges direct, cultural, and structural violence (Galtung, 1969). The VPUU methodology is also cognizant of the fact that the underlying cause of these three types of violence is unhealed trauma (Jayakumar, 2019). VPUU is regarded as one of the best examples of the "Safety through Environmental Design" principle in South Africa, which was later integrated into the national White Paper on Safety and Security published in 2016 (Civilian Secretariat of Police, 2016). VPUU aims to strengthen core normative governance principles, including responsibility, accountability, transparency, and effectiveness. It is also referenced as an area-based approach focused on integrated planning as part of the national South African Integrated Urban Development Framework (CoGTA, 2016), a key policy document for urban development in South Africa.

The Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) approach is an integrated, area-based strategy that promotes, amongst others, social capital within communities. This strategy is structured around a set of primary objectives, each targeting the enhancement of community well-being (Krause, 2011; Krause et al., 2014).

The first objective emphasizes crime prevention through social development by supporting victims of violence and implementing prevention strategies through initiatives like Neighborhood Watch programs and collaborations with non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The second objective seeks to advance institutional development by providing leadership training and mentorship to community groups, thereby enabling self-organized service delivery. The third objective focuses on situational crime prevention through infrastructure development, including the construction of secure

public spaces such as pedestrian walkways and community centers, as well as the delivery of essential services to informal settlements through co-production. Community involvement is further promoted through the creation of Community Action Plans (CAPs) in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. These plans are meant to articulate community needs and aspirations, and to organize upgrading efforts into short, medium, and long-term interventions with an emphasis on projects that can be co-produced by the community. This approach exemplifies the co-creation of localized Integrated Development Frameworks that dovetail into the municipal IDP process.

The primary objectives are further operationalized through targeted work streams within the program (see Figure 2), targeted at (1) social cultural development, (2) improvement of safety and security, (3) economic development, (4) institutional development, (5) knowledge management and (6) infrastructure development. The knowledge management work stream entails the monitoring and evaluation of program impacts, as well as the effective dissemination of lessons learned among all partners.

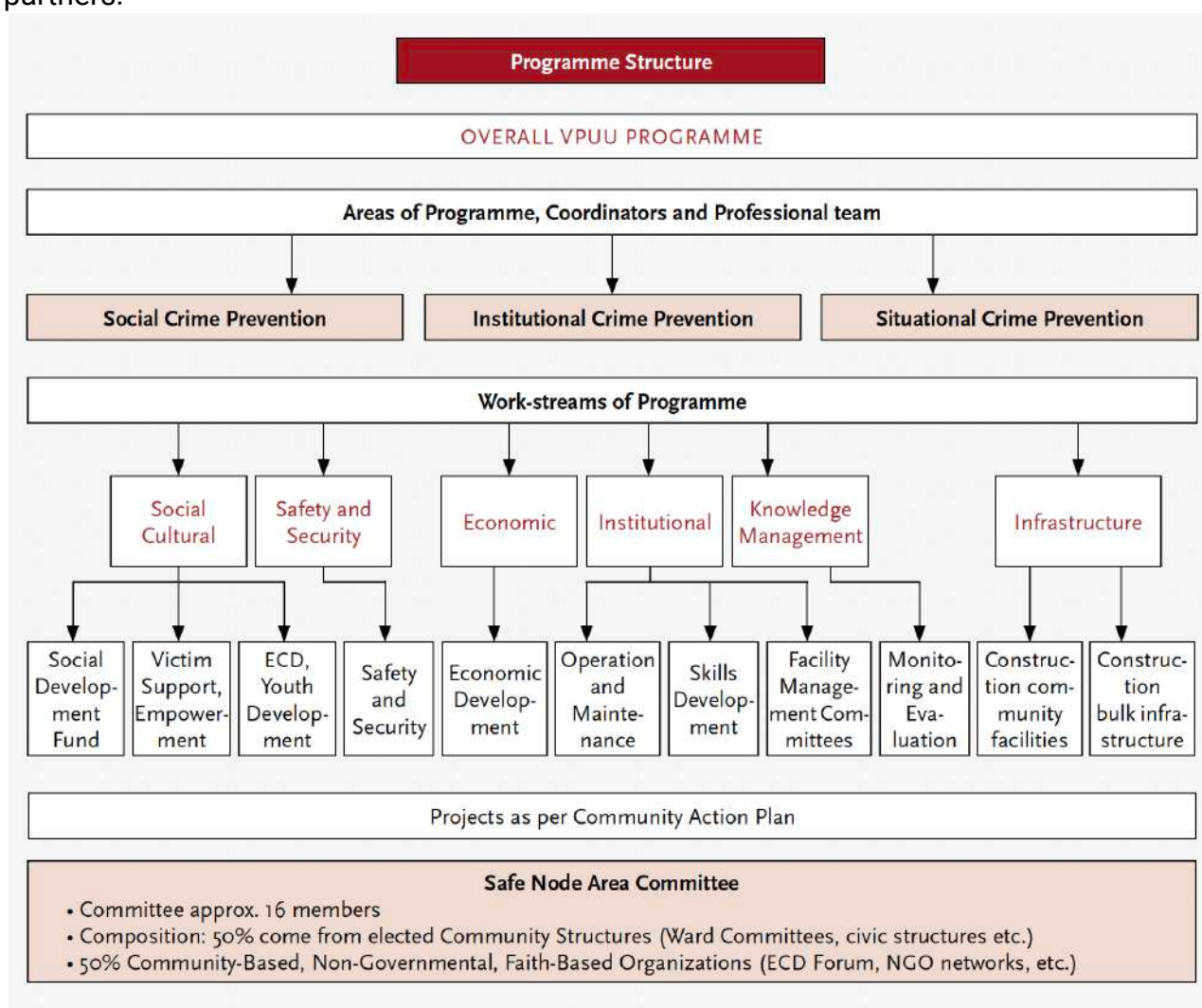


Figure 2. Structure of the VPUU Program. Source: Krause et al., 2014

To implement the VPUU approach, a non-profit organization of the same name was established to facilitate collaboration between communities and local authorities (Krause, 2014). This organization subsequently created local governance arrangements for informal settlement development projects, thereby enabling direct stakeholder participation in planning, decision-making, and implementation processes. These governance arrangements integrate pre-existing self-organized community initiatives alongside leadership from community committee members. To enhance local governance, three tiers of intermediaries were established: VPUU, which acts as a bridge between the community and local government; the Safe Node Area Committee (SNAC), which connects various community groups; and “Change-Makers”—local employees hired on short-term contracts through Public Employment Programs via VPUU as intermediary, providing tangible economic benefits to the community. This structure is illustrated in Figure 3.

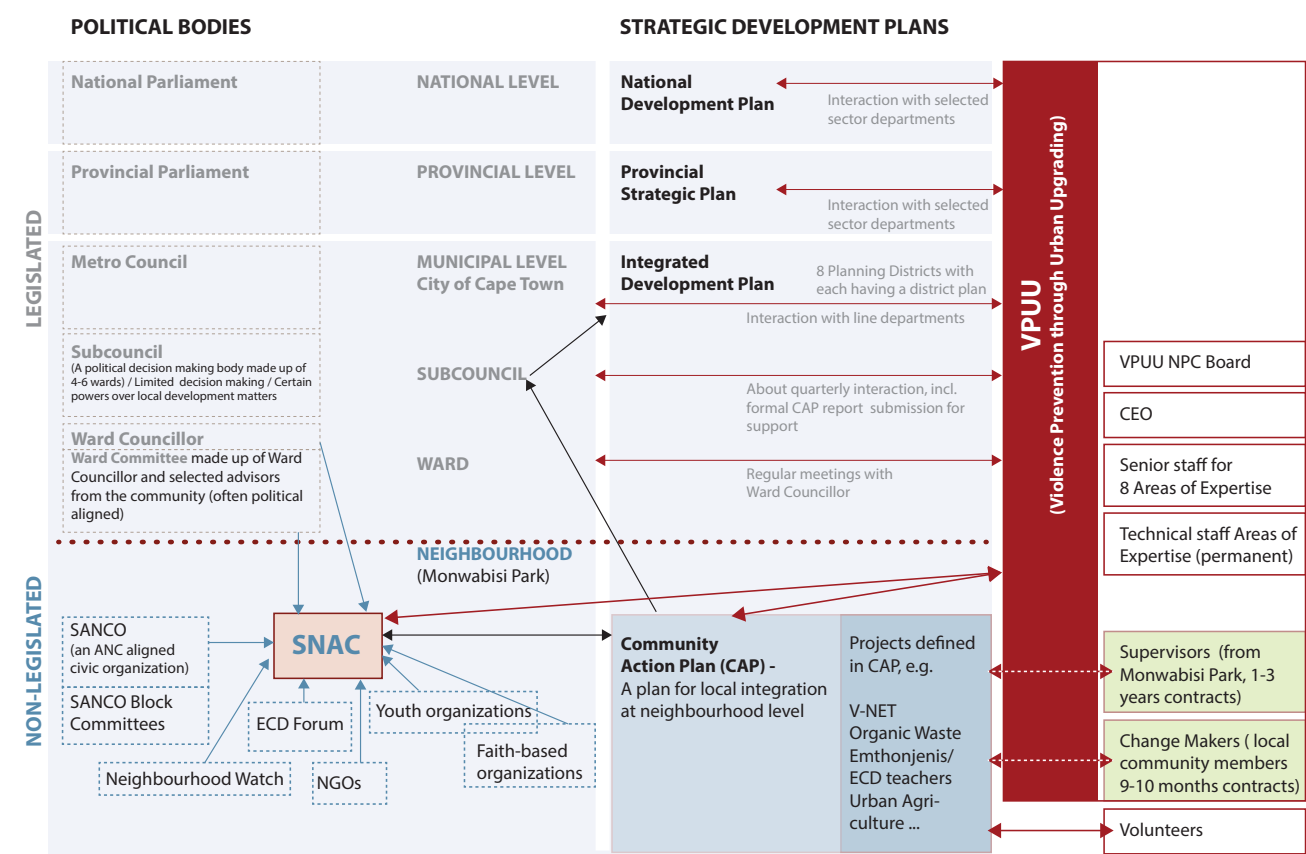


Figure 3. Key actors of the local governance arrangement in Monwabisi Park. Source: the authors, 2024

The specific roles and responsibilities of each governance body can be outlined as follows:

VPUU NPC (Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading Not for Profit Company): Established in 2013, VPUU NPC serves as a key intermediary, fostering sustained dialogue between the public sector and local citizens, and facilitating the

conceptualization, organization, and implementation of transformative initiatives in marginalized communities. The organization has formed partnerships with the City of Cape Town, various communities throughout South Africa including the community of Khayelitsha, the German Development Bank (KfW), local and international professionals and researchers, the National Treasury, and the Western Cape Government. Through these collaborations, VPUU NPC aims to reduce violence by implementing strategic, area-based interventions designed to improve the quality of life and well-being of residents living in informal settlements (VPUU, 2016). Internally, VPUU NPC (which calls itself by the abbreviated name VPUU also used in this report) has established a range of thematic teams, each contributing specialized expertise to initiatives such as the Informal Settlement Support Program (ISSP) of the Western Cape Government Department of Human Settlements. These teams focus on areas structured around processes, namely Community Participation, Participatory Planning as Co-design for Spatial Justice, Project Management and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL). Furthermore, they are structured around programmatic themes such as Early Childhood Development, Local Economic Development, ICT4D and Area-Based Management, collectively strengthening the organization's capacity for effective intervention and community support (VPUU, 2020). As part of the participatory process, VPUU brings the Community Action Plan (CAP) from the local community structure (SNAC) into the city administrative structure through the Subcouncil (the political structure) and the relevant line departments (municipal administration) required to contribute to the CAP's implementation.

Safe Node Area Committee (SNAC): In response to the need for an impartial, community-oriented intermediary, VPUU developed the Safe Node Area Committee (SNAC)—a governance body composed of elected representatives from actively engaged community groups. These groups represent key sectors such as Early Childhood Development, Youth, Health, and existing civic organizations such as SANCO. Each sector is represented by two representatives. Through close collaboration with both VPUU and the wider community, SNAC acts as an intermediary, facilitating communication and ensuring that local governance reflects community needs and priorities. Additionally, SNAC contributes to spatial development within the neighborhood by partnering with VPUU to revise the Community Action Plan (CAP) biennially.

Change Makers and Supervisors: Among VPUU's key innovations was the introduction of "Change Makers" in Monwabisi Park. Selected from the local community, these individuals participate actively in various VPUU-initiated programs. Prospective Change Makers apply via an open and transparent process at VPUU and are contracted for nine-month periods, with responsibilities varying according to their assigned cohort or project. Their duties include knowledge dissemination, raising resident awareness, and supporting both the implementation and maintenance of VPUU projects. Acting as intermediaries between the community and VPUU, they play a crucial role in communicating information and aligning community needs with VPUU's

expertise, thereby fostering trust. Change Makers operate under the guidance of community members who are employed as supervisors for one to three years and are supported by VPUU's permanent staff, known as facilitators. This instrument relies on public funding allocated to VPUU through Public Employment Programs designed to reintegrate unemployed individuals into the workforce.

1.2 Co-production and placemaking as enabling aspects of informal settlement communities

The Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading approach is embedded in theories of co-production and placemaking. Co-production refers to collaborative processes between community members and other stakeholders in designing, implementing, and maintaining urban interventions. Placemaking describes the ways individuals and communities shape the physical and social character of their environment to create a unique sense of place and place identity. The concept of co-production has acquired increasing attention across various disciplines over the past two decades (Lee et al., 2024). In urban studies and planning, the literature explores, among other, the socio-spatial effects of co-production, highlighting its deep connection with placemaking processes (Ellery & Ellery, 2019). According to Schneekloth and Shibley (1995), placemaking involves the dynamic social and spatial transformations of specific locations by individuals and communities, creating a unique sense of place and fostering a distinct place identity.

The concept of a sense of place encompasses both conscious awareness and subconscious responses, including the emotions and attachments people develop toward specific locations (Shamai, 1991). Moreover, having a strong sense of place is recognized as a key factor that affects individuals' willingness to engage in co-production activities (Manzo & Perkins, 2006; Thompson & Prokopy, 2016; Ellery & Ellery, 2019; Meetiyyagoda et al., 2023). This relationship can be linked to the connection between voluntary participation in co-production processes and the development of personal fulfillment and a sense of ownership (Puerari et al., 2018).

Placemaking is often associated with the creation of social infrastructure, which can help mitigate inequality (Klinenberg, 2018)—a factor particularly significant in informal settlements. Studies show community groups use placemaking as a strategic tool for upgrading their environments (Ley, 2019). A sense of place influences the willingness to join co-productive efforts, while participation also enriches it. Together, co-production and placemaking are discussed as producing more effective planning outcomes, and tangible placemaking initiatives are seen to further strengthen governance quality.

In this context, co-production and placemaking can be viewed as integral components of good governance. Normative concepts of good governance incorporate

essential elements of participation and horizontal relationships to ensure transparency, trust, and accountability throughout the processes. Recently, co-production and co-creation have emerged as effective approaches to tackle the various challenges present in participatory planning. The advantages of co-production include fostering greater inclusiveness and empowerment among community members (Osborne et al., 2018; Fokdal & Ley, 2018), thereby contributing to the principles of good governance. By emphasizing collaborative efforts, co-production serves as a responsive strategy to address the declining legitimacy of the public sector and its increasingly limited resources, focusing on the outcomes generated within the policy cycle (Brandsen et al., 2018).

Co-production and related forms of civic engagement have the potential to strengthen social capital and enhance environmental quality (Corcoran et al., 2017). These factors are considered essential aspects of quality of life within the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) framework for measuring individual well-being (OECD, 2015). Informal settlements that are often just studied in terms of their material conditions, offer detailed insights into co-production and governance as elements that strengthen social relations and thereby contribute to empowerment.

1.3 Contextualizing quality of life and well-being in informal settlement communities

South Africa has a long history of surveys for social indicator research, including objective and subjective indicators for quality of life (Møller & Roberts, 2023). At the national level, longitudinal data from the World Values Survey Series, ongoing since the 1980s (Kotzé & Steenekamp, 2009; Møller & Roberts, 2021), provide a broad overview. International comparative data are complemented by sources like the World Happiness Report Dashboard (Gallup Analytics, 2025). Regionally, quality of life surveys for the Gauteng area have been conducted every two years between 2009 and 2022, resulting in six survey rounds (De Kadt et al., 2021; Mushongera et al., 2024). However, while both national and regional studies establish correlations between socioeconomic conditions and perceived life satisfaction, they are not specifically designed to target individuals outside economic prosperity.

For Cape Town, the Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS), launched in 2002, focuses on young adults in the region. CAPS assesses various domains of quality of life and their influence on subjective well-being, which it treats as a dual component—affective (happiness) and cognitive (satisfaction) (see, for example, Tibesigwa et al., 2016). National and regional well-being results show that inequality of happiness, measured by the standard deviation, is high in South Africa (Bothma & Veenhoven, 2024). This key finding indicates that aggregated national or regional data often overlook the deep social divides and thereby strong deviation of informal settlement communities to the aggregated data sets. By moving beyond aggregated data focusing on non-

economic drivers for well-being in contexts that can be characterized as socioeconomically disadvantaged, research can support more effective policy development.

This study therefore pursued a dual approach to contribute knowledge to the field of well-being research: First, by conducting a highly geographically focused study on an informal settlement on the southeastern fringe of Cape Town, the focus is shifted from aggregated data from large populations to a disaggregated approach—a purposively selected subset of the population of an informal settlement—in line with the "leave no one behind" approach. Second, the methodological focus is on the qualitative investigation of influencing factors to understand the interplay of different well-being domains and the role of civic engagement within co-production and governance in this interplay. Ultimately, this approach aims to provide nuanced insights that can inform more inclusive and effective strategies for enhancing well-being in informal settlement communities. Furthermore, this approach corresponds with efforts to measure apparent quality of life—as distinct from assumed quality of life—following the tradition of the subjective well-being school (Veenhoven, 2005). It also incorporates elements of the ethics-based well-being school, particularly the capability approach (Sen, 1985; Nussbaum, 2000), by considering individuals' abilities to pursue valued activities (Sen, 2009) and examining the impact of these activities on various forms of livelihood capital (DFID, 1999).

Given that the cognitive evaluation of life satisfaction is deeply context-dependent and varies significantly across cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds (Diener et al., 2003), it is essential to contextualize quality of life domains to ensure cultural sensitivity and prevent potential offense. For instance, in contexts where individuals are longing for employment opportunities, the concept of work-life balance may differ substantially from contexts in which paid employment is the prevailing norm. Abstract measures, such as those utilized in the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI), should therefore be approached with similar sensitivity and accompanied by qualitative questions that establish contextual background prior to introducing standardized PWI items.

The second part of this report provides a detailed account of the methods employed to incorporate individual contextualizations, utilizing the well-established OECD framework for measuring well-being (see Chapter 2.2). Furthermore, it elaborates on the process by which this contextualization was operationalized within qualitative question sets, which were developed and refined through multiple pilot tests with members of the respondent group (see Chapter 3).

Part II – Empirical Research

2 Research framework

This study builds on the theoretical discourses outlined in Part I and analyzes the VPUU approach exemplified by four co-produced social infrastructure interventions in Monwabisi Park, using an inductive research methodology to explore the links between co-production and well-being, as well as the interplay between placemaking and good governance. This approach frames placemaking as a socially constructed process, enabling an analysis of how it supports good governance while also investigating how effective governance arrangements facilitate placemaking initiatives. Within this framework, placemaking and co-production exhibit a reciprocal relationship: co-production can serve as an integral component in the implementation of placemaking strategies, while the outcomes of these strategies, in turn, foster a greater willingness to participate in co-production. Similarly, co-production and good governance are interdependent. Good governance provides the structural conditions necessary for effective co-production, whereas co-production facilitates the development of self-organizing structures that may enhance governance quality.

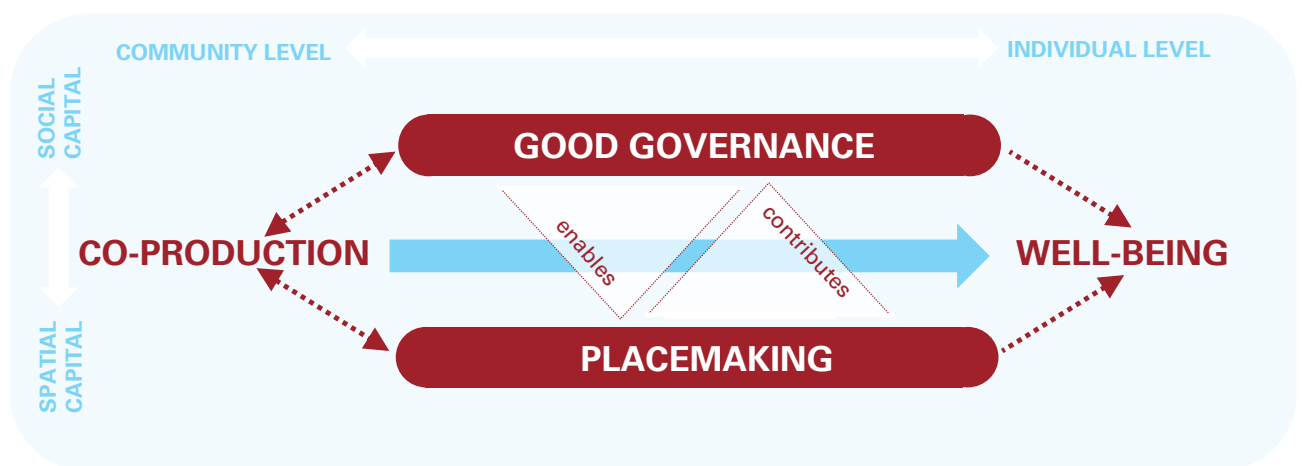


Figure 4. Conceptual framework. Source: the authors, 2024.

Well-being is conceptualized in this study as a multifaceted and evolving construct that encompasses both subjective and objective dimensions. To evaluate the influence of co-production and governance on well-being, the study introduces an

analytical model (see Figure 5). This model draws upon the well-being domains identified in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Better Life Index (BLI) and guidelines for measuring subjective well-being (OECD, 2013). The analytical model categorizes these domains into three primary clusters:

- Material Conditions (including housing quality, income, and wealth),
- Quality of Life (QoL) (covering employment status, health status, education and skills, social connections, environmental quality, and personal security), and
- Subjective well-being (encompassing life evaluation, affect, and eudaimonia).

These clusters are intentionally structured to highlight the interplay between concrete (material conditions) and abstract (quality of life) factors, and how they collectively influence an individual's perception of well-being. Furthermore, the model incorporates livelihood capitals from the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) – specifically natural, physical, economic, human, and social capital (DFID, 1999). This comprehensive approach enables a detailed examination of how co-production and governance affect the livelihoods of communities in informal settlements, with the ultimate goal of fostering improved well-being (Annisa et al., 2024).

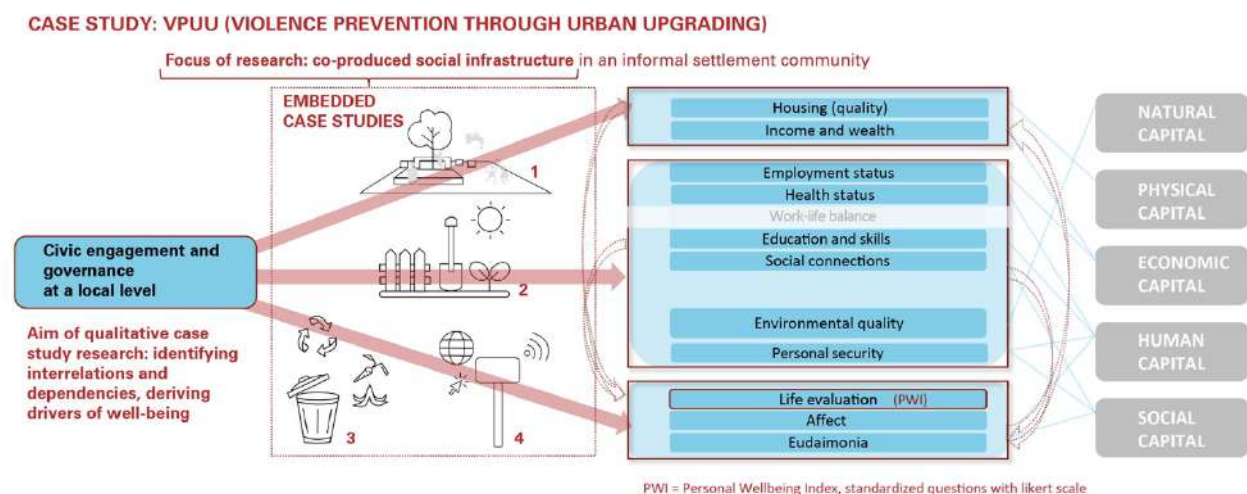


Figure 5. Analytical model. Source: the authors, 2024.

This analytical model is used within a case study research strategy, based on multi-method qualitative data collection to examine the VPUU approach and its co-created interventions in Monwabisi Park. The co-created interventions serve as contextualized lenses to investigate how co-production and governance influence (A) material conditions, (B) Quality of Life (QoL), and (C) personal well-being, while also linking this influence to the five livelihood capitals previously outlined.

3 Methodology

3.1 Case study selection

To examine the influence of civic engagement within co-production and governance on the sub-domains of well-being discussed previously, the VPUU approach was selected as a case study, focusing on co-production in the informal settlement of Monwabisi Park. This case is representative of informal settlement communities that face characteristic challenges such as inadequate service delivery, limited opportunities, and informal governance structures. The VPUU approach implemented in Monwabisi Park offers valuable insights into the extent to which co-production and place-making approaches can enhance perceived quality of life.

Four types of co-produced interventions were selected as embedded case studies to be analyzed in depth and provide concrete examples of the VPUU approach. These interventions demonstrate the implementation of co-production within Monwabisi Park to create social infrastructure. As mentioned in Chapter 1.1.4, VPUU has worked in the community since 2009 (Barry & Kingwill, 2020) using an area-based strategy to provide social infrastructure in close collaboration with the community. Though each intervention is unique, they are connected by VPUU's overarching framework and its local governance structure throughout the project lifecycle.

The selection criteria required that all interventions embody co-productive and place-making approaches, that their implementation had been completed or was ongoing for a significant period, and that community participants were accessible for interviews to ensure feasibility. Based on these criteria, the following embedded case studies were chosen:

- A. Emthonjeni is a multifunctional facility integrating Early Childhood Development with public space, supporting both children and adults.
- B. Urban Food Gardens transform unused areas into productive gardens, tackling food security and supporting local ECD centers.
- C. The waste-to-resource initiative creates a sustainable waste management cycle through community-run composting.
- D. V-NET, a co-produced WIFI network, improves digital inclusion by providing affordable internet access and local content.



Figure 6. The four types of embedded case studies. Source: the authors, 2024.

Chapter 4.1 provides detailed descriptions of the embedded case studies that exemplify the VPUU approach, as well as their purpose, challenges and processes for scaling up.

3.2 Study design and data collection methods

As part of WP4, empirical research was conducted in 2024 and 2025, including a two-week intensive field study and workshop in October and November 2024. The core research team comprised members from the Chair of International Urbanism at the University of Stuttgart and VPUU. This team was responsible for designing the study, developing the research framework, guiding the methodology, and ensuring both academic and practical relevance. Additionally, the team addressed ethical considerations, coordinated data collection, conducted in-depth analysis and synthesis, and produced research outputs, including a comprehensive report, conference papers, academic publications, and presentations, to disseminate findings to scholarly and professional audiences.

3.2.1 Study management and workplan

Following an initial preparatory phase, the study was implemented over an 18-month period. Central to the research process was the conceptualization of qualitative on-site research activities, which encompassed the development of an analytical framework, the design and pilot testing of qualitative questionnaires, the formulation of

themes for focus group discussions, the construction of the Photovoice survey, and the planning of follow-up expert interviews. Site selection and the identification of case studies within the site were also undertaken during this stage. In the concluding months of the conceptualization phase, efforts were directed toward securing the acceptance of local stakeholders and obtaining ethical approval. Preparatory activities for data collection were finalized in July 2024, followed by a refinement phase from July to October 2024, which facilitated the start of fieldwork in October and November 2024. The key milestones of this process are illustrated in the timeline presented in Figure 7.

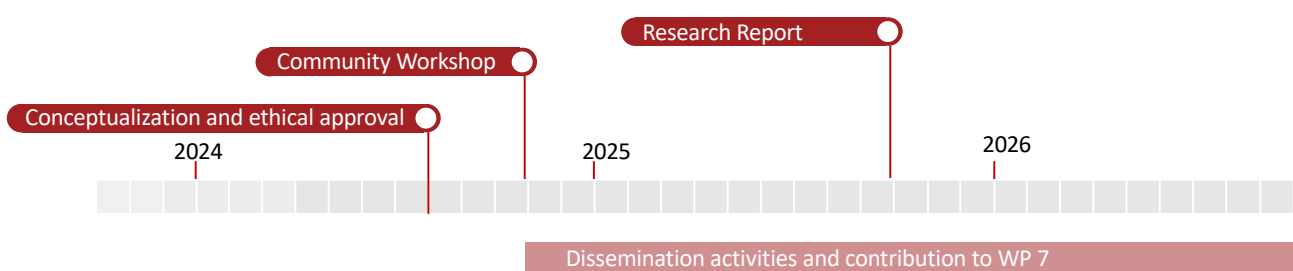


Figure 7. Timeline of the WISER project with key milestones of WP 4/ task 4.4.
Source: the authors, 2024.

Activities	2023	2024				2025		
	Oct - Dec	Jan- Mar	Apr- Jun	July- Sept	Oct - Dec	Jan- Mar	Apr- Jun	July- Sept
Development of research concept								
Development of questionnaires, focus group themes & survey								
Ethics review & study permits								
Recruitment & training field staff								
Piloting and data collection								
Data cleaning, analysis, and reporting								
Community engagement meetings								
Dissemination								
Writing & publication								

Table 1. Activities within task 4.4 of WP4. Source: the authors, 2025.

3.2.2 Desktop research

The desktop research approach employed a systematic narrowing of focus, progressing from broad to specific contexts. This process provided a comprehensive overview, beginning at the national scale of South Africa, then moving to the city scale of Cape Town, and ultimately examining the status of informal settlements.

The research further explored the spatial, social, and governance aspects of Monwabisi Park itself. Building on this foundation, it investigated VPUU and their ongoing and past collaborative initiatives with the Monwabisi Park community. Altogether, this preliminary desktop research established a strong basis for understanding existing conditions before proceeding to primary data collection.

In the field of well-being research, several key data sources were considered with a particular emphasis on South Africa and Cape Town. These include the World Database of Happiness (<https://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/nations/south-africa-33/>), Gallup World Happiness Reports (<https://www.gallup.com/analytics/349487/world-happiness-report.aspx>), and publications from the South Africa Quality of Life (SAQoL) trends study (e.g., Davids & Gaibie, 2011; Møller, 2013).

3.2.3 Qualitative data collection

The qualitative data collection employed multiple methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the embedded case studies in Monwabisi Park. First, transect walks were conducted with VPUU's Change Makers, VPUU representatives, and local residents, allowing for direct observations of the four projects' implementation and impact. Next, a joint focus group discussion, including participatory mapping, provided an initial overview of the area and community engagement, followed by project-specific discussions to capture more nuanced perspectives. Additionally, eighteen semi-structured interviews with community members were carried out, guided by a questionnaire based on eight thematic modules assessing various aspects of life satisfaction, civic engagement, and social, human, economic, physical, and natural capital (see ANNEX II). To complement these findings, semi-structured expert interviews with the VPUU CEO and project leaders offered critical insights into project design, execution, and community involvement. Furthermore, an online Photovoice survey was conducted among selected Change Makers to explore their perceptions of how co-produced interventions influenced quality of life and well-being.

The semi-structured interview questions were carefully designed around eight modules corresponding with the domains of quality life specified in the analytical framework (Figure 5). The questionnaire combined standardized questions based on the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) to assess well-being through a valid cross-cultural instrument (International Wellbeing Group, 2024), with a set of qualitative, open-ended, questions around the livelihood capitals, to guarantee both a comprehensive overview of well-being and a detailed qualitative investigation of its complex and contextual aspects. The entire questionnaire then underwent comprehensive on-site testing with support from VPUU experts and invited community members to identify and resolve potential comprehension issues. This process enhanced the overall usability of the questionnaire and facilitated the fieldwork process.

Following pretesting, the research team finalized the questionnaire digitally using KoBo Toolbox, a free data collection platform provided by the international nonprofit organization KoBo, supported by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and partners. The project was hosted on KoBo Toolbox's secure, password-protected servers to ensure data security. Additionally, a paper-based version of the questionnaire was produced to enable simultaneous analog and digital data collection. This dual approach facilitated efficient digital data management while also providing interviewees with clear paper records, fostering trust and serving as a reliable backup in case of technical issues.

Sampling and recruitment of participants: The VPUU team pre-selected participants during the data collection process to ensure representation from a diverse array of community stakeholders. This included engaged community members, supervisors, Change Makers working with VPUU, volunteers, and representatives from the Safe Node Area Committee (SNAC). As outlined in Chapter 1.1.4., Change Makers are community members who hold short-term contracts with VPUU, serving as intermediaries that connect VPUU, SNAC, and the wider community while facilitating project execution on-site (Annisa et al., 2024). SNAC is an elected community organization that acts as a link between VPUU and the local community, advocating for local interests and facilitating community engagement in governance and development efforts (ibid.). Each focus group discussion consisted of approximately ten to twelve participants.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with community participants. A sample of eighteen participants were selected to allow for in-depth exploration of individual experiences and perspectives. In qualitative research, sample sizes are typically limited, as the aim is **not** statistical generalization but rather the generation of rich, detailed insights into social processes and meanings. Data analysis leads to the identification of themes. Smaller samples also enable researchers to conduct more intensive analysis of thematic narratives and contextual factors (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data collection team (on-site): On-site data collection was supported by multiple members of VPUU, including Change Makers and volunteers who acted as facilitators and guides during the process, as well as young researchers from the University of Stuttgart enrolled in the M.Sc. Architecture and Urban Planning (ARCH) and the M.Sc. Integrated Urbanism and Sustainable Design (IUSD) programs. Together with and supervised by the core research team, they carried out data collection in the field. The team was responsible for engaging directly with community members, gathering qualitative data, and documenting local perspectives and practices, thereby contributing essential context-specific insights to the study.

Method	Tool	Aim
General Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	• Participatory mapping • Graphical Recording	Getting introduced to VPUU members and all workshop participants, ice-breaking. Gaining an overall understanding and timeline of development of the four projects, initial insights into the area, and the residents' engagement in the development process.
Specific FGD related to embedded case studies	• Participatory mapping • Graphical recording/note taking	Gaining project related information; refining project development timeline; gaining in-depth insights participant's involvement in the projects.
Transect Walks	• Go-along interviews • Observations • Photos • Note taking	Gaining firsthand insights into the project implementation and impact on the ground; visually recording project statuses; and gaining further information on participant's involvement in the project
Semi-structured interviews	• Voice recording • Recording in KoBo toolbox • Graphical Recording	Understanding on an individual level, life satisfaction and civic engagement, and the development in their social, human, economic, physical, and natural capital.
Expert interviews	• Voice recording • Note taking	Gaining insights into the governance aspects of the projects; Cross-checking information from selected semi-structured interviews; Filling gaps and clarifying points that emerged during the interviews.
Online Photovoice survey	• Photos • Recording of answers in KoBo toolbox	Participants' viewpoints on their neighbourhood and projects they were involved with

Table 2. Data collection aims, methods and tools. Source: the authors, 2025.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with participatory mapping

Tools: Participatory mapping, graphical recording, note taking

A joint focus group discussion was conducted, moderated by experienced VPUU facilitators specializing in community participation, while the research team contributed probing questions throughout. Simultaneously, two research team members systematically mapped the discussion, recording project timelines, key quotations, and other relevant information.

The discussion sought to provide an overall understanding of the four embedded case studies and to gain initial insights into the area and the residents' engagement in the development process. Additionally, the session served as an introduction between the research team, the Monwabisi Park community, and VPUU members, helping to "break the ice" and establish rapport. The session provided an overall understanding and timeline of the development of the four embedded case studies, initial insights into the area, and the residents' engagement in the development process, while also facilitating introductions and engagement with VPUU members and workshop participants.

Building on insights from the initial joint FGD session, four case study-specific focus FGDs were held in parallel, each dedicated to one of the four embedded case studies. Participants included research team members, Change Makers, SNAC members, and VPUU representatives. The sessions featured participatory mapping and systematic documentation of key quotations and notes to capture context-specific information. These case study-specific FGDs sought to collect nuanced data on project development, implementation, and community engagement. Each group generated a participatory map of its respective case study, along with valuable quotes and important notes, providing rich, context-specific insights into the development and engagement processes of each case study.

Transect walks with observations and go-along interviews

Tools: Go-along interviews, observations, photos, note taking

Four transect walks incorporating go-along interviews were conducted with VPUU Change Makers, VPUU representatives, and Monwabisi Park residents. These walks were strategically aligned with the four embedded case studies previously discussed in the FGDs, enabling the research team to directly observe multiple project sites. The sessions promoted closer interactions between researchers and participants. As community members and VPUU staff guided the researchers through the settlement, the team combined interviews with on-site observations to generate context-rich data on project implementation and impact. These walks also facilitated visual documentation and generated additional insights into participants' roles, involvement, and experiences.

Semi-structured qualitative interviews with community members

Tools: Voice recording, recording in KoBo toolbox and on paper-based questionnaires, graphical recording

Eighteen semi-structured interviews were conducted in smaller groups using a questionnaire based on eight thematic modules derived from the research framework (see Annex II). The first two modules assessed life satisfaction and civic engagement, while modules three to seven focused on social, human, economic, physical, and natural capital. The interviews aimed to gain an understanding of the individual level of participants' life satisfaction, civic engagement, and the development of their social, human, economic, physical, and natural capital. The interviews provided detailed insights into participants' personal experiences, perceptions of community development, and the various dimensions of capital that influence their quality of life and engagement.

Semi-structured expert interviews with NGO representatives

Tools: Voice recording, note taking

Additional data was obtained through semi-structured interviews with the VPUU CEO and project leaders, allowing for flexible and in-depth discussions on project design, implementation, and community involvement. These interviews aimed to gain insights into the governance aspects of the projects, cross-check information gathered from the semi-structured interviews, and clarify or fill gaps that emerged during other data collection activities. The interviews provided critical insights into project governance, validated information from previous interviews, and helped address ambiguities or missing details in the data collected.

Online Photovoice survey

Tools: Photos, online survey

An online survey was launched targeting a selected group of Change Makers, enabling participants to share their perspectives on their neighbourhood and the projects they were involved with. The survey aimed to gain insights into participants' perceptions of the impact of co-produced interventions on quality of life and well-being. The survey captured participants' viewpoints on their neighbourhoods and the projects they participated in, providing direct feedback on the perceived effects of community-led interventions. The response rate of the Photovoice survey was sixteen participants.

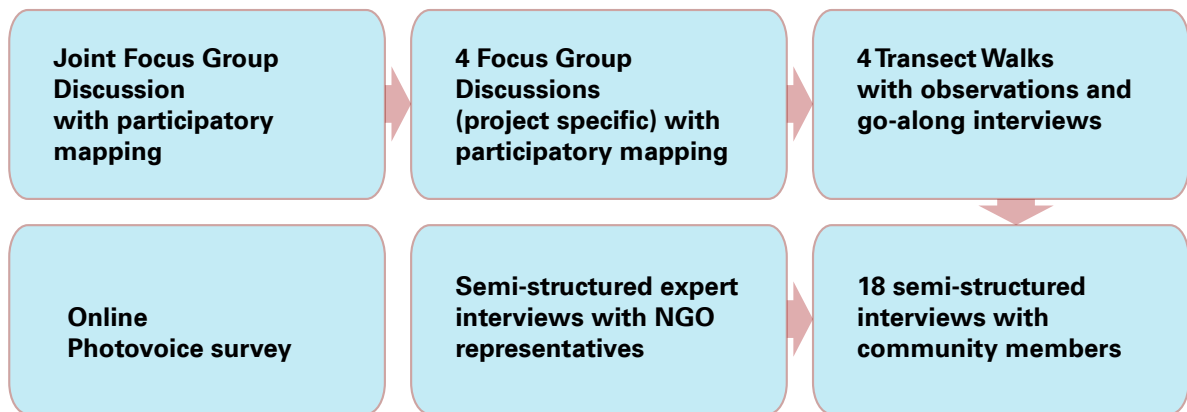


Figure 8. Sequence of data collection methods and tools. Source: the authors, 2025.

3.2.4 Quantitative data collection

To complement the qualitative depth with some degree of comparability, the eighteen interview partners were also asked to respond to a set of standardized Personal Well-being Index (PWI) questions. PWI is designed to generate a quantifiable measure of subjective well-being, with scores ranging from zero to ten. This limited quantitative dataset allowed basic descriptive analysis which is not statistically representative, but enabled comparative analysis across the various components of WP4. To enhance contextual understanding and support a robust mixed-methods approach, the PWI was administered in conjunction with qualitative questions. The Photovoice surveys also included the standardized PWI question set.

Additionally, quantitative information referring to the case studies were collected during focus group discussions. This approach sought to clarify the spatial, temporal, and social dimensions of the project, including community members and other stakeholders involved, project timeframes, the quantity of projects implemented, and their respective locations within the settlement.

3.4 Data management and analysis

The research team tailored the data management and analysis procedures to the distinct requirements of each data collection format, thereby addressing the unique characteristics inherent to each method. The subsequent sections outline the specific steps undertaken in managing and analyzing both (1) qualitative and (2) quantitative data.

3.4.1 Qualitative data analysis

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with participatory mapping: The FGD data, including both verbal discussions and visual mapping outputs, underwent systematic

thematic analysis. Key themes as well as sites within Monwabisi Park were identified. The participatory mapping components were analyzed together with the corresponding discussion content to achieve a holistic perspective on the influences of participants involvement in the projects on their well-being.

Transect Walks with observations: During the transect walks, go-along interviews were conducted with respect to the interests of the participants and focusing on what was being demonstrated by the community members and VPUU staff. Sketches were made where necessary and detailed field notes were recorded to capture both verbal responses and observational insights. Following data collection, these materials were then analyzed based on each case study under relevant themes following the analytical framework presented in Chapter 2. This approach allowed for the integration of spatial observations with participant narratives, providing an overview of the case studies' impact on natural, physical, economic, human and social capitals.

Semi-structured interviews with community members: Individual interview transcripts were coded thematically. Thematic analysis was conducted on the semi-structured interview responses, utilizing two levels of coding. The first level entailed initial coding to identify emerging patterns and concepts, while the second level involved developing broader themes that encapsulated participants' experiences and perspectives regarding their involvement in the case studies. The analysis was guided by the analytical framework established at the outset of the research to ensure a systematic approach. Coding was facilitated with MaxQDA, which enabled the organization and analysis of code distribution across multiple transcripts. MaxQDA also supported the visualization of code relationships within and between documents, aiding in mapping the frequency and overlap of thematic codes.

Expert interviews with NGO representatives: Expert interview data was analyzed to understand institutional perspectives, implementation strategies, and organizational learning from the projects. These interviews provided crucial context for interpreting community-level data and understanding the broader governance and implementation framework surrounding the four case study projects.

3.4.2 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the standardized Personal Well-being Index (PWI) questionnaire were systematically analyzed at the item level and subsequently visualized using condensed radar charts. Aggregated results were evaluated for two distinct groups: (1) individuals actively engaged in co-production processes and civic initiatives, and (2) community members who participated solely as users of social infrastructure. Additionally, PWI outcomes from the Photovoice survey—which was administered exclusively to Change Makers—were analyzed separately to provide targeted insights.

Furthermore, spatial information about intervention sites per embedded case study, as well as defining elements of each case, were depicted through map-based and three-dimensional visualizations.

3.5 Data quality and management

3.5.1 Data validation

By combining multiple data collection methods, including focus group discussions, individual interviews, transect walks, and participatory mapping, methodological triangulation was achieved. This allowed for cross-validation of findings. Additionally, data triangulation was achieved through collecting information from multiple sources, including community members, VPUU staff, Change Makers, and SNAC representatives.

During data validation, several limitations of the exclusively online Photovoice survey became evident. Although some Change Makers successfully uploaded photos with accompanying comments, a plausibility check of responses to the PWI questions raised significant concerns. The abstract nature of the PWI items—presented solely in the digital questionnaire without direct researcher explanation—suggested that participants may not have answered with sufficient care or understanding. The survey also suffered from a low response rate: only sixteen Change Makers (around 8% of the total number of Change Makers in the settlement) participated, following post-card-based advertising with links or QR codes. Given the lack of representativeness and questionable response quality, the research team decided to exclude the PWI results of the Photovoice survey from subsequent analysis and discussion.

3.5.2 Data security, transmission and storage

The management of all collected data was conducted in accordance with established ethical research standards and data protection protocols. The primary measures implemented included the secure storage of physical materials, the management of digital files, and the implementation of controlled access protocols for research team members and students, with these measures being intended for academic purposes only. Audio recordings and transcripts were stored and shared with restricted access. Furthermore, all identifying information was anonymized during the transcription and analysis phases in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

3.5.3 Data collection team recruitment, training and pretest

The research team conducted semi-structured interviews with young researchers from the University of Stuttgart. After developing and pre-testing the interview questionnaire (see Chapter 3.2.3), the core team held a “data collection preparation” workshop prior to the commencement of fieldwork. In this workshop, young researchers alternated roles as interviewers and interviewees, enabling them to practice question

delivery, become acquainted with voice recording protocols, and gain practical experience with digital note-taking using KoBoToolbox. This training helped young researchers to understand their responsibilities, anticipate challenges, and refine interviewing techniques prior to fieldwork. Additionally, local VPUU partners organized preparatory meetings with Monwabisi Park community leaders and recruited supporting staff and community members to assist with data collection.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Given the sensitivity inherent in conducting research with marginalized populations, considerable effort was devoted to preparing the study in strict adherence to ethical standards. The study design and associated questionnaires underwent internal review by the "Responsibility in Research" committee at the University of Stuttgart and received approval in July 2024. Additionally, the local partner organization, VPUU, obtained authorization from the City of Cape Town to conduct on-site qualitative impact assessments of their interventions.

3.6.1 Voluntary participation and withdrawal options, informed consent and data confidentiality

In alignment with established ethical protocols, participant recruitment was facilitated by information sheets that clearly outlined the study's objectives and procedures in accessible language, and identified the responsible researchers including their contact details. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, including explicit agreement to the publication of anonymized data collected during the study. Participants were assured that their information would remain confidential and securely stored, and were informed of their right to decline any question or to withdraw from the study at any stage. To ensure confidentiality, the informed consent sheet with the participant's name and signature was separate from the questionnaire but linked via an alphanumeric identifier. For the digital KoBo Toolbox Photovoice survey, an encrypted staff QR code was used, which was detached from the survey answers in a second step. All supporting documentation relating to these ethical practices is provided in the appendix (see Annex I).

3.6.2 Study limitations, risks and benefits

Qualitative research is known to be characterized by several inherent limitations (see, e.g. Mwita, 2022; Taylor et al., 2015). The relatively small sample sizes typically employed reduce the generalizability of findings. Moreover, qualitative results are often highly context-specific, which further restricts their applicability beyond the immediate study setting. Additionally, the framework of the research might be influenced by existing preconceptions of the researcher (Malterud, 2001), and participant responses may be shaped by the structure of researcher-participant interactions, potentially introducing confirmation bias into the data collected (Dodgson, 2019).

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the potential risks faced by both researchers and participants when conducting studies in informal settlement contexts, which require specific safety considerations. To ensure a secure and effective research process, local partners from VPUU collaborated closely with community leaders and members of Neighbourhood Watch groups to facilitate the secure and effective implementation of on-site research activities. Additionally, given that interviewers occasionally encountered emotionally charged narratives from participants (see, e.g., Silverio et al., 2022), debriefing sessions were organized to provide research team members with support in processing their experiences and enhancing reflexivity.

The study uses a phenomenological perspective (Taylor et al., 2015), with the benefit of acknowledging complexity and context with a holistic approach. Using explorative and inductive reasoning (see, e.g., Ochieng, 2009), it aims to deepen understanding of a specific societal problem (Queirós et al., 2017). The study follows a non-hierarchical, eye-level approach (Taylor et al., 2015) to capture authentic perceptions of social processes. This method is especially relevant when working with a marginalized community.

A key aspect of this approach was to address sensitive topics with care and to respect participants' reluctance to discuss certain issues. This was particularly evident in the context of Monwabisi Park, where health-related subjects were consistently avoided by interviewees and, consequently, were not actively pursued by the researchers. This strategy ensured that the research process remained ethically sound and responsive to participants' comfort levels.

4 Study results

4.1 Contextual information on the embedded case studies

The initial desktop research, as well as the focus group discussions and transect walks, contributed to the compilation of contextual information about the embedded case studies presented in the following paragraphs.

4.1.1 Content, purpose, activities and scope of co-produced social infrastructure

A. Emthonjeni spaces for Early Childhood Development in Monwabisi Park

Early Childhood Development (ECD) plays a critical role in shaping children's physical, emotional, and cognitive growth during their first six years. While national policies in South Africa aim to expand universal access, children in informal settlements remain underserved due to inadequate infrastructure, high fees, and limited trained practitioners. Families living in informal settlements such as Monwabisi Park often cannot afford formal ECD services, leaving many children without access to structured early learning and care. Emthonjeni spaces aim to bridge this gap by providing learning and childcare opportunities for children unable to attend formal ECD programs. In IsiXhosa, "Emthonjeni" means "being at the fountain," referencing the connection to public water taps that house the Emthonjeni program.

The ECD strategy for Monwabisi Park was developed in 2010 through a collaborative effort involving SUN Development (the implementing consultant for the VPUU program), SNAC, the ECD Forum, local ECD NGOs, and several City of Cape Town departments, including Social and Economic Development, Environmental Health, and Water and Sanitation (Ewing & Krause, 2021). During the initial phase, VPUU contracted Sikhula Sonke, a local NGO from Khayelitsha, through a paid Service Level Agreement. The Emthonjeni Program advances free, accessible ECD as a long-term strategy to prevent crime and violence by integrating early childhood learning into public spaces designed for educational activities.

Purpose and activities: Established at public water collection points, Emthonjeni spaces were designed through a process of co-creation and placemaking around selected taps. These water collection points were converted into multifunctional areas that offer early learning opportunities, health services, safe play zones, and spaces for community gatherings.

The program offered at Emthonjenis is designed for children whose parents cannot afford the monthly fees of the approximately 22 existing ECD centers in Monwabisi Park. Rather than competing with these centers, Emthonjeni aims to complement their offerings. VPUU worked closely with the ECD Forum to ensure that Emthonjeni supports and strengthens the existing ECD sector, which is primarily run by women and provides rare economic opportunities in informal settlements. To further this goal, VPUU established a strategic partnership with The Unlimited Child (TUC), a curriculum provider that also trains ECD teachers. Through this partnership, VPUU and

TUC offer training to all 22 ECD centers as well as to the practitioners of the out-of-center Emthonjeni program.

Within the Emthonjeni program, learning sessions follow the TUC curriculum and are led by trained VPUU facilitators, engaging children aged 2–6 in daily play-based activities that encourage creativity, social skills, and school readiness. Health initiatives, such as vaccination checks and nutritional support, are integrated to promote holistic child development. Sessions are held five days a week for groups of 15–25 children. Children receive a snack at the ECD Resource Centre, a central hub within Monwabisi Park located in one of VPUU's Active Boxes. These snacks are prepared by parents who volunteer in exchange for their children receiving food and free education. Nap time is not included in the daily routine, due to shorter hours compared to formal ECD centers.

Each Emthonjeni is designed to blend education, health, and community interaction. Shaded seating is provided for caregivers (see Figure 9), while trees and greenery create a welcoming environment. Accessible water points support hygiene, and safe play structures allow children to explore securely. The spaces also host health services, vaccination drives, community discussions, and small-scale business initiatives, contributing to both child development and local economic empowerment.

Timeline – scaling up of Emthonjeni spaces as co-produced social infrastructure:

The establishment of the first Early Childhood Development (ECD) center in Monwabisi Park in 2002 marked the beginning of structured early learning opportunities in the community. In 2012, the concept of Emthonjeni was developed by SUN Development on behalf of VPUU, in collaboration with the University of Cape Town (UCT), the SNAC, and particularly the ECD Forum. Sikhula Sonke, a local organization, was contracted by VPUU to deliver this service, leading to the establishment of the first Emthonjeni space in 2013.

In 2013, the Neighborhood Watch initiative was introduced, further strengthening local structures for care and safety. From 2014 onwards, VPUU assumed responsibility for Emthonjeni operations, directly employing local residents from Monwabisi Park. In 2021, several Emthonjeni spaces, such as A15 and A16, underwent major repairs, and V-NET established a nearby hotspot, integrating digital access with early learning spaces. By 2022, VPUU had further strengthened its support for Emthonjeni, ensuring continuity and integration within the broader network of community services.

Until 2025, more than 15 spaces had been established, recording over 16,000 child attendances and engaging more than 2,000 parents. In Monwabisi Park alone, 553 children have participated. Parents describe the program as a lifeline, with facilitators even checking in when children miss sessions illustrating the depth of community trust and care.

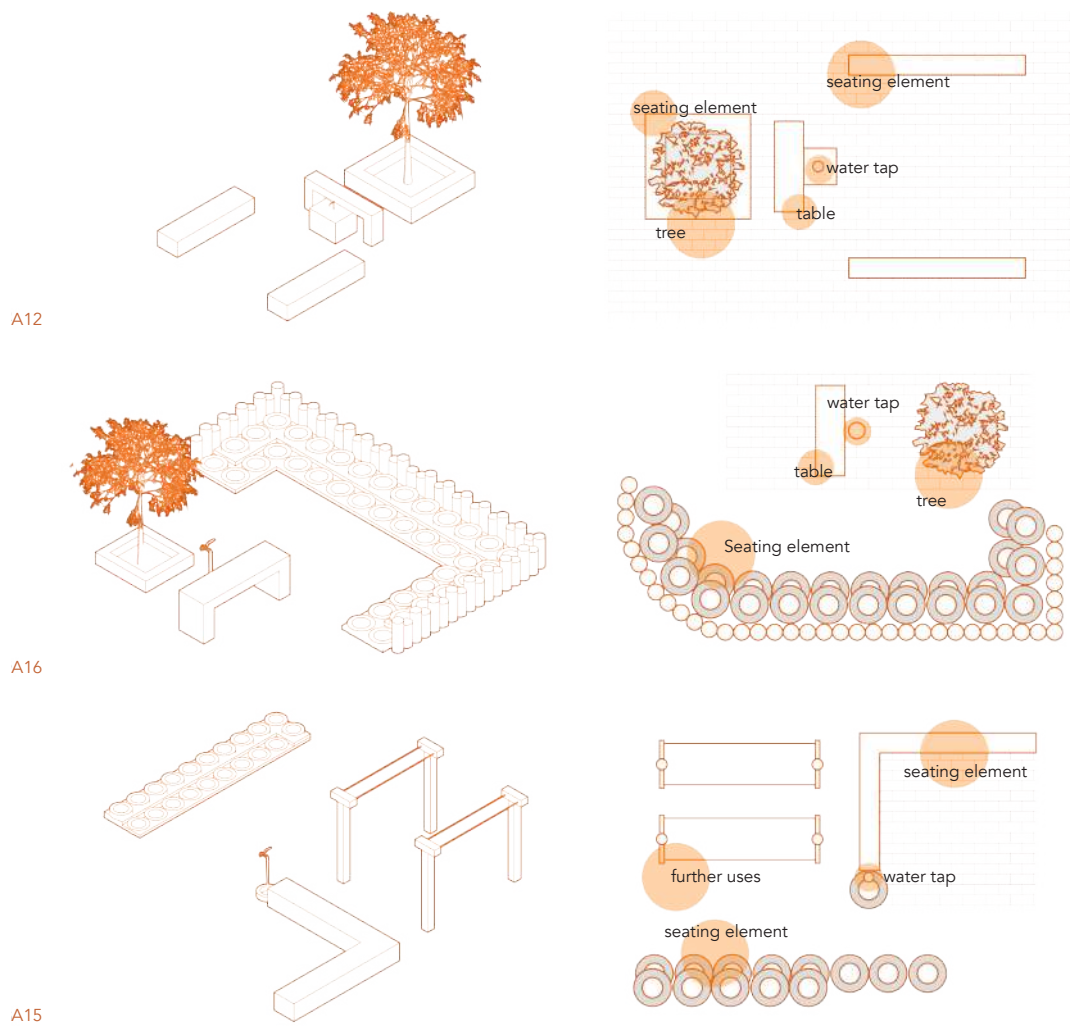


Figure 9. Examples of Emthonjenis, developed from transect walks. Illustration by Aziz, Knüppel, Konzelmann and Stolp, 2025.

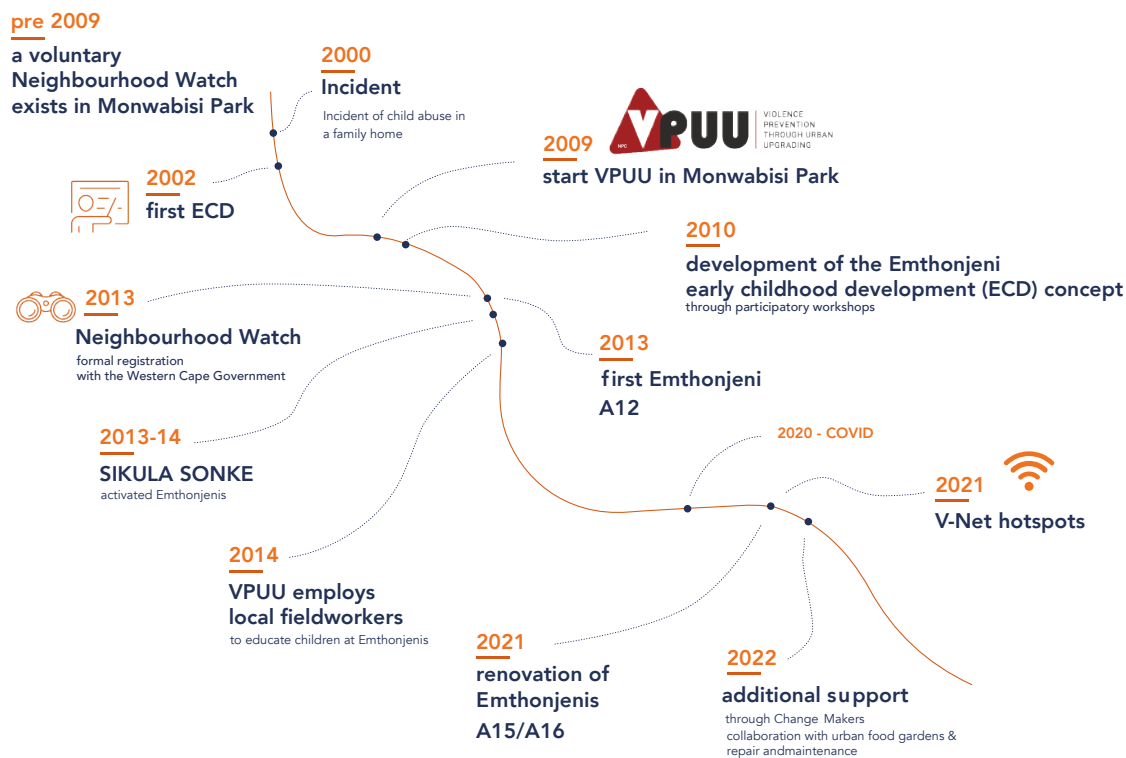


Figure 10. Timeline of development of Emthonjeni, based on FGD and semi-structured interviews. Illustration by Aziz, Knüppel, Konzelmann and Stolp, 2024.



Figure 11. Location of ECD centers and Emthonjenis in Monwabisi Park. Illustration by Aziz, Knüppel, Konzelmann and Stolp, 2025.

Emthonjeni serves as an entry-level step within the early learning ecosystem in Khayelitsha and Cape Town. Within this ecosystem, four levels of public spaces and services have been identified (see Table 3), illustrating how the Emthonjeni model interacts with and scales as an entry point for early childhood learning and development (Ewing & Krause, 2021).

Public space	Scale	ECD services
Emthonjeni	Neighborhood block 50–100 households	Basic ECD activation, stepping stones following a curriculum
Creche/ECD Centre	Section area 200–300 households	Education according to a curriculum
ECD Resource Centre (located in an Active Box)	Neighborhood area 1500 to 3000 households	Programme approach, training of care givers; shared services, toy library, M&E, Quality assurance, immunization of children, nutritional programmes
Community Library	Suburb/town <100,000 residents	Added services toward a holistic life cycle approach, teacher training

Table 3. ECD services and public space. Source: Ewing & Krause, 2021.

B. Urban Food Gardens in Monwabisi Park

Food insecurity is a major challenge in Cape Town’s informal settlements, where poverty, unemployment, and limited access to fresh produce leave households, especially children, vulnerable to malnutrition. In response, Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) established the Community Urban Gardening Program, transforming unused land into productive gardens that provide nutritious food, educational opportunities, and safe communal spaces initiated by Monwabisi Park residents, transform underutilized spaces into productive gardens to address food security. The initiative promotes community engagement by sharing knowledge on local food production and repurposing organic waste for sustainable gardening. Beyond food production, it fosters sustainable enterprises and supports Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers and the Emthonjeni program by supplying healthy vegetables for children's meals.

Purpose and activities: Since the first garden opened in 2015, the initiative has expanded to multiple sites across Monwabisi Park. The gardens serve multiple purposes beyond food production. They act as educational hubs, offering starter kits, compost, seedlings, and training in urban farming techniques that families can replicate at home. They support the establishment of gardens in ECD centers, ensuring children gain access to nutritious food while also learning about sustainability from an early age.

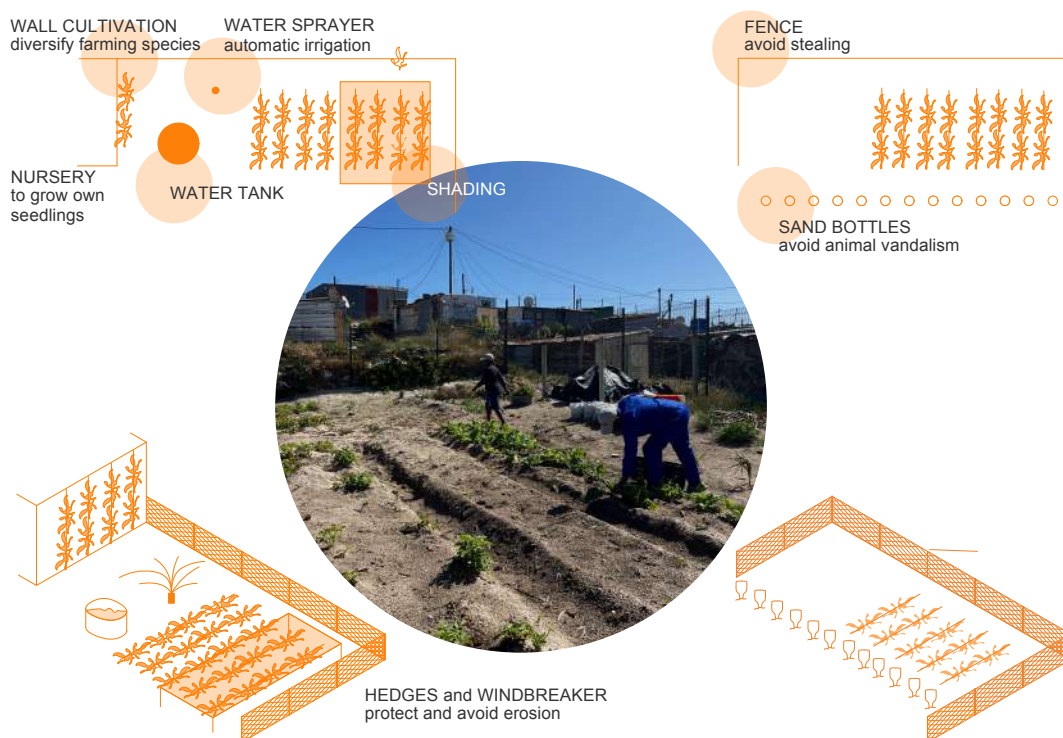


Figure 12. Garden elements in Monwabisi Park. Illustration by Mideros, Cao, Nogger, Steinmayer and Konzelmann, 2025.

Timeline – scaling up of Community Food Garden spaces as co-produced social Infrastructure: The first community food garden was established in 2015 in Section C (see Figure 13), alongside the inauguration of the first VPUU Monwabisi Park Neighbourhood Centre. The initial gardening team consisted of ten members, with oversight and fundraising managed by the VPUU Manager. A year later, in 2016, the second garden was started in Section A after the opening of the second Neighbourhood Centre. At that stage, the main objective of the gardens was to produce vegetables for sale within the community, with financial gain serving as the primary motivation for participation. However, lower garden output than expected by the group members, seasonal income, reliance on biological compost and harsh weather conditions slowed vegetable production. This, and job opportunities outside the garden project for some members, led to frustration among participants, and many eventually withdrew. In 2020, operations ceased entirely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project was revived in 2021 with only four members remaining, as many had lost confidence in the gardens' ability to provide income. During this revival period, a new garden space in Section A was made available through investments by VPUU.

As of 2021, following a consultative process between VPUU, SNAC, and the local garden groups, a stable income source was identified and funded through a COVID-19

relief measure. This initiative enabled the pairing of food gardens with ECD centers, establishing off-take agreements between the gardens and the centers. VPUU ensured the quality of food and coordinated deliveries to the ECD centers. Each delivery was paid for according to an agreed price list, with a monthly ceiling per garden set in advance.

VPUU also began linking Change Makers to gardens to assist with food production, expand garden areas, establish nurseries for seedling production, and introduce compost heaps to reduce input costs. Launched in five communities, including Monwabisi Park, the program led to deeper integration of gardens with VPUU's nutritional initiatives, with garden produce used to prepare meals for children at ECD centers.

Since then, VPUU members and active community participants have periodically expanded and maintained the community food gardens. In Monwabisi Park, two gardens in A-Section benefited from the program, and a new garden was established in New Monwabisi Park as part of this initiative. Notably, there is an ongoing effort to create interconnected local circular systems linking early learning, nutrition, food production, organic waste collection, and bridging the digital divide.

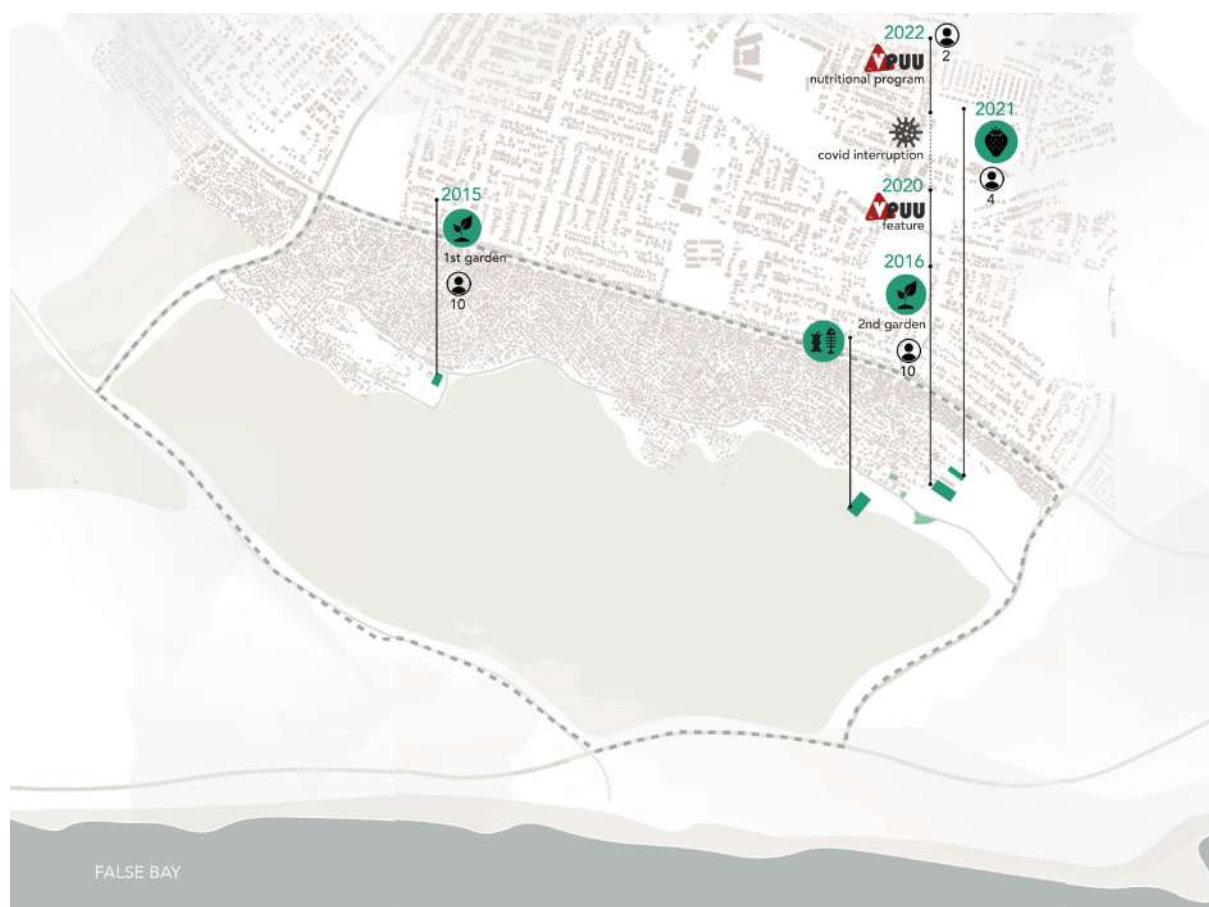


Figure 13. Timeline of development of community food gardens. Illustration by Mideros, Cao, Nogger and Steinmayer, 2025.

C. Organic Waste Management in Monwabisi Park

Waste management is a critical challenge in South Africa, particularly in informal settlements where poor collection and illegal dumping threaten public health and the environment. In response, VPUU launched an Organic Waste Management Program in Monwabisi Park, creating a structured system for residents to collect, compost, and repurpose organic waste, while providing income and skill-building opportunities for local community members.

Purpose and activities: In 2021, VPUU launched an organic waste collection pilot project in Monwabisi Park, selecting Section C as the initial site. This initiative sought to reduce illegal dumping, improve public health by removing organic materials often consumed by rodents, and begin composting this waste to support local food gardens. Additionally, the project created income-generating opportunities for unemployed residents through Public Employment Programs, addressing both environmental and socio-economic challenges. Notably, about 50% of household waste in informal settlements is organic and suitable for composting, making it a valuable resource for local circular systems.

The program quickly expanded by 2024, although some areas remain uncovered due to resource limitations and logistical constraints. Residents participate by registering their households, receiving numbered buckets with QR codes for organic waste collection at no cost. Households fill these buckets with organic waste, layered with Bokashi to control odors and pests. Every four days, Change Makers (waste champions) collect the waste and transport it to nearby collection stations. Data on participation, waste quantities, and collection frequency is recorded to monitor engagement. Collected organic matter is composted at a central station, producing fertile soil that is redistributed to local gardens and Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers, creating a circular system where waste is converted into resources for food production. Participants can also bring extra waste to stations in exchange for internet vouchers, providing an additional incentive for involvement.

Since its pilot in 2021, the program has expanded across multiple zones, integrating door-to-door registration, QR-coded buckets for household waste, and collection by trained waste champions. Collected organic matter is composted and redistributed to community gardens and Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers, forming a circular system that supports food production, improves sanitation, and enhances nutrition. Incentives like internet vouchers further encourage participation and engagement. In March 2025, 8,915 households participated in the organic waste management program, resulting in the collection of 176.4 tons of organic waste that month. The following three figures illustrate the progression of the Organic Waste Program over time. The project began in C-Section with a single station, later

expanding to include a second station in New Monwabisi Park (NMP) and a third in A-Section.

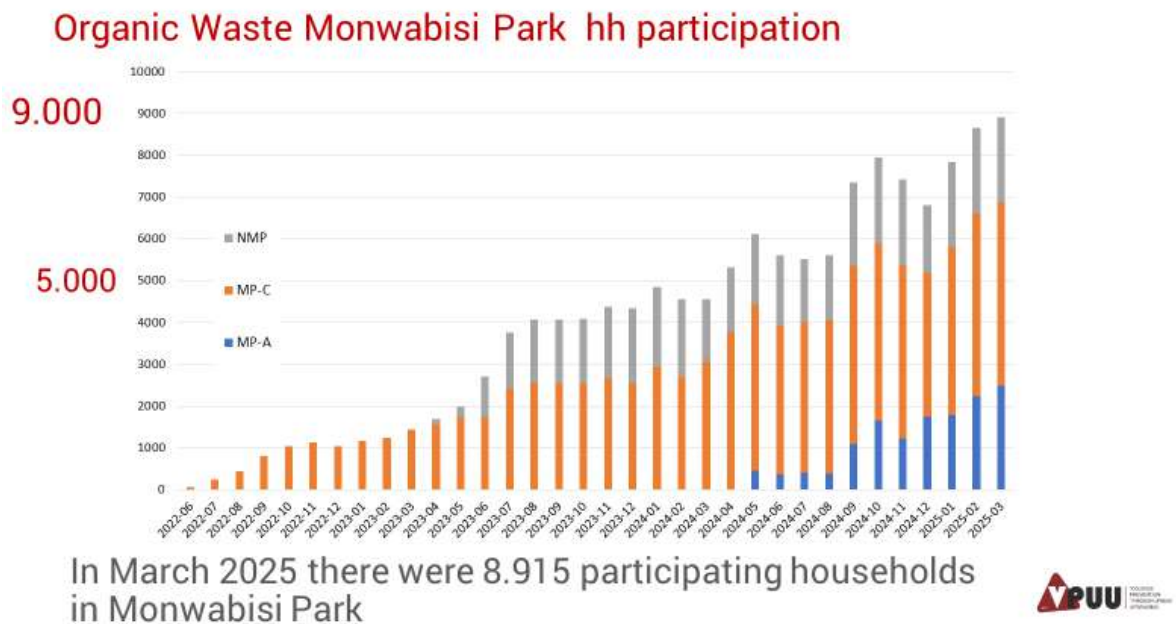


Figure 14. Number of Households participating within the Organic Waste program since inception in June 2022. Source: VPUU, 2025.

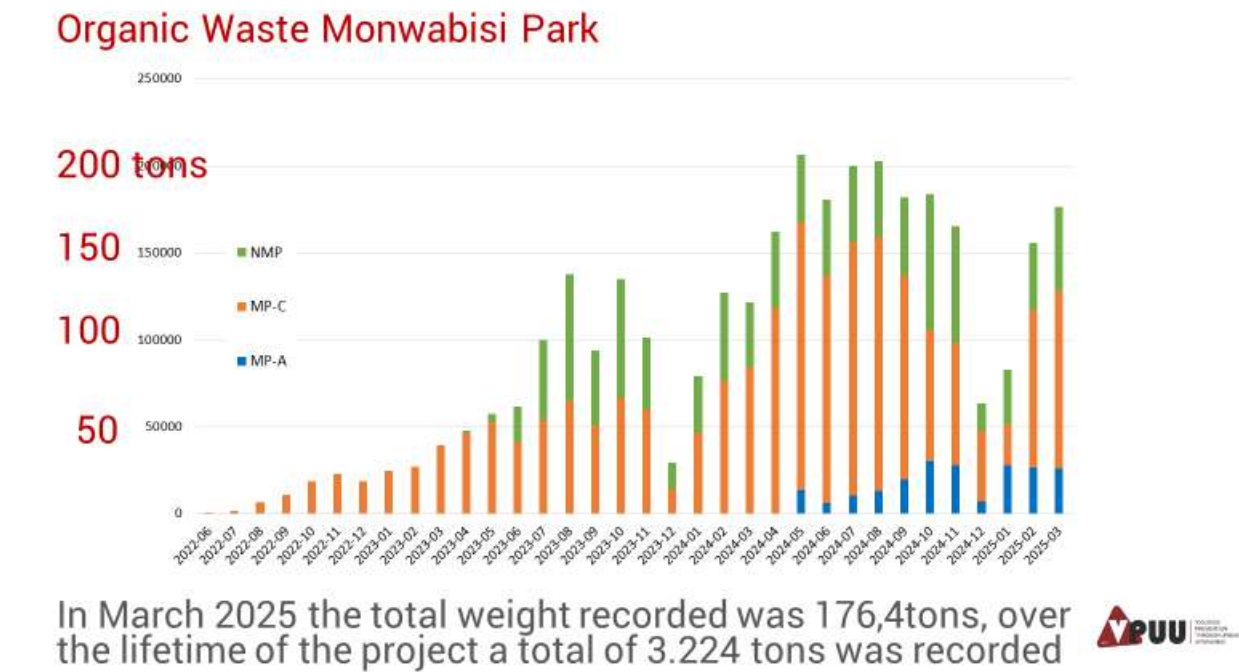


Figure 15. Weight of organic waste extracted over the project period. Source: VPUU, 2025.

Figure 15 depicts the weight of organic waste collected over the project period. It shows that during the project period over 3.000 tons of organic waste were extracted. Of note are the dips in collection of organic waste during the month of December. This is traditionally the holiday month in South Africa and many residents commute back to rural areas. In the case of Monwabisi Park, many residents travel to their family homesteads in the Eastern Cape about 800 km away from Monwabisi Park.

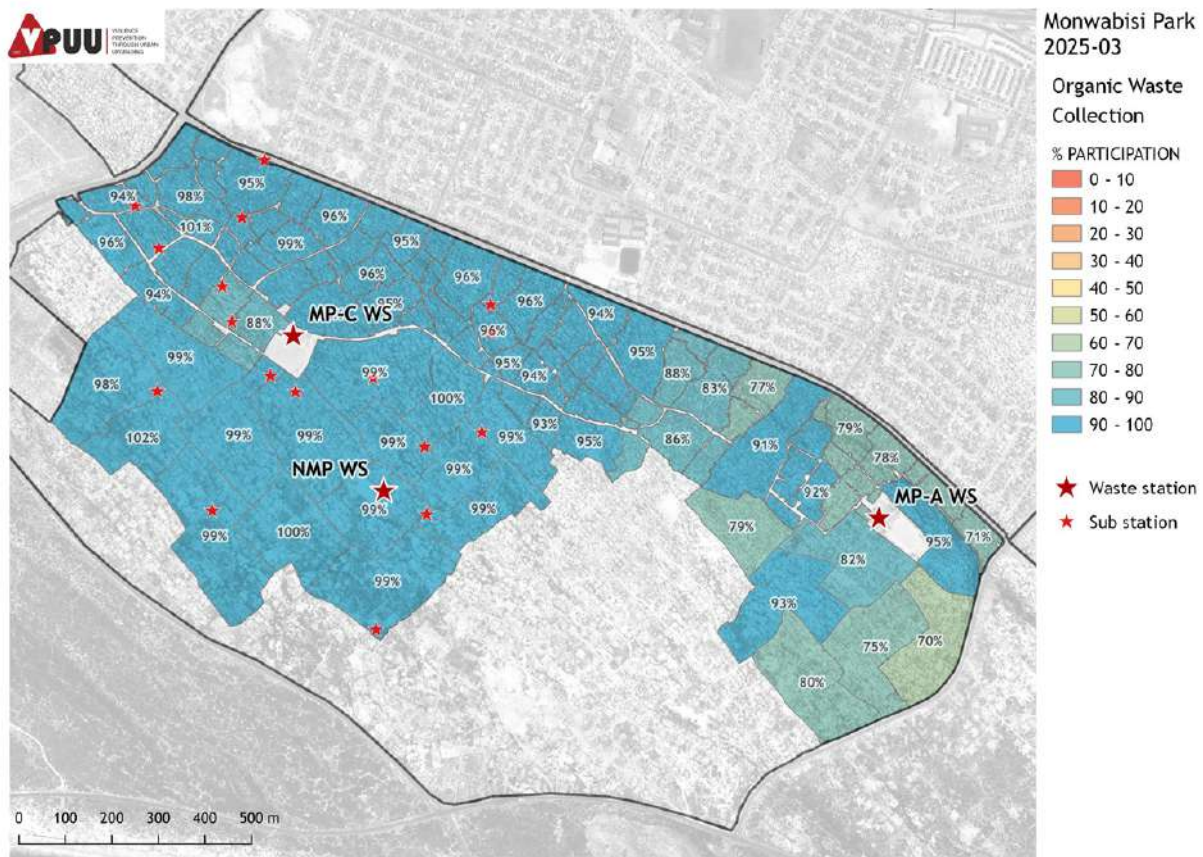


Figure 16. Overview of which areas within Monwabisi Park are part of the organic waste program and the percentage of households participating within the program. Source: VPUU, 2025.

Figure 16 highlights the three main waste stations located in A-Section, C-Section, and New Monwabisi Park (NMP). In addition, the figure shows the substations—aggregation points established by Change Makers—where residents can drop off their organic waste buckets before transport to the main stations. This local innovation has significantly increased community participation and buy-in for the organic waste program.



Figure 17. Change Makers and supervisor at the waste station. Source: Preecha, Mauritz and Stricker, 2024.

Timeline – scaling up of Organic Waste Management as co-produced social infrastructure: The Organic Waste Management project launched in 2021 with a pilot initiative in C-Section, establishing the first waste collection center and reaching local residents through information campaigns and door-to-door outreach. Early success prompted expansion within C-Section and the creation of a second waste station in New Monwabisi Park, which also became the site for composting collected waste.

By 2023, the program extended into parts of B-Section and additional zones of New Monwabisi Park (Zones 2, 3, 4, and 5). In 2024, coverage expanded to A-Section and more areas of B-Section, broadening the project's reach across Monwabisi Park.

However, some areas—such as Zone 6, M-Section, and parts of Zones 1, 2, and 5—remain outside the collection system. This exclusion is not due to lack of interest, but rather resource constraints and a shortage of suitable equipment, as long distances make waste transport physically demanding. Without further funding for new waste stations or drop-off points, these areas cannot yet be included.



Figure 18. Timeline and development of the Organic Waste Management program. Illustration by Preecha, Mauritz and Stricker, 2025.

D. V-NET providing community-managed internet infrastructure

In South Africa, limited internet access, high mobile data costs, and low digital literacy disproportionately affect low-income households, especially in informal settlements like Monwabisi Park and Khayelitsha. Approximately 40% of South Africans lack internet access, reinforcing socioeconomic inequalities and limiting opportunities for education, employment, and social participation.

Purpose and activities: V-NET, established by VPUU, provides affordable, reliable, and community-managed internet to bridge this digital divide. Initially intended to connect VPUU offices and Early Childhood Development (ECD) centers, the network expanded to cover Monwabisi Park and surrounding areas, offering both free and low-cost connectivity to residents. V-NET operates as a full mesh network, where WIFI hotspots are strategically placed across the community to create stable, continuous coverage. Local leaders, community members, and technical experts collaborate to identify hotspot locations, ensuring the network meets community needs while fostering engagement and ownership. ECD centers benefit from enhanced educational resources, supporting students who would otherwise lack connectivity.

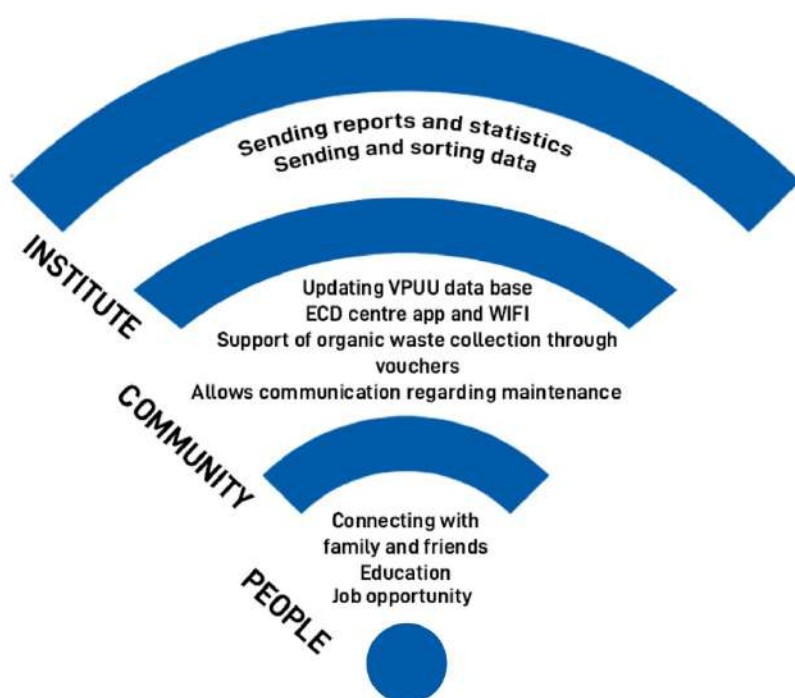


Figure 19. Levels of connectivity through V-NET. Illustration by Bhuju, Jardosh and Matijašević, 2024.

Timeline – scaling up of V-NET as co-produced social infrastructure: V-NET began in 2019 through a technical support from Wakoma and Bequest, with the initial goal of connecting VPUU offices to streamline communication and operations. It was initially a purely internal VPUU network.

In response to the lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic, VPUU opened its internal network to local communities. At the time, Monwabisi Park had only two Active Boxes in A- and C-Section equipped with WIFI hotspots. Between 2019 and 2021, the network expanded to connect six Early Childhood Development centers, providing public WIFI access to support teachers and learners.

In early 2021, public WIFI hotspots were introduced with support from the German Development Bank, marking the first direct network service for residents. Later that year, VPUU and SNAC developed a rollout strategy for VNET WIFI hotspots to better manage connectivity in Monwabisi Park. In 2022, the first private WIFI installations extended services to households and community organizations.

By 2024, V-NET had achieved significant growth, reaching 100 private subscribers and installing 104 hotspots across the settlement. Alongside technical expansion, the project built partnerships with government, NGOs, and technology companies to secure ongoing maintenance and upgrades.

Looking ahead, V-NET has outlined clear goals: short-term expansion into New Monwabisi Park as soon as stable electricity is available; medium-term rollout into adjacent

underserved communities; and a long-term transition to a fully self-sustaining model driven by private subscriptions and local training programs.

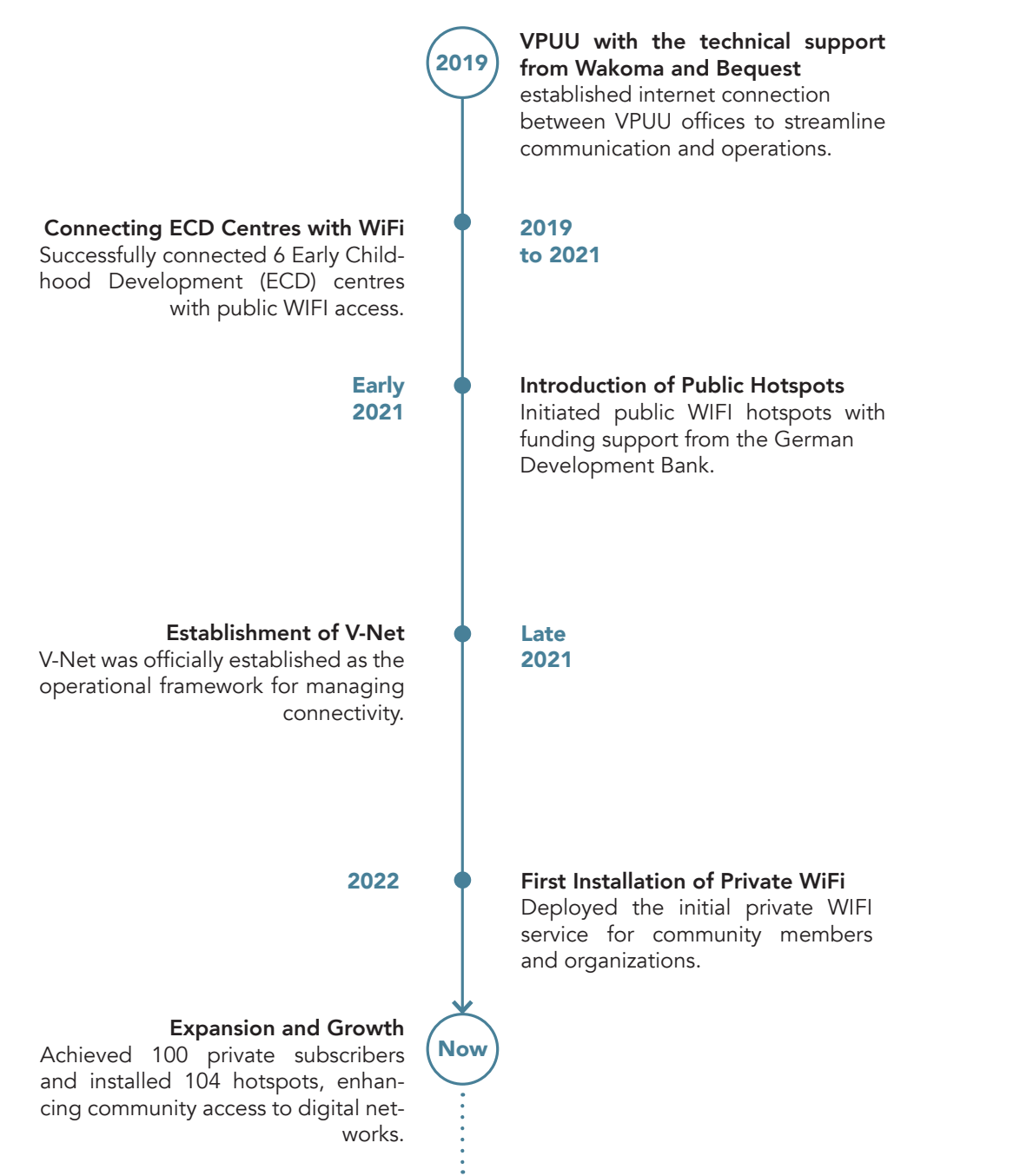


Figure 20. Timeline of development of V-NET. Illustration by: Bhuju, Jardosh, Matijašević, 2025

V-NET exemplifies social innovation whereby a social need is addressed through co-creating solutions with residents. As the project matures, additional income streams are introduced to help reduce maintenance costs for VPUU, the initiator and owner. For V-NET, these income sources include voucher sales and the provision of private

internet connections. Currently, users receive one hour of free internet access per day. Residents can also earn additional bandwidth by dropping off organic waste. VPUU anticipates attracting donors to support this public good initiative by funding Organic Waste Vouchers, which will help offset V-NET's operating costs.

4.1.2 Synergies between the four co-produced case studies

The four coproduced social infrastructure case studies in Monwabisi Park - Community Food Gardens, Emthonjeni, V-NET, and Organic Waste Management, demonstrate a high degree of interconnectivity, creating mutually reinforcing benefits for residents.

The following themes of interconnection and circular processes are intentionally integrated into the projects:

Nutrition and local food production operate as a circular process: organic waste is collected, composted, and used to support food production, which in turn provides meals for ECD centers and the Emthonjeni project.

Bridging the Digital Divide: VPUU provides V-NET, a mesh WIFI network designed to close the digital gap. Residents receive one hour of free internet access daily, along with a 24-hour lifeline connection for messaging services like WhatsApp, Signal, or Telegram. This basic service can be enhanced by participating in public good initiatives—such as dropping off organic waste—or through financial contributions, including purchasing WIFI vouchers or subscribing to a private home connection. Educational content is freely accessible, and local ECD centers have internet access to promote early learning. Students benefit from a network that supports internet-based research.

Placemaking and Improved Safety Through Active Spaces: Every intervention includes a placemaking component. In the Emthonjeni project, co-design and participatory processes are prioritized for each public space, resulting in high community involvement. V-NET WIFI connections encourage gatherings around hotspots, adding a spatial placemaking element that is shaped by both community leadership (such as SANC) and the needs of private users. Food gardens also contribute to public space placemaking and provide passive surveillance, enhancing safety in the surrounding areas.

One of the clearest synergies exists between the Organic Waste Management project and the Community Food Gardens. Household food waste is collected through the Organic Waste program, processed via the Bokashi composting system, and returned to the gardens as nutrient-rich compost. This closed-loop system not only reduces waste and environmental hazards but also enhances the productivity of the gardens,

which in turn supplies fresh produce for ECD centers and community nutritional programs. By linking waste management with food production, the projects simultaneously promote environmental stewardship, community engagement, and food security.

V-NET complements both the educational and environmental projects by providing digital connectivity that enhances participation and learning. For example, households participating in the Organic Waste program can earn free WIFI through the exchange of collected organic waste, incentivizing engagement while linking digital access to sustainable behavior. Similarly, ECD centers benefit from V-NET by accessing offline educational content and reporting tools, allowing children to gain digital literacy alongside nutritional support from the gardens. Through these mechanisms, V-NET extends the impact of other interventions, transforming waste, food, and learning activities into opportunities for digital inclusion and knowledge sharing.

The Emthonjeni program benefits from its integration with the broader network of interventions. The children and families engaged in Emthonjeni gain direct exposure to gardening and digital skills, creating early awareness of environmental sustainability, healthy nutrition, and technological literacy. Moreover, the projects collectively foster local leadership and skill development: Change Makers and gardeners trained in one initiative often contribute to others, creating a skilled cohort of residents capable of sustaining multiple interventions. This shared capacity-building approach strengthens social cohesion, encourages civic responsibility, and ensures that project benefits are not siloed but circulate across the community, producing compounded social, educational, and economic outcomes.

In essence, the co-production of these interventions creates a network of mutually reinforcing projects, each amplifying the reach and impact of the others. By integrating environmental sustainability, food security, early childhood development, and digital inclusion—anchored in participatory co-design and strong community ownership—Monwabisi Park offers a model of holistic community development. Here, resources, knowledge, and participation flow across multiple domains, fostering a resilient and self-sustaining ecosystem.

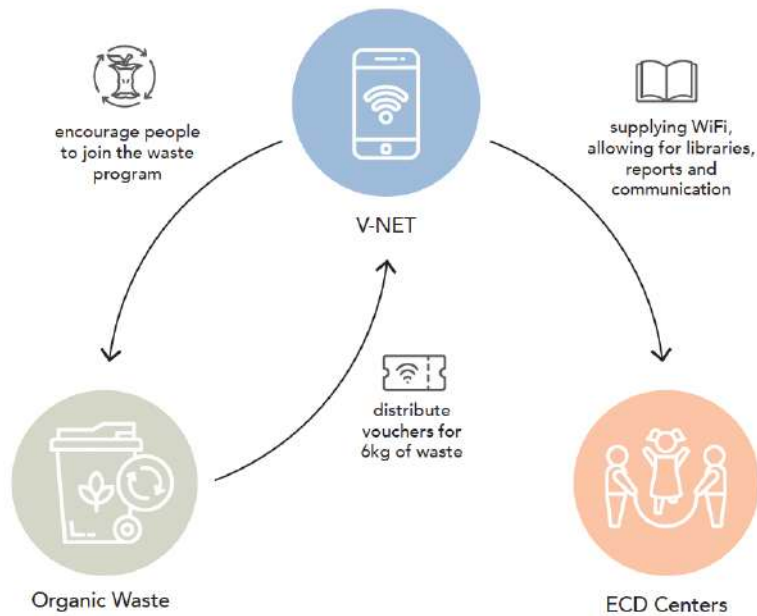


Figure 21. Synergies between the V-NET, ECD centers, and Organic Waste Management. Illustration by Bhuj, Jardosh, Matijašević, 2025.



Figure 22. Synergies between Community Food Gardens, Emthonjenis, ECD centers and Organic Waste Management. Illustration by Mideros, Cao, Nogger and Steinmayer, 2025.

The subsequent table provides a chronological summary of the projects initiation and progression, demonstrating how they evolved in parallel to allow for synergistic outcomes.

2002 - 2013	Starting points	2002: Establishment of the first Early Childhood Development (ECD) center in Monwabisi Park. 2009: The City of Cape Town introduces VPUU to the Monwabisi Park community. 2010: The first Community Action Plan is co-produced by local leadership, VPUU, and the City of Cape Town. Signed by the Executive Mayor, the Subcouncil Chairperson, and SNAC Chairperson, it defines the roadmap for Monwabisi Park's development. 2012: the Emthonjeni Concept is developed by SUN Development, on behalf of VPUU, SNAC, and the ECD sector, with support from University of Cape Town (UCT) 2013: Neighborhood Watch is introduced, establishing early structures for community safety and organization. 2013: VPUU NPC is registered, formalizing the VPUU program as an institutional entity. 2013: The first Emthonjeni is constructed, and out-of-center education begins at the site, delivered by the local NGO Sikhula Sonke as a contracted service provider.
2015 - 2017	Early Expansion of Community Spaces	2015: The first Community Food Garden is established in C-Section, coinciding with the opening of the first Monwabisi Park Neighbourhood Centre. A team of ten residents begin vegetable production. 2016: A second food garden is launched in A-Section following the opening of the second Neighbourhood Centre, with a focus on income generation through vegetable sales. 2016: The Emthonjeni project expands with the construction of additional Emthonjeni facilities, increasing access to out-of-center early education.
2019 - 2020	Introduction of Connectivity	2019: V-NET is launched with technical support from Wakoma and Bequest, connecting VPUU offices in Khayelitsha (Harare and Monwabisi Park). 2019–2021: V-NET expands to provide WIFI access to six ECD centers. 2020: COVID-19 pandemic causes a complete halt in food garden operations.

		2020/21: During the COVID-19 lockdown, V-NET scales up to introduce public WIFI hotspots, funded by the German Development Bank.
2021	Multiple New Initiatives	2021: The Organic Waste Management pilot project is launched in C-Section, establishing the first collection center and composting hub. 2021: Food gardens are revived after COVID-19, though with a reduced team of four participants. A new garden plot is established in A-Section. 2021: Major upgrades and repairs are carried out on Emthonjeni facilities in A15 and A16. Late 2021: VPUU formally launches V-NET in Monwabisi Park as an externally facing network and establishes it as an operational framework.
2022:	Integration and Nutrition Focus	2022: Food gardens and VPUU enter into an off-take agreement, with VPUU purchasing agreed-upon produce from the gardens for its nutritional program. This initiative provides meals for children in ECD centers and offers food gardens a measure of income security. 2022: V-NET completes its first installation of private home WIFI connections, extending services to both community members and organizations. 2022: VPUU provides additional support to sustain Emthonjeni activities.
2023–2024:	Consolidation and Expansion	2023: The Organic Waste program expands into B-Section and Zones 2, 3, 4, and 5. 2024: The Organic Waste program extends to A-Section and additional areas of B-Section. Some coverage gaps remain in Zone 6, M-Section, and parts of Zones 1, 2, and 5 due to limited resources. 2024 (current): V-NET reaches 100 private subscribers and installs 104 hotspots. Partnerships with government, NGOs, and technology companies are established to support long-term sustainability.

Table 4. Evolvement of the four embedded case studies. Source: the authors, 2025

4.2 Governance, implementation and management of co-produced case studies

The four VPUU-supported social infrastructure case studies in Monwabisi Park demonstrate a shared approach to community-led implementation and participatory

governance. Each case study integrates local knowledge, skills, and leadership with institutional support from VPUU and partner organizations, ensuring responsiveness to community needs and long-term sustainability. Central to this success is the active involvement of local actors—residents and Change Makers—who serve as waste champions, gardeners, ECD facilitators, and V-NET installers and monitors. They are trained, empowered, and entrusted to manage day-to-day operations. VPUU's role varies across projects, ranging from technical and financial support to coordination and oversight, while the community assumes ownership and operational responsibility.

Community Food Gardens: The governance of the community food garden project in Monwabisi Park follows a mixed model that balances VPUU oversight with strong community involvement. While VPUU acts as the project initiator and primary funder, facilitating – with the City of Cape Town – access to public land, coordinating with formal institutions such as the Department of Agriculture, and hiring key personnel like supervisors, and Change Makers in the form of compost makers or gardener support, the core responsibilities lie with the resident head gardeners. These residents manage the day-to-day care of the gardens, transferring their knowledge of planting, composting, and plant protection to the Change Makers. Financial incentives, in the form of support payments as part of the off-take agreement when harvested produce is provided to the ECD kitchen, initially motivate participation. Over time, however, the gardeners have assumed more autonomous roles, demonstrating a transfer of power and sustainable self-management as they continue gardening independently, applying skills acquired through the program. This model ensures long-term viability, even in the absence of VPUU staff, as local actors retain the knowledge and capacity to maintain the gardens. Research shows that for many participants, the gardens represent more than nourishment: they are safe spaces to connect with neighbours, escape isolation, and regain a sense of purpose and dignity. It is a social space and gardeners provide an acknowledged service in their community which in return earns them recognition in their community.

Emthonjeni Program: The Emthonjeni program is built on a community-centered implementation structure. Local residents—including elected leaders from SNAC, members of the ECD Forum, and neighbours living near each Emthonjeni—are actively involved in designing, organizing, and maintaining this social infrastructure. Trained Change Makers serve as ECD facilitators, delivering structured learning programs and monitoring children's development. Supervisors, employed on longer-term contracts by VPUU, ensure that knowledge is retained and transferred, mitigating the potential loss of expertise when short-term staff contracts conclude. Safety and regular participation are supported by Neighbourhood Watch groups and parents, reinforcing community ownership of the program. VPUU coordinates the overall implementation in collaboration with community members, government agencies, NGOs, and private partners, providing a governance framework that sustains the program over time

while promoting local engagement and continuity. Beyond education, Emthonjeni has become a symbol of safety, belonging, and opportunity within the settlement. Emthonjeni demonstrates how community-driven, human-centered design can expand access to ECD while fostering resilience and empowerment in disadvantaged communities. The overall strategy is coherent, promoting an integrated model that brings together outreach programs like Emthonjeni, ECD-centered early learning, VPUU-run ECD Resource Centers, and local government services such as libraries and primary health clinics (see Table 3 for an overview of the four levels related to ECD services and public space on p. 47).

Organic Waste Management: The Organic Waste Management program operates through a structured system led by Change Makers in the form of waste champions, who are local residents trained to collect and process household organic waste. Each Change Maker follows a prescribed workflow, beginning with check-in via a mobile time management application and wearing protective clothing. They conduct daily briefings with supervisors, collect waste using wheelie bins and gloves, raise awareness among residents, and record data digitally through KoBo. Participating households get registered and receive buckets and Bokashi to facilitate composting. After completing collection rounds, waste champions return to the stations to weigh, record, and clean equipment, reporting any challenges to supervisors. This operational model integrates environmental management with capacity-building and community engagement, providing both economic and social benefits while ensuring that residents develop the skills and sense of ownership necessary to sustain the program independently.

The initiative strengthens social cohesion, environmental awareness, and civic responsibility, while creating safer, cleaner streets and reducing pest infestations. Growth: Despite challenges such as resource limitations, mobility of residents, and difficult terrain, the program demonstrates the value of community-driven, participatory approaches to waste management. It offers a replicable model that transforms waste into a resource, aligning with national strategies for sustainable development and inclusive urban governance. As conclusion, VPUU's waste-to-resource approach leverages community-owned solutions to establish a sustainable waste management cycle. Waste Champions collect and process organic waste at waste stations, where food composting systems produce fertilizer for future gardening activities. Incentive systems encourage community participation, turning waste into a valuable resource. Besides providing an ecological value to the community, the Organic Waste Collection system also acts as social infrastructure, providing knowledge to community members involved and fostering social ties within the collection network.

Concerns have been raised about affordability and cost-benefit, specifically whether the current model can be replicated given its reliance on Change Makers collecting organic waste at the household level—a process with high labour costs. The original

approach envisioned three waste stations as starting points for Change Makers to collect organic waste throughout the community. However, supervisors and Change Makers introduced the concept of substations: aggregation points at the block level, each serving around 200 households, positioned much closer to participating residents.

By 2025, this local innovation was further refined through collaboration between local leadership, supervisors, and VPUU, shifting the model from a collection system to a drop-off system operating at about 15 substations and two main stations. Substation hosts now receive an incentive—a VNET house connection—in recognition of their efforts to record organic waste drop-offs by neighbours. Participating households receive a WIFI voucher, a cleaned bucket, and Bokashi. A vehicle now collects organic waste from the substations, making operations significantly more cost-efficient.

Although a notable drop in participation was observed due to a service interruption, initial results suggest that participation levels are likely to recover to those seen in 2024 within four to five months.

V-NET: The V-NET initiative is managed through a multi-stakeholder approach, with VPUU overseeing network operations, partnership development, and community engagement. Local communities contribute by providing feedback, sharing needs, and participating in daily network usage, ensuring the system is responsive to their priorities. Governance support from the City of Cape Town ensures regulatory compliance and facilitates expansion, while ECD centers and local vendors use the network for educational resources, business growth, and service access. WIFI hotspots are placed in consultation with community leaders to align with local needs. Capacity-building initiatives train residents to maintain and troubleshoot the infrastructure, creating employment opportunities and strengthening long-term sustainability.

The initiative has also improved access to learning and employment opportunities, created technical jobs through the training of Change Makers, and strengthened community cohesion. VPUU's management, combined with community participation and a voucher system for extended access, ensures both sustainability and scalability. Overall, V-NET illustrates how a community-focused technological solution can bridge the digital divide, foster empowerment, and contribute to sustainable urban development in marginalized areas.

V-NET has strong potential to become self-sustaining. Achieving approximately 500 home connections would ensure financial viability for V-NET in Monwabisi Park. With 13,479 households in the area, reaching this target is feasible if the necessary capital for installation can be secured. Business plans have already been shared with potential funders. PUU is a registered Internet Service Provider, operating V-NET under a Community Network License.

4.3 Impact on personal well-being, material conditions and quality of life domains

The findings generated from the qualitative, semi-structured interviews conducted in this study offer nuanced insights into the impact of the VPUU program and its embedded case studies on participants' personal well-being, encompassing overall life satisfaction as well as affective and eudaimonic dimensions. Additionally, the analysis examines the influence of co-production on material conditions and multiple quality of life domains. The analytical framework outlined in Chapter 2 is employed to systematically structure the subsequent presentation of results.

4.3.1 Residents' perception of life satisfaction

In response to a first content question concerning general life satisfaction, residents reported a moderate level of satisfaction, with a few deviations towards a low and high perception of life satisfaction. Notably, employment status within the quality of life (QoL) domains emerged as the predominant theme, being frequently identified both as a contributor to enhanced life satisfaction and as a significant factor diminishing it. Social connections—specifically, relationships with friends and family—were the next most commonly mentioned contributors to enhanced life satisfaction. Additionally, self-efficacy attained through civic engagement was identified as a positive influence on life satisfaction, with an emphasize on active participation in community activities (see Table 5).

<i>Interview question: WHAT ASPECTS MAKE YOUR LIFE SATISFYING AT THE MOMENT?</i>	
<i>(● = diminishing current satisfaction, ● = enhancing current satisfaction)</i>	
QoL-domain EMPLOYMENT STATUS	<i>"I'm not satisfied at all. I will be satisfied if I can get a permanent job." (V1, Pos. 28)</i>
	<i>"The only thing that is not satisfying me is not having it job." (OW2, Pos. 60)</i>
	<i>"I managed to find a job and I managed to buy a house from all that with the job I got." (OW1, Pos. 11)</i>
	<i>"VPUU give us jobs and then we've got the schools for the children's, all the schools. And then we've got taps for the water." (OW3, Pos. 28)</i>
QoL-domain SOCIAL CONNECTIONS	<i>"Living with my son, seeing him growing every day" (CFG 3, Pos. 20)</i>
	<i>"to be living in my family" (OW2, Pos. 60)</i>
	<i>"chilling with friends" (V3, Pos. 75)</i>
QoL-domain CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	<i>"To see the change that I make in the community, that makes me see where I'm going." (E1, Pos. 76)</i>

	<i>“But then the fact that we cannot always blame the government of the country satisfied me because we have to focus on life and we have to try by all means to live positively. So we are trying to live. If then it happens that you are unemployed and then you try by all means to get the job for the moment you don't work, then you don't just sit. I always try to be involved in the community activities, so that at least satisfies me.”</i>(CFG4, Pos. 90)
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Table 5. Selected quotations exemplifying the three QoL domains that were predominantly referenced in the context of current life satisfaction. Source: the authors, 2025

A follow-up inquiry regarding anticipated life satisfaction over a five-year horizon indicated that the vast majority of interviewees expect a substantial improvement in their overall well-being. The factors identified as likely to enhance future life satisfaction were distributed across multiple quality of life domains (see Figure 23).

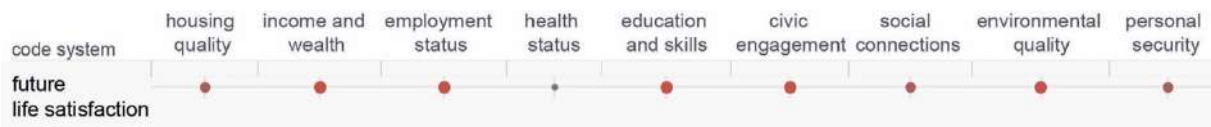


Figure 23. Code relations between future life satisfaction and material conditions as well as QoL domains as analyzed with MaxQDA. Source: the authors, 2025

Employment was again cited as an important aspect likely to contribute to future life satisfaction. With regard to employment status, the notion of establishing an independent business or further developing self-employment that had already been initiated was repeatedly emphasized (see Table 6). In some cases, reference was made to the knowledge acquired within the framework of the VPUU program, which was expected to contribute to the establishment of an independent business in the future.

In general, the quality of life domain of education and skills was identified as a pivotal factor in the pursuit of future life satisfaction. Interviewees projected that advancements in education and skills would not only result in increased income and wealth but also in enhanced housing quality and the consolidation of social networks, thereby connecting aspirations across various domains.

Interview question:

WHAT WOULD MAKE YOUR LIFE MORE SATISFYING IN THE NEXT 5 YEARS?

(● = diminishing future satisfaction, ● = enhancing future satisfaction)	
QoL-domain EMPLOYMENT STATUS	<i>"Having a job and being able to provide for my family? Yeah, that's the number one thing." (V3, Pos. 97)</i>
	<i>"I want to open the homes for the children. That's my plan for the next five years." (E1, Pos. 96)</i>
	<i>"I wish that I can build my own internet service somewhere, in the Eastern Cape, to go and implement what I've learned from V-NET. That is my goal." (V1, Pos. 42)</i>
QoL-domain EDUCATION AND SKILLS	<i>"You see now as I'm busy pursuing my diploma, so I'm thinking of pursuing another course, project management. So with those qualifications, I'm seeing myself in one of the top management positions." (E2, Pos. 34)</i>
	<i>"My graduation. All in blend, when I get this, then I will get even a better job. Then I'll start out to get a proper tenement, a general family. You see everything is going to be stable financially." (OW5, Pos. 44)</i>

Table 6. Selected quotations exemplifying the significance of employment status as well as education and skills for future life satisfaction. Source: the authors, 2025

Building on their assessment of current and anticipated life satisfaction, respondents were invited to evaluate their satisfaction with personal achievements to date. On average, participants reported moderate satisfaction, though responses ranged widely from complete dissatisfaction to high levels of satisfaction. Areas in which interviewees most frequently expressed contentment included the development of social relationships—primarily within their immediate families—as well as educational and skill attainment. In contrast, employment status referred to both positive and negative evaluations of personal achievements, as exemplified in Table 7.

<i>Interview question:</i> HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH WHAT YOU ARE ACHIEVING IN LIFE? (● = diminishing satisfaction with achievements, ● = enhancing satisfaction with achievements)	
QoL-domain SOCIAL CONNECTIONS	<i>"My kid is the most important thing to me. So if I fail him, I fail myself. So seeing that I'm able now to give him whatever he wants and likes, I can do things for myself too." (OW1, Pos. 17)</i>
QoL-domain EMPLOYMENT STATUS	<i>"I've decided to accept my position and where I am right now and having this position of being at VPUU helps me a lot because when I got here with my son, I wasn't even able to get something to eat at home." (CFG 3, Pos. 42)</i>
	<i>"there's some stuff that I'm not satisfied. Okay. I think it's that issue of a job." (OW2, Pos. 64)</i>
QoL-domain EDUCATION AND SKILLS	<i>"She recently got her driver's license, and I believe that's a life achievement right now. At the moment, she has not secured a</i>

	<i>job for her yet but she's trying to develop herself so that she stands a better chance of securing employment.”(V2, Pos. 126, translated)</i>
	<i>“I'm going to start my achievement at school, my matric (final high school exam) and then also my organization, the one that I told you about (community food garden). Yeah, those are the things that motivate me every day.”(CFG 1, Pos. 44)</i>
	<i>“it's 10 because I'm having a garden, I'm attending some classes so that I can grow in my work.”(CFG5, Pos. 68)</i>

Table 7. Selected quotations exemplifying QoL domains most often mentioned in relation to personal achievements. Source: the authors, 2025

4.3.2 Residents' perception of eudaimonic and affective dimensions

The results of the questions on future life satisfaction and achievements in life indicate that the interviewees predominantly have a positive outlook on the future. Findings from a more detailed analysis of the eudaimonic dimension substantiate this insight, with participants frequently referencing key elements of eudaimonic well-being such as a sense of purpose, individual and communal flourishing, and the cultivation of positive relationships (see Table 8).

EUDAIMONIC DIMENSION	
Sense of purpose	<i>“I can see that the teenagers are not taking the right path, so I've decided to be the role model to the youth as I go. So, I'm giving back what I've got today.” (V1, Pos. 70)</i> <i>“We are working like this because we want, as the leaders, we want this area to be a better area.” (E4, Pos. 272)</i>
Individual and community flourishing	<i>“For me, it's a privilege to be here. Because when I came here, I noticed a lot of things and then I think it's because of what I've achieved here, not in a bad way, but there was no one who achieved what I've achieved here.” (CFG1, Pos. 332)</i> <i>“VPUU has been a life changing moment for me. Major life changing moment. Most of the things I'm able to do now, it's because of VPUU. So my life was at a standstill, now it's slowly getting there.” (OW1, Pos. 158)</i> <i>• “Why I'm feeling proud of Monwabisi Park? Because it changes other people's lives and especially the kids because now they do have a playground where they can go after school and where they can be safe and they are not even paying fees, but they're here almost every day for free and I make sure that they don't go home hungry.” (CFG 2, Pos. 308)</i>
Cultivating positive relationships	<i>• “I feel grateful because before I was not involved in the project and I didn't know anyone here. But now because I'm involved, I know many people and I make a relationship with</i>

	<i>them. We build a relationship, the beautiful relationship.” (OW4, Pos. 64)</i>
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Table 8. Selected quotations exemplifying eudaimonic dimensions expressed during the interviews and their relation to QoL domains. Source: the authors, 2025

These key elements also demonstrated strong associations with affective dimensions of well-being. Participation in the VPUU program and its embedded case studies was commonly perceived as contributing to feelings of happiness and satisfaction. Such positive affective states were frequently linked to the QoL domains social connections, education and skills, environmental quality and civic engagement, as illustrated in Table 9. In contrast, negative affective states—such as worry and anxiety—were most often reported in relation to the domains employment status and personal security, with a special emphasis on exposure to crime.

AFFECTIVE DIMENSION	
Feeling of happy and/or satisfied	<i>“I’m very happy. And why? I see there is more changes. And myself, it always keeps me busy like tomorrow.” (OW3, Pos. 90)</i> (ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY)
	<i>“Most of the time I just collect the children around. I just want to keep them in peace. Then after school I help them with the homework, then we go to the gym. They help me a lot to reduce stress, keep me happy all time. Just love kids.” (OW4, Pos. 34)</i> (SOCIAL CONNECTION, EDUCATION AND SKILLS)
	<i>“This is how we’re going to work when we get at the field. So that’s when we get to create that connection. If you work together, like in sync, it’s always a bonding situation because it is just enjoy working and you’re doing it in sync.” (OW1, Pos. 78)</i> (SOCIAL CONNECTION, EMPLOYMENT STATUS)
	<i>“They want my presence every time. That makes me very happy.” (V1, Pos. 200)</i> (SOCIAL CONNECTION, EMPLOYMENT STATUS)
Feeling worried/ scared	<i>“Mentally, job hunting is taking a toll on her.” (V2, Pos. 509, translated)</i> (EMPLOYMENT STATUS)
	<i>“I’m scared of a crime, a high rate here” (E4, Pos. 358)</i> (PERSONAL SECURITY)
	<i>“The crime is high. The Alcohol abuse. And I feel stuck here in life.” (CFG 2, Pos. 94-96)</i>

	(PERSONAL SECURITY, lack of EMPLOYMENT PERSPECTIVE)
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Table 9. Selected quotations exemplifying affective dimensions expressed during the interviews. Source: the authors, 2025

4.3.3 Perceived impact of the VPUU- approach and the embedded case studies on material conditions and quality of life domains

Subsequent interview questions explored the influence of the VPUU program as a case study, along with the embedded case studies within the VPUU framework, on a comprehensive range of quality of life domains. Utilizing MaxQDA for quantitative analysis of coded interview passages (see Chapter 3.4.1), the findings reveal that the impact of the VPUU program and its co-produced social infrastructure is both broad and multifaceted, extending across all identified QoL domains. In particular, interview responses underscored strong effects in the areas of education and skills development, civic engagement, and the strengthening of social connections within the community (see Figure 24).

A more detailed analysis of the interview responses indicates substantial interdependencies among the various quality of life domains, as illustrated in Table 10. Many responses did not pertain solely to a single domain; rather, they often reflected overlapping and interconnected aspects that contributed to multiple domains simultaneously. This pattern highlights the complex and multidimensional nature of quality of life in informal settlements, where improvements in one area, such as education, may directly or indirectly enhance other domains, including economic stability, social capital, and health outcomes.

Moreover, in assessing the domain of "income and wealth", it became evident that a distinct approach is necessary. Given the unique circumstances and characteristic of informal settlements, this domain was broadened to include the subdomain "alternative means of reimbursement". This addition is intended to capture the use of theft-resistant alternative currencies, such as vouchers or natural resources (e.g., food, compost), which are utilized alongside or as substitutes for conventional monetary payments.

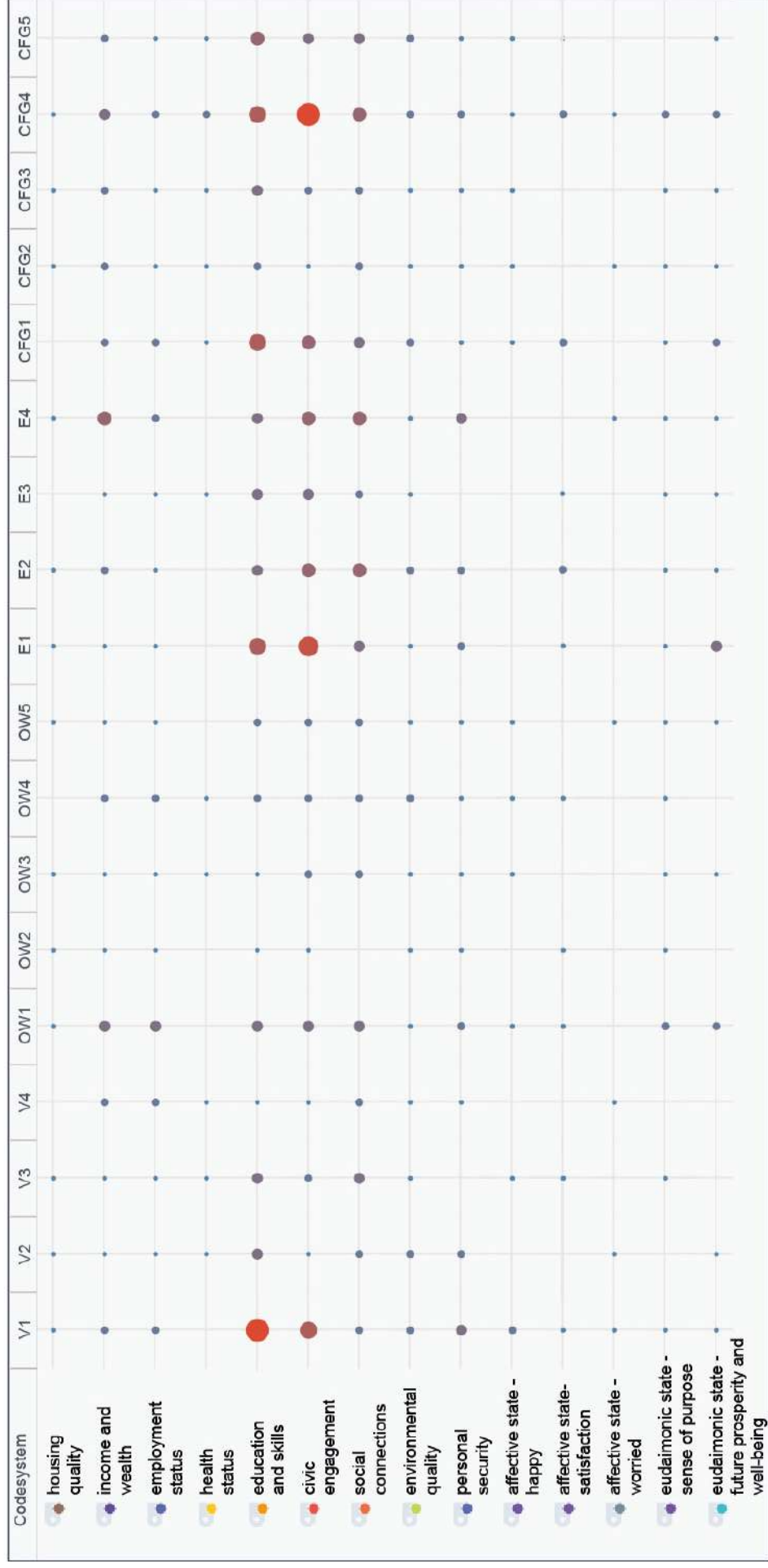


Figure 24. Code matrix illustrating how frequent domains were addressed during interviews, as analyzed with MaxQDA.
Source: the authors, 2025.

DOMAIN	QUOTE	RELATED DOMAINS
HOUSING QUALITY	<i>"Yeah, it did improve because the project (VPUU) would identify the houses that are affected and would come with some sort of assistance." (E2, Pos. 266)</i>	EDUCATION AND SKILLS, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
INCOME AND WEALTH	<i>"I do get cash - for example, when I worked for other organization, and have my own organization. So yeah, it was impressing. And so also when you buy food for the other people or for older, I used to take it out my pocket, but then were paid." (CFG1, Pos. 490)</i>	CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, SOCIAL CONNECTIONS
ALTERNATIVE MEANS OF REIMBURSEMENT	<i>"I came to VPUU applying for that social plan. Okay. So they didn't give you the money, they just give you the voucher to go and buy." (E4, Pos. 216)</i>	
EMPLOYMENT STATUS	<i>"It helps hugely in the community in terms of employing the Change Makers, that money that they will be paid. They will go back to their homes and do the different things from putting food on the table to renew the structure. Yeah. So it helps. It makes the difference." (CFG4, Pos. 850-851)</i>	HOUSING QUALITY, INCOME AND WEALTH
HEALTH STATUS	<i>"Yes. Is a lot because their childrens are protected to play with these rest food (waste). And the houses, they didn't have the flies and rats any more. Before this organic waste collection, we just throw the food. But now we use the buckets to control the rats." (OW3, Pos. 118-119)</i>	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
EDUCATION AND SKILLS	<i>"It's in their (VPUU's) papers to develop the skills for everyone. You understand. So they are giving chance to each and every community member." (V1, Pos. 313)</i>	SOCIAL CONNECTIONS, CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	<i>"VPUU manages to make our life a little bit easier. We somehow, we tend to forget if we are still living in informal settlement because of these project that VPUU has brought into our community." (E2, Pos 300)</i>	ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
SOCIAL CONNECTIONS	<i>"Experiencing a lot because when we are together, we're doing this, we get our views from each other and we share everything. We are like a family now. We've got new friends now that we don't know before. Oh, very nice." (OW4, Pos. 313)</i>	EDUCATION AND SKILLS
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY	<i>"If you have a garden around your own place, it helps with seeing the environment. We are</i>	HEALTH STATUS

	<i>breathing most the air. So the plants you have are assisting in terms of purifying the air that you have to breathe. So that helps a lot health wise.”(CFG4, Pos. 896-897)</i>	
PERSONAL SECURITY	<i>“Because if you are not connected to your neighbours, you can’t feel comfortable walking around. You see? But when I came to my work here in VPUU, because I think it’s seven hundred meters or eight hundred meters to come here, I feel safe because I know people who stay in this environment, you see, because I always greet them. Sometimes if maybe I’m needing something I can go and borrow something from the neighbour, because you have to get used to associate with people each and every time.”(CFG5, Pos. 148-149)</i>	SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Table 10. Selected quotations exemplifying the interrelations between QoL domains.
Source: the authors, 2025

In analyzing the civic engagement domain—the core focus of this study—the findings reveal that, while all domains within the analytical framework are interrelated with civic engagement, the most pronounced associations are observed with education and skills, social connections, and personal security. This suggests a significant correlation between civic engagement and these specific domains, underscoring their mutual reinforcement and importance within the community context (see Figure 25).

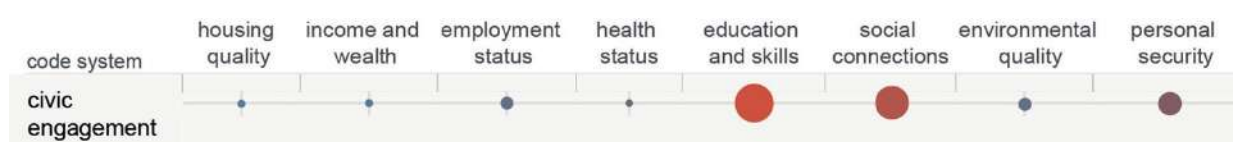


Figure 25. Code relations of civic engagement to material conditions as well as QoL domains, as analyzed with MaxQDA. Source: the authors, 2025

A thorough examination of the survey outcomes across these key domains discloses that the VPUU program's framework structures serve as a pivotal exchange platform, promoting the advancement of education and skills, fostering spaces for social connections, and enhancing security through community engagement, as exemplified by the quotations in Table 11.

QoL domain CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	
EDUCATIONS AND SKILLS	<i>"Monwabisi Park, it's an informal settlement, but there's a lot to learn in this. You learn things from the leadership, then things from VPUU. You learn things educational wise. VPUU used to bring the stakeholders to come and teach us some different things. So, I'm proud to say people of Monwabisi Park, they are well equipped in most of the things. Through VPUU." (V1, Pos. 180)</i>
SOCIAL CONNECTIONS	<i>"Here, at SNAC, we are coming from all different organizations in area of the community. So, we are sitting here to discuss the problems and how to be solved. How we can handle this and that, we are sitting in this hall. But no, it's not about work. Our aim is to develop this area. The work business just came in as a bonus." (E4, Pos. 276)</i>
PERSONAL SECURITY	<i>"I think VPUU can promote the safety, these projects having a positive impact in the community. For instance, when they employ the Change Makers for programs that they have, you find that they will take some of the guys and some of the guys were involved in their own criminal activities, but when they get involved, they feel part of community. You just don't look at the guy. You say, hey, he has changed a bit. I know some here were doing the wrong things. But some of them now are accompanying the ladies who are taking the children here to another ECD (early child care facility) over the hill." (CFG 4, Pos. 912)</i>

Table 11. Selected quotations exemplifying QoL domains most often mentioned in relation to civic engagement. Source: the authors, 2025

4.3.4 Civic engagement and co-production – motivating and enabling aspects

The interviews proceeded with questions about what motivated the participants to engage in VPUU projects and strategies to motivate additional community members to participate in future co-production processes. As a result, core themes became apparent. In addition to themes related to the structural aspects of hybrid governance—such as facilitating public support, fostering equitable communication, and leadership development—temporarily activating elements (e.g., awareness and information) as well as long-term stabilizing elements (e.g., placemaking) were also identified, as presented in Table 12.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT within co-production and governance - motivating and enabling aspects	
Activation and information	<i>"Workshops. Bringing them to work workshops. Just to explain to, because some of them, maybe they don't know what is happening. But workshops, they can motivate them. And then involve someone that has been working or helped, someone that has experienced how things were in the past, but now they see</i>

	<i>the change. So these motivations, they can bring up more numbers.”(E1, Pos. 472</i>
Eye-level communication	<i>“It was a great experience because my opinions are always viewed as the important ones. So yeah, that makes me to be more involved. Yeah, because my opinions are respected and are valued.”(E2, Pos. 190)</i> <i>“I’m trying to say we are connected within the community. VPUU don’t just come with projects, it always consults the community.”(E2, Pos. 186)</i>
Facilitating public support	<i>“I am more involved in the community in activities such as growing vegetables, initiating the community gardens. So I think that one day will take me up because we not only sitting there growing the spinach, we are trying to knock on the departmental doors like the Department of Agriculture, we are trying to knock there so that they can support us in terms of the community gardens. So having that hope of the door being opened one day, personally I have that hope that we can make it work.”</i> <i>“And also VPUU help us in our community, when you have, like me, I’ve got my soccer team. If I want to register my team, I must go and ask them to help me. If they help us, yes, they help us a lot. They do many things in our community. If you go there and tell them your story, they (VPUU) are willing to help us.” (OW4, Pos. 130)</i>
Leadership development	<i>“It was my first time to lead people. It was not easy at first, but because we have got mentorship sessions and supervisors to teach how to lead these people, what are the challenges that we are going to face, how to handle the challenges, how to communicate with your team, how to delegate their work to them, everything that we are doing here. I thank VPUU because at the level that I am with the leading skills now, it’s better than before.”(V1, Pos. 188)</i>
Facilitating placemaking strategies	<i>“But then I have to strive up and straightforward. That is why I get involved in the community activities. Not to be ashamed of my standard of living and not to have excuses or to blame anybody involving the government. Blaming the government because we say I stay here in Monwabisi Park because the government is not building the houses for me or is not doing the infrastructure. But then I get involved in the community activities such as the garden to make myself satisfied with my standard of living.”(CFG 4 , Pos. 860)</i>

Table 12. Selected quotations exemplifying motivating and enabling aspects related to co-production within the VPUU context. Source: the authors, 2025

4.4. Triangulation with PWI Results

The findings from the standardized Personal Well-being Index questionnaire, administered in conjunction with the qualitative interviews, substantiate participants' self-reported perceptions with quantifiable data, as illustrated in the radar chart presented in Figure 23. This triangulation reveals a consistent pattern: the moderate life satisfaction identified in the qualitative analysis is reflected in the quantitative scores, while participants' clear expectation of higher life satisfaction in the future (within a five-year period) is similarly supported by the data.

A comparison between participants actively engaged in community organization activities and the broader group of interviewees indicates that community organization members report higher satisfaction across all quality of life domains, with the exception of environmental quality. Notably, the positive impact of civic engagement on personal achievements, relationships, and income—previously observed in the qualitative findings—is now substantiated through quantitative analysis. Additionally, the Personal Well-being Index (PWI) results reveal significantly higher self-reported health satisfaction among actively engaged individuals, a dimension less thoroughly explored in the qualitative interviews due to participants' reluctance to answer health-related questions. Thus, the PWI analysis provides a significant supplementary perspective.

Although the PWI results lack statistical significance due to the limited sample size, it remains noteworthy to compare the mean life satisfaction reported by the surveyed participants (5.7) with the estimated average life satisfaction in South Africa. According to a study by Helliwell et al. (2020), this national average was 6.3, only slightly higher than the assessment provided by the marginalized residents of the informal settlement.

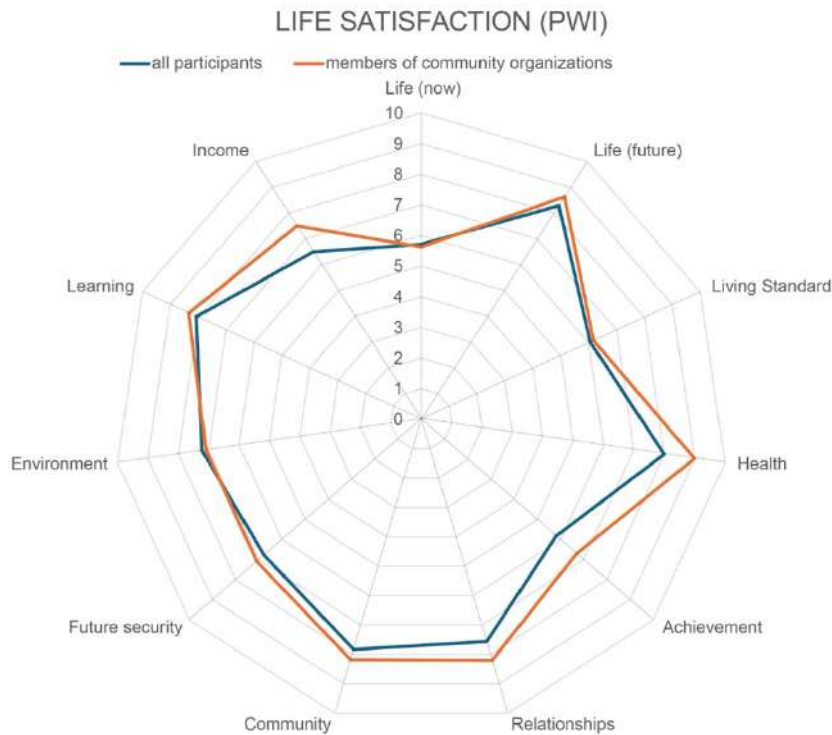


Figure 26. Radar chart of the PWI survey results administered during the interviews.
Source: the authors, 2025

4.5 The reciprocal influence between livelihood capitals and quality of life domains

This research further highlights the significant role of co-production on improving quality of life. Furthermore, it became evident that quality of life domains enhance the various livelihood capitals (human, social, natural, financial, and physical). These livelihood capitals, in turn, have an influence on domains of quality of life. The relationship between livelihood capitals and quality of life is not only reciprocal but also complex, with influences effecting multiple domains at the same time.

These influences are often direct, but can also be indirect, manifesting over a longer period of time. For example, strengthening social networks through co-production initiatives can gradually enhance education and skill development, which in turn increases opportunities for employment and improves overall job prospects.

To further illustrate the key themes and livelihood capitals identified in participants' responses, the following table presents selected quotes that exemplify responses related to three QoL domains: employment status, education and skills, and social connections. These quotes were chosen to represent recurring patterns in the data, provide insight into participants' lived experiences and discuss the associated livelihood capitals and their direct and indirect influences.

Employment status influencing livelihood capitals

On the one hand, employment through or in VPUU-embedded projects has a direct influence in the form of income, which can be used to gain access to housing and provide immediate short-term support for households. This income often provides the foundation for stability and security within families in Monwabisi Park. However, the long-term effects of this employment become clearer when we consider its indirect influence. Indirectly, employment can build confidence, strengthen social participation and create lasting opportunities in education, skills development and entrepreneurship. While employment has the strongest impact on economic capital, it also enables human capital through skill-building and fosters social capital by supporting community development. Overall, it contributes to housing and environmental capital. Thus, the benefits of employment through VPUU extend far beyond immediate financial gains, helping to empower individuals and strengthen communities over time.

QoL Domain: EMPLOYMENT STATUS			
Quotations	Capitals	Direct influence	Indirect influence
<i>"I managed to find a job and I managed to buy a house from all that with the job I got."</i> (OW1, Pos. 11)	Economic Physical	Income enables house purchase	Improved family security and long-term asset building
<i>"VPUU give us jobs and then we've got the schools for the children, all the schools. And then we've got taps for the water."</i> (OW3, Pos. 28)	Human Economic Social	Direct employment opportunity	Employment supports education and basic service access
<i>"I wish that I can build my own internet service somewhere, in the Eastern Cape, to go and implement what I've learned from V-NET. That is my goal."</i> (V1, Pos. 42)	Human Economic	Skills transfer from V-NET training	Potential entrepreneurship and local development
<i>"I've decided to accept my position and where I am right now and having this position of being at VPUU helps me a lot because when I got here with my son, I wasn't even able to get something to eat at home."</i> (CFG 3, Pos. 42)	Human Economic	Job improves direct material gain	Greater household stability, reduced vulnerability
<i>"It helps hugely in the community in terms of employing the Change Makers, that money that they will be paid. They will</i>	Economic Social	Income from jobs improves housing, food access	Circulates money in community, raising collective well-being

<i>go back to their homes and do the different things from putting food on the table to renew the structure. Yeah. So it helps. It makes the difference.”</i> (CFG4, Pos. 850-851)			
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Table 13. Livelihood capitals enhanced through co-production directly and indirectly influencing quality of life domains (employment). Source: the authors, 2025

Education and skills influencing livelihood capitals

Education and skills have a direct and indirect influence on individuals and, by extension, the wider community. Directly, education builds formal qualifications, skills and personal achievements, laying the groundwork for future growth and success. These immediate benefits provide individuals with valuable knowledge and experience in many areas of life.

However, this research also shows that, in the long term, education indirectly drives employability and financial stability, as well as social participation and long-term empowerment. It opens doors to new opportunities and enables people to participate more fully in their communities. In terms of cross-capital links, education's influence is strongest with human capital, but it also enables economic capital through better job prospects and stability, as well as social capital by encouraging civic engagement and active community roles. In essence, education acts as a catalyst for personal and collective advancement across multiple domains.

QoL Domain: EDUCATION AND SKILLS			
Quotations	Capitals	Direct influence	Indirect influence
<i>“You see now as I’m busy pursuing my diploma, so I’m thinking of pursuing another course, project management. So with those qualification, I’m seeing myself in one of the top management positions.”</i> (E2, Pos. 34	Human Economic	Formal qualifications and training	Career progression
<i>“My graduation. All in blend, when I get this, then I will get even a better job. Then I’ll start out to get a proper tenement, a general family. You see everything is going to be stable financially.”</i> (OW5, Pos. 44)	Human Economic Social	Formal qualifications	Job access, financial stability, stronger family support

<i>"She recently got her driver's license, and I believe that's a life achievement right now. At the moment she has not secured a job for her yet but she's trying to develop herself so that she stands a better chance of securing employment." (V2, Pos. 126, translated)</i>	Human Economic	Skills achievement	Better employability and independence
<i>"I'm going to start my achievement at school, my matric and then also my organization, the one that I told you about (community food garden). Yeah, those are the things that motivate me every day." (CFG 1, Pos. 44)</i>	Human Economic	Education milestone and community garden involvement	Increased motivation, stronger community role

Table 14. Livelihood capitals enhanced through co-production directly and indirectly influencing quality of life domains (education and skills). Source: the authors, 2025

Social connections influencing livelihood capitals

Social connections in this research proves to be fundamental in shaping family bonds, nurturing friendships, and providing platforms for collective action. These relationships provide direct emotional support and a sense of belonging, while also creating an indirect effect on enhancing wellbeing, resilience, and civic engagement over time. This research demonstrates that, through informal learning and shared experiences, social ties facilitate individual growth and increased participation in community activities. The influence of social connections is most evident in the development of social capital, where trust and cooperation are fostered within the community but also with VPUU. However, the scope of their influence is not limited to these domains; they also enhance human capital by supporting learning and creating supportive networks. Furthermore, they contribute to economic capital by enabling community-led development and shared economic opportunities. It is evident that social connections are vital for both personal fulfilment and the broader advancement within the community.

QoL Domain: SOCIAL CONNECTIONS			
Quotations	Capitals	Direct influence	Indirect influence
<i>"Living with my son, seeing him growing every day"</i> (CFG 3, Pos. 20)	Social Human	Family bond and emotional support	Improved wellbeing
<i>"to be living in my family"</i> (OW2, Pos. 60)	Social Human	Strong family ties	Sense of belonging and stability

"chilling with friends" (V3, Pos. 75)	Social	Peer connection and leisure	Emotional wellbeing and stress relief
<i>"Experiencing a lot because when we are together, we're doing this, we get our views from each other and we share everything. We are like a family now. We've got new friends now that we don't know before. Oh, very nice."</i> (OW4, Pos. 313)	Social Human	Building friendships and exchanging ideas	Broader networks, learning, and informal education
<i>"Here, at SNAC, we are coming from all different organizations in area of the community. So, we are sitting here to discuss the problems and how to be solved. How we can handle this and that, we are sitting in this hall. But no, it's not about work. Our aim is to develop this area. The work business just came in as a bonus."</i> (E4, Pos. 276)	Social Economic Human	Collective problem-solving and community dialogue	Stronger civic engagement, local development, and shared resources

Table 15. Livelihood capitals enhanced through co-production directly and indirectly influencing quality of life domains (social connections). Source: the authors, 2025

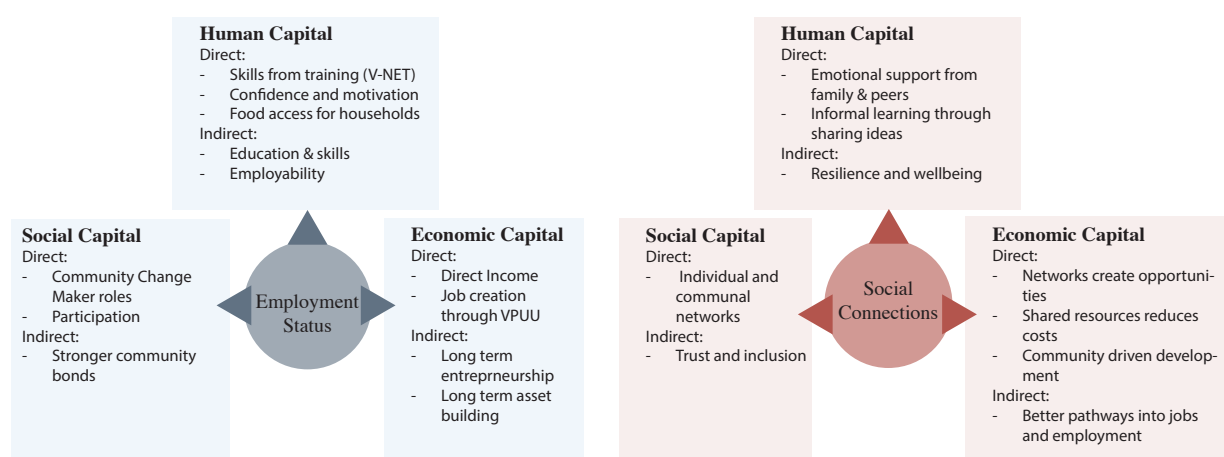


Figure 27. Capitals directly and indirectly influenced by selected quality of life domains. Source: the authors, 2025.

5 Discussion of study results

5.1 Perception of quality of life and well-being by the participants

The perceptions of quality of life within informal settlement communities are shaped by a complex interplay of socioeconomic and relational factors. The findings of this study, as presented in Chapter 4.3.1, highlight that residents generally report moderate levels of life satisfaction, though there is notable variability, with some expressing both lower and higher levels of contentment. Interestingly, the hope and expectation of an increase in life satisfaction is high, at least among the study participants included in the qualitative study. The responses from the participants indicate that this positive expectation can be attributed to the positive changes in the informal settlement that have been achieved in recent years in the context of the VPUU program.

When asked what really matters to residents in terms of life satisfaction, it becomes clear that employment status stands out as a particularly influential domain, frequently cited as a primary determinant of both enhanced and diminished life satisfaction. This underscores the centrality of economic stability in shaping overall well-being within these communities. While income (economic capital) is important, the findings suggest that it is not the only factor related to employment. Improvements in the community, such as access to basic services (social capital) or skill development (human capital), are other aspects that seem to be important in understanding what respondents seek under an improved employment status.

In addition to economic considerations, social connections—especially relationships with friends and family—emerge as critical contributors to positive perceptions of quality of life. The significance of these social bonds highlights the importance of community cohesion and support networks.

Furthermore, self-efficacy gained through civic engagement is recognized as a meaningful factor, with active participation in community activities contributing positively to individuals' sense of agency and satisfaction as outlined in Chapter 4. Collectively, these findings emphasize that the quality of life in informal settlements is not solely dependent on economic conditions but is also profoundly influenced by social and participatory dimensions.

5.2 The role of governance and placemaking in facilitating co-produced interventions

5.2.1 The role of hybrid governance in facilitating co-produced interventions

The study conducted in Monwabisi Park demonstrated that VPUU is a prominent organization significantly influencing the emergence of hybrid governance structures

within the neighborhood. It became clear that VPUU plays a critical role by addressing significant gaps in resources and expertise. The organization acts as an intermediary between local government and the community, facilitating effective communication and collaboration between these entities. Additionally, VPUU equips community members with the necessary knowledge and skills to engage in co-produced upgrading measures while also promoting organizational development to maintain a cohesive community structure.

In connection with the hybrid governance structures, the establishment of the Safe Node Area Committee (SNAC), a representative body of elected local leaders, proved to be particularly instrumental in fostering development of the settlement. SNAC acts as an intermediary between VPUU and the community, ensuring that governance and spatial development initiatives are responsive to local needs by regularly updating the Community Action Plan.

Additionally, the Change Makers initiative proved to be instrumental as it involves recruiting local residents on short-term contracts to raise awareness, support project implementation, and disseminate critical information. Supported by supervisors and by VPUU staff, Change Makers build trust and ensure sustained engagement, acting as liaisons who connect community needs with VPUU expertise, as agreed between the project partners (SNAC representing broader leadership, VPUU and City of Cape Town) in the Community Action Plan.

Tracing the emergence of SNAC, Change Makers, supervisors and volunteers, the role of VPUU is shifting from direct operational involvement to a more facilitative role of steering the process to providing knowledge and guidance. This shift aligns with the broader goal of empowering individual community members to take greater ownership of decision-making and implementation. Certain strategic decisions remain within VPUU's management, as outlined in the Community Action Plan, particularly due to VPUU's unique ability to secure funding and serve as a vital bridge to the formal sector. This agency continues to be a core aspect of VPUU's expertise and role. The evolution of SNAC signifies a crucial advancement in the decentralization of governance tasks, therefore promoting a hybrid system. This paradigm combines the grassroots perspectives and agency of community members with the institutional backing and strategic guidance offered by NGOs.

Across the embedded case studies, community members participated in various roles—such as SNAC members, Change Makers, supervisors, and volunteers—contributing to initiatives ranging from early childhood education to organic waste management. Their involvement not only facilitated project delivery but also strengthened local capacity and ownership, highlighting the effectiveness of VPUU's participatory approach.

In summary, two levels of intermediaries are involved in strengthening local governance. VPUU (as between community and local government) and SNAC (as between different community groups) and Change Makers (as between VPUU and different community groups). A unique cohort known as Change Makers has emerged, serving as multipliers and ambassadors between Community Action Plan (CAP) interventions and local residents. Since the CAP represents an agreement between the two intermediaries and the state, defining a shared vision for neighbourhood development, Change Makers play a pivotal role in local governance. They actively take ownership as multipliers and ambassadors, operating with the support and mandate of both intermediaries.

The analysis of the roles and responsibilities of actors within the aforementioned projects reveals a significant transition in neighborhood governance toward a hybrid model. This shift represents an interplay between bottom-up, community-driven initiatives and governance approaches initiated by VPUU. Over time, the establishment of structures like SNAC underscores a gradual development in governance structures within Monwabisi Park.

5.2.2 The role of placemaking in facilitating co-produced interventions

VPUU's approach to placemaking serves as both a governance strategy and a developmental framework across its various case studies. Site selection and project development are carried out in consultation with the SNAC, representing the community and ensuring meaningful participatory input. Throughout the placemaking process, interim decisions are shared with SNAC for all related projects.

In the case of Emthonjeni, the process extends further: alongside SNAC, the ECD Forum (as the relevant sector body) and immediate neighbours to each Emthonjeni are actively involved. All stakeholders are invited to contribute their perspectives on each specific placemaking initiative, while VPUU retains responsibility for the technical design phase. This approach enables residents at multiple levels to shape project briefs and directly experience the outcomes.

Notably, the concept of "placemaking" is no longer explicitly communicated or framed for community members. As a result, residents may not be consciously aware of the terminology or strategy of placemaking—a finding also highlighted in qualitative interviews. Nonetheless, they recognize and value its impact through the tangible improvements to spaces, services, and opportunities that enhance their daily lives.

During VPUU's initial engagement in Monwabisi Park, placemaking was made explicit, with a gradual handover of mobilization and implementation from VPUU (as the intermediary between the State and local leadership) to SNAC (as the intermediary

between CAP projects and the broader community). However, this transition also revealed barriers in information flow from SNAC to the wider community. To address this gap, the role of Change Makers as multipliers has become increasingly important in bridging communication and fostering broader community engagement.

One of the key advantages of placemaking, as demonstrated by the embedded case studies, is its integration of physical development with social processes. By creating safe, accessible and meaningful spaces, placemaking strengthens social connections, fosters trust and gives residents a sense of ownership of spaces such as Monwabisi Park. Furthermore, it is directly linked to quality of life. For instance, placemaking promotes education and skills development by incorporating training, learning, and youth engagement in projects such as food gardens, V-Net, and Emthonjeni. It also reinforces social connections by providing shared spaces where residents can meet, exchange ideas, and work collectively towards common goals. In this way, placemaking transforms the built environment and contributes holistically to well-being by reinforcing human, social, and economic capital sustainably.

5.3 Drivers of well-being related to co-production, placemaking and governance

Drawing from the study, this research identifies several key drivers influencing quality of life in the South African informal settlement context. These drivers can be organized into five interrelated categories: (1) eudaimonic, (2) altruistic, (3) relational, (4) formative, and (5) material. The eudaimonic category encompasses factors such as sense of purpose, fulfillment, personal growth and belonging. Altruistic drivers relate to the flourishing of the community and the support of others. Relational aspects emphasize trust and social capital, while formative drivers include human capital, skill development, and safety. Finally, material drivers pertain to economic opportunities and improvements in physical and environmental conditions.

5.4.1 Eudaimonic drivers of well-being

The commitment exhibited by both the interviewees and members of the VPUU organization was predominantly characterized by an intrinsic sense of purpose directed toward enhancing the quality of life within the informal settlement, particularly through the co-production of social infrastructure. This intrinsic motivation was further reinforced by the program's demonstrable success in achieving tangible improvements at the community level. Ideally, such a sense of purpose operates as a self-reinforcing driver: it is cultivated by the anticipation of positive change and further consolidated through the realization of actual improvements. Moreover, this sense of purpose may also be retrospectively reinforced, as individuals reflect on previously attained positive outcomes, thereby fostering motivation for continued engagement and further advancements.

Within this context, fulfillment emerges as a significant driver for enhancing quality of life. Interviewees identified fulfillment not only as an outcome of successfully transforming challenging conditions—particularly through co-produced interventions such as ECD facilities and community gardens—but also as a result of attaining personal goals and effecting meaningful individual change. Fulfillment was frequently linked to personal growth, which, in the context of the informal settlement, encompassed both the initial steps to overcome present hardships and the ongoing pursuit of improved living conditions.

Improvements achieved through co-produced social infrastructure have had a notable impact on residents' sense of belonging, positioning it as a key eudaimonic driver of quality of life and well-being. Despite challenging living conditions, these projects fostered a sense of shared achievement and reduced feelings of marginalization, thereby enhancing both community cohesion and individual well-being.

5.4.2 Altruistic drivers of well-being

Another key finding of this study is that eudaimonic drivers were closely linked with altruistic motivations. Interview participants frequently expressed a desire to engage in co-produced social infrastructure projects not only for personal benefit, but also to improve the well-being of other community members – members from the immediate environment of the respondents, such as family members and friends, but also people outside this immediate environment such as members of the younger generation. This altruistic orientation was reflected in both the support for more vulnerable individuals and the aspiration to contribute to the overall development of the community. These two elements collectively underscore the significance of altruistic drivers in shaping quality of life and well-being.

5.4.3 Relational drivers of well-being

The findings of this study underscore the role of positive relational connections in enhancing quality of life and well-being. In environments where public institutional support is limited or lacking, social capital becomes especially significant. The research demonstrates that co-produced social infrastructure interventions cultivate social capital across multiple dimensions: (a) engagement through personal networks, (b) connections within networks among community members, and (c) interactions with institutions. Together, these forms of engagement foster the development and reinforcement of social capital, which is foundational to improved well-being within the community.

At the level of personal networks, the findings indicate that social connections formed through participation in co-produced social infrastructure projects persist

beyond the duration of formal involvement. These individually established relationships often evolve into enduring networks, as participants reported continued interactions with neighbors and volunteers outside the project context. Examples included collective activities such as recreational outings and the provision of mutual child-care, illustrating the lasting impact of these connections.

At the network level of the community, involvement in VPUU projects generated a positive ripple effect throughout the community. Participants who benefited from these initiatives often encouraged and mobilized others to become involved, thereby expanding participation and strengthening communal bonds. These individuals contributed by providing support, guidance, and educational resources to fellow community members. Interview data further revealed that participants' connections to the community were reinforced not only through VPUU engagement but also through membership in other local associations.

At the institutional level, engagement with organizations such as VPUU has had a notable positive impact on the quality of life in Monwabisi Park. Enhanced access to resources through these partnerships addresses immediate needs while also fostering long-term opportunities for community development. Participation in bodies like SNAC has enabled community members to engage in decision-making, develop advocacy skills, and gain experience in community representation. Furthermore, SNAC members' direct links to the ward councilor facilitate the presentation of community priorities at higher levels of governance.

Within this relational context, the study's findings further indicate a growing sense of trust among residents of Monwabisi Park, positioning trust as a key driver of quality of life and well-being. In an environment characterized by inherent mistrust of public institutions, the development of trust within the community and toward facilitators or intermediaries such as VPUU is particularly significant. In interviews, both community members and experts emphasized that trust is not acquired instantly, but rather cultivated over longer time spans and reinforced through positive shared experiences. The process of co-producing social infrastructure not only fosters the development of trust, but also positions trust as a valuable social asset – a “currency” - that enables and sustains ongoing transformative change within the community.

5.4.4 Formative drivers of well-being

The study further identified formative drivers, particularly the development of human capital and skill acquisition, as important contributors to quality of life and well-being. These formative processes occur at both the community and individual levels. At the community level, initiatives like the leadership development of SNAC members through VPUU support enhance collective capacity, while at the individual level,

participation in co-produced social infrastructure interventions fosters professional qualifications and personal growth.

Additionally, the study highlighted that networking facilitated by social infrastructure interventions not only disseminates information about community processes but also raises awareness of risks faced by particularly vulnerable members. This flow of information directly influences another key driver of quality of life and well-being: the sense of security within the community.

5.4.5 Material drivers of well-being

Material conditions emerged as another significant category of well-being drivers in the interviews. Economic opportunities, particularly access to employment, were frequently identified as critical determinants of quality of life and personal well-being. Interviewees expressed a strong desire for an improved standard of living through stable and regular income. However, the sustainability of such opportunities was a recurring concern, as job placements generated by the VPUU program are typically of limited duration and distributed on a rotational basis.

Beyond providing short-term employment, the program has achieved tangible success in supporting business opportunities and offering institutional backing to existing organizations. This is particularly evident in the ECD sector, where temporary jobs for Change Makers in the Emthonjeni project are complemented by more permanent supervisory positions in ECD. Local small businesses, such as ECD centers, benefit from ongoing institutional support in the form of skills development, access to VNET, and collective bargaining assistance from VPUU and external partners. Additionally, food gardens exemplify how the program fosters business growth and creates both entrepreneurial and fixed-term job opportunities.

In addition to economic opportunities, physical and environmental enhancements were also identified as important drivers of well-being. Interviewees highlighted the positive impact of a cleaner and healthier environment, achieved through community-based organic waste management initiatives established within the VPUU framework. Furthermore, infrastructural improvements—particularly in sanitation, lighting and walkways—were frequently cited as key factors contributing to better health outcomes and increased personal security.

6 Conclusions

The present research was driven by the underlying understanding that existing studies on well-being have not included sufficiently a reflection on the drivers of well-being in socioeconomically disadvantaged settings, such as informal settlements. The central assumption guiding this study is that co-production and aligned governance

arrangements have a role to play in this context. The case of Monwabisi Park, an informal settlement in Cape Town, South Africa, revealed important insights into how social infrastructure and basic services are provided through mechanisms of co-production, as well as the effects of co-production and governance arrangements across multiple well-being domains. A notable finding of the study is the revelation of surprising parallels between the Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) results at the national level (Helliwell et al., 2020), and those obtained within the context of the informal settlement Monwabisi Park. This finding suggests that, despite differing living conditions, certain dimensions of subjective well-being may be more consistent across diverse socioeconomic backgrounds than previously assumed – at least in the context of the case study area affected by the VPUU program. In this regard, it would be valuable for future research to investigate how these insights might differ in informal settlement contexts where VPUU's program and co-production processes have not been implemented.

With regard to the research and data collection methods employed, this study underscores the necessity of careful administration and facilitation to promote respondent understanding, thereby ensuring meaningful participation and reliable insights. In Monwabisi Park, several complementary methods were used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the local situation. While all the methods offered valuable insights, face-to-face data collection proved particularly effective. These encounters not only enabled researchers to ask follow-up questions, but also gave interviewees the chance to clarify, expand on, and reflect on their own answers. This exchange created a more dialogical process in which context-specific details and lived experiences could emerge more naturally. This highlights the importance of combining diverse approaches while prioritizing methods that enable dialogue, mutual understanding and deeper engagement with the community.

Unsurprisingly, this study highlights the central importance of economic stability for overall well-being in communities characterized by economic hardships. Yet, non-material factors also significantly shape quality of life. Strong social ties—especially with friends and family—emerge as key contributors to positive well-being, emphasizing the value of community cohesion and support networks. Additionally, self-efficacy fostered through civic engagement plays a crucial role, as active participation in community initiatives is closely linked to higher life satisfaction. These findings indicate that an exclusive focus on economic drivers offers an incomplete perspective on the diverse factors that impact the quality of life in informal settlements. Accordingly, this study argues that incorporating drivers pertaining to non-economic categories—such as eudaimonic, altruistic, relational, and formative drivers—offers the chance to provide a more comprehensive understanding of quality of life and well-being in this context.

This study illustrates that the well-being and overall quality of life for residents in Monwabisi Park are closely tied to their social relationships and support networks. The cascading effects of participation in VPUU projects, the impact of safe social infrastructure interventions, and the collaborative efforts of community members, Change Makers, and VPUU have shown the effectiveness of collective action in enhancing local well-being. A closer examination of the category of social connections reveals that these play a vital role in individual well-being and quality of life, operating at personal, communal, and institutional levels. Personal networks support resource access, personal growth, and empowerment by enabling individuals to leverage skills and relationships to address challenges. At the communal level, networks foster collective action, shared responsibility, and the development of sustainable solutions to local issues. Institutional connections, such as partnerships with organizations like VPUU, enhance knowledge, skills, and capacity building both for specific projects and broader governance. Together, these interconnected levels of social connections are essential for strengthening resilience and improving quality of life in informal settlements.

In terms of governance in these contexts, dedicated intermediaries that are not aligned to particular political interests are essential for mediating tensions and supporting collaboration. VPUU has demonstrated effectiveness in this role, and has also ensured that community-based bodies are included in the collaboration. As shown with SNAC in this study, such entities can gradually shift leadership and decision-making to local residents, enhancing ownership and accountability. This research further highlights that such community-based structures need to be grounded in democratic principles, ensuring diverse representation and transparent decision-making. These characteristics are vital for building trust and legitimacy.

In Monwabisi Park, governance is guided by the Community Action Plan—a neighbourhood development framework co-created by SNAC, VPUU, and City of Cape Town line departments. This plan is regularly submitted to and deliberated in the Sub-council, serving as ongoing input into the City's Integrated Development Plan (IDP).

Furthermore, municipal recognition of intermediaries and community-based organizations as an equal partner is also crucial for institutionalizing collaboration and connecting grassroots initiatives with formal governance. In summary, combining effective intermediaries with empowered, community-based bodies provides a promising path toward inclusive and sustainable development. These strategies foster shared ownership, accountability, and social capital, laying a foundation for long-term improvements in quality of life and well-being.

7 Recommendations

Overall, this study highlights the necessity of long-term strategies to sustain community engagement. The placemaking initiatives embedded in the case studies promote community cohesion by establishing inclusive, shared spaces and fostering a sense of ownership. Developing strong leadership and shared responsibility is crucial for ensuring lasting impacts of co-produced social infrastructure, especially in politically contested settings like informal settlements in South Africa, where systemic barriers can impede equitable development.

Building on these insights, the study identifies several areas where modifications or enhancements could be useful in the context of co-production, governance and assessment of quality of life and well-being in South African informal settlement contexts. Furthermore, these recommendations may have applicability beyond the immediate context of this research.

7.1 Call for integrating non-economic drivers in QoL research and policies

In addition to the material factors frequently examined in studies on quality of life and well-being, the findings of this research highlight the importance of non-economic drivers—including eudaimonic, altruistic, relational, and formative drivers—in shaping quality of life and well-being within informal settlements in South Africa. Incorporating these dimensions seems essential for developing a more comprehensive and holistic perspective on well-being, especially in contexts that are largely excluded from formal economic structures and are characterized by a high degree of informality. To encourage ongoing improvements in quality of life, it is advisable that future policy frameworks explicitly incorporate these non-economic drivers of well-being. Programs should acknowledge eudaimonic goals, such as enhancing purpose, fulfillment, personal growth and belonging, in addition to material improvements. Promoting altruistic behaviors, such as community service and mutual aid, has been shown to enhance social cohesion and resilience. Relational drivers, such as fostering social connections, networks of trust, and community belonging, are equally critical and should be actively promoted through participatory processes and inclusive community-building initiatives. Finally, formative elements—such as access to education, personal growth opportunities, and capacity-building—must be embedded within development strategies.

By incorporating an approach that values both economic and non-economic drivers, development initiatives can more effectively address the multifaceted challenges of well-being in (and beyond) informal settlements, ensuring more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable outcomes.

7.2 Call for adopting a holistic perspective

This research recommends adopting a holistic perspective on quality of life and well-being assessment. In this context, the livelihood framework provides a valuable lens for acknowledging the interdependencies between different forms of capital.

Through the development and application of the analytical model, this study highlights the importance of adopting a holistic perspective on the interconnected development of livelihood capitals. The impact of each capital cannot be fully understood if examined in isolation, as all five capitals—social, human, economic, physical, and natural—are deeply interlinked and exert both direct and indirect influences on one another.

The analysis further shows that changes in quality of life domains have a direct influence on livelihood capitals, shaping them in both the short and long term. Improvements or challenges in domains such as employment, education, or social connections cascade into shifts across multiple capitals. For example, gains in education and skills (a QoL domain) strengthen human and economic capital, while stronger social connections reinforce social capital and can open access to resources. This demonstrates that the overall impact on livelihood capitals is best understood through the lens of quality of life domains, which act as key drivers of change.

7.3 Call for contextualizing QoL and well-being assessment

A key motivation for developing a context-specific analytical framework was to identify locally meaningful factors influencing quality of life. As a result, this research highlights the need to reassess how quality of life is evaluated in the Global South, advocating for greater emphasis on contextualized dimensions - such as social capital and social infrastructure - as fundamental components of well-being in informal settlements. Furthermore, in areas dominated by informal (economic) activities, it is essential to move beyond conventional categories of monetary income and formal employment and also consider alternative livelihood strategies. This broader perspective is necessary to fully understand the complex and evolving dynamics of lived realities in these contexts.

Moreover, In addition to collecting well-being assessments as aggregated data for larger areas, it is crucial to conduct small-scale studies that evaluate the direct impact of specific interventions on the quality of life of those affected. Localizing these studies to particular contexts helps identify actionable levers for improving well-being. When evaluations are positive, these approaches can then be tested for transferability to other settings.

7.4 Call for acknowledging and supporting hybrid governance schemes

This study underscores the important role of intermediaries in connecting stakeholders, facilitating dialogue, and establishing links between local actors and higher-level governance institutions. An effective hybrid governance model relies on robust vertical connections across different scales. These connections enable shared decision-making and the integration of policies from national to local levels. The establishment of co-production and hybrid governance structures necessitates a sustained, long-term commitment, recognizing that trust-building is a valuable asset in development processes that require time and continuity. Disruptions to this continuity, for example, through the withdrawal of support, not only hinder existing development processes but also have the potential to significantly worsen the situation, as withdrawal can be perceived as disappointment and betrayal. Therefore, hybrid governance arrangements should be recognized, supported, and acknowledged not only for their short-term results but also for their complex, long-term impacts. It is essential that support extends beyond limited project timelines and basic funding to encompass institutional backing, capacity-building, and acknowledgment of the nuanced and sustained work necessary for successful improvements of quality of life and well-being.

7.5 Call for targeted partnerships to sustain gains of QoL and well-being

While this study demonstrated that co-production and active community engagement are vital for improving quality of life in informal settlements, it is evident that deep-rooted structural challenges require long-term solutions supported by intermediaries as well as additional resources. Beyond recognizing the value of hybrid governance structures, it is essential to strengthen these frameworks through targeted partnerships that provide sustained support and capacity.

7.6 Call for regular monitoring and reflecting around quality of life and well-being

The importance of creating collaborative reflective spaces that bring intermediaries, residents, and external researchers together is highlighted by this study. Such reflection enables the documentation and assessment of holistic developments within a structured framework, allowing for effective monitoring of program impacts on well-being and quality of life across multiple levels. The integration of transdisciplinary approaches and external expertise fosters a broader perspective, promotes alignment with wider discourses, and facilitates program adaptation and the celebration of achievements. These collaborative spaces also generate opportunities for further conceptual development and research, benefiting both local stakeholders and

emerging scholars interested in various aspects of developmental programs. Integrating these reflective practices into public discourse on quality of life in South Africa (and beyond the South African context) can enrich governance and policy debates, paving the way for scaling and replicating successful approaches.

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ANNEX I – study preparation

A1 Information sheet for community members



The Department of International Urbanism at the University of Stuttgart, Germany is doing a study called

"THE ROLE OF QUALITY OF GOVERNANCE: THE LINK BETWEEN CO-PRODUCTION PROCESSES AND WELL-BEING IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENT COMMUNITIES". We're working closely with a local non-profit group called Violence Protection through Urban Upgrading (**VPUU**).

This study is part of an international research project to help with public policies for well-being and sustainable development. In our study, we will be looking at how good governance plays a role in making informal settlements in Cape Town, South Africa better. We're using social science and maps to study specific places and infrastructures made jointly by the people living in **Monwabisi Park**. We'll be walking around, talking to people, and making maps.

We want to understand how people in **Monwabisi Park** jointly work together to improve their environment, how they make the place theirs and how collaboration with the public authorities and others can be successful.

The study hopes to give ideas to help people make their lives and happiness better. It will also show governments how they can support this process.

A2 Photovoice survey invitation postcard

ARE YOU A CHANGE MAKER IN MONWABISI PARK?

**We kindly ask you to contribute to
an online survey -
please scan**



or visit

<https://ee-eu.kobotoolbox.org/x/LTsl7uQC>



A3 Informed consent sheet

WELL-BEING SURVEY 2024 INFORMED CONSENT FORM

In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (Act 4 of 2013), also called the POPI Act or POPIA, which came into effect on 1 July 2021, we would like to assure you that VPUU NPC is taking all necessary steps to make sure that we are in regulation with the act.

**TO BE COMPLETED BY THE FIELD WORKER IN CONSULTATION WITH THE RESPONDENT
THAT IS EIGHTEEN YEARS OR OLDER**

1. Who is conducting the survey:

You are invited to complete a questionnaire as part of our Well-being Survey. The purpose of the survey is to gather information on what matters to you and your quality of life.

2. What is the purpose of the survey:

This is an ongoing survey to understand the quality of life in specific areas better. Trained residents and academics are conducting the survey. The Survey Co-ordinator is Mr Michael Krause contactable on +27 21 447 0086.

3. Who is the responsible party for the survey data and where will it be stored:

VPUU (together with University of Stuttgart, Germany) is responsible for the data collected. All information in the questionnaire will be stored in a password-protected database. A copy of the consent form will also be kept and filed electronically, in a password-protected database.

4. How the information will be used:

All information collected will be used for its intended purpose and/or for other projects in the area relating to VPUU's work.
Your personal data will not be shared with or sold to a 3rd party

5. What will be required of you if you agree to participate?

- You will need to understand and sign this consent form.
- You will be asked a set of questions by the field worker which may take up to 20 minutes
- Your answers are entirely voluntary
- You may withdraw participation at any point, and in the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation, participants involvement will be terminated with immediate effect without any consequences.

INFORMED CONSENT: *By completing any personal information, the data subject unconditionally and voluntarily, consents to the processing of the submitted personal information for any and all purposes related to household surveys.*

Respondent signature: _____

Date: _____

Map Target Point: _____

Fieldworker: _____

ANNEX II – questionnaire

A4 Questionnaire for semi-structured interviews including PWI

Module 0 – Demographic background

0.1_How old are you?

0.2_Gender?

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Other

0.3_Where do you stay in Cape Town? (please indicate section within Monwabisi Park (if applicable) and, if possible, neighbourhood block)

.....

0.4_How long have you been living there (approximately)? Please tell us the year that you arrived.

.....

0.5_How many people live in your household?

0.6_Did you move within this settlement/from other places to this settlement? If so, from where?

.....

Module 1 - General Life Satisfaction // This module is all about understanding how satisfied you are with your life and what matters to you in terms of life satisfaction

1.1 B2_ Thinking about your own life and personal circumstances, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole?

0 = 😞 not at all satisfied, 10 = 😊 completely satisfied

Please mark on the scale below.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
😞										😊

1.2_What aspects make your life satisfying at the moment?.

.....

.....

.....

1.3 B4_ As your best guess, how satisfied with your life do you expect to feel in 5 years' time?

0 = 😞 not at all satisfied, 10 = 😊 completely satisfied

Please mark on the scale below.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
😞										😊

1.4_What would make your life more satisfying in the next 5 years?

.....

.....

.....

.....

1.5 E3_ How satisfied are you with what you are achieving in life?

0 = 😞 not at all satisfied, 10 = 😊 completely satisfied

Please mark on the scale below.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
😞										😊

Module 2.0 – Civic engagement – general information // This module is designed to find out if you're involved in a group that aims to make life better.

2.1_Are you part of an association/ community organization? For example a savings club, cultural association, religious or sports associations - please answer with yes or no

☐ YES ☐ NO

If YES

2.2_Please tell us more – what associations/ organization(s) are you involved in and what is your contribution there?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2.3_Why are you contributing to this association/ organization? Please tell us more about your motivation!

.....

.....

.....

.....

If NO

2.4_Why are you not part of an association/ community organization?

.....

.....

.....

2.5_If you have been part of an association/ community organization but are no longer contributing to it, what made you stop?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Module 2.1 – Civic engagement – specific to case study //

This module tries to identify your participation in specific upgrading projects in Monwabisi Park.

» USAGE

2.6_ Which of these projects do you (or your family members) use? (Multiple answers possible)

- ☐ Emthonjeni
- ☐ Community Food Garden
- ☐ (Organic) Waste Collection
- ☐ V-Net
- ☐ Non of these projects

2.7_ Who uses it?

.....

2.8_ When and how often?

	daily	weekly	monthly
Emthonjeni	☐	☐	☐
Community Food Garden	☐	☐	☐
(Organic) Waste Collection	☐	☐	☐
V-Net	☐	☐	☐

2.9_ For what purpose?

.....

.....

IF YOU USE NONE OF THESE PROJECTS,

2.10_ Why don't you use any of these projects?

.....

.....

.....

2.11_ How could you use these projects in the future?

.....

.....

.....

Module 2.1 – Civic engagement – specific to case study //

This module tries to identify your participation in specific upgrading projects in Monwabisi Park.

» CURRENT ENGAGEMENT

2.12_ Which of these project are you or your household most contributing to? (please select one)

- ☐ Emthonjeni
- ☐ Community Food Garden
- ☐ (Organic) Waste Collection
- ☐ V-Net

2.13_ Are you contributing as a volunteer (unpaid)?

- ☐ YES ☐ NO

2.14_ Is it through paid work?

- ☐ YES ☐ NO

2.15_ Is it through other means (voucher etc.)? - please specify

.....

2.16_ How often do you participate/ help in activities related to this project?

- | daily | weekly | monthly |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

2.17_ What is your contribution there?

.....

.....

2.18_ Why are you participating/ helping there? Please tell us more about your motivation.

.....

.....

IF YOU AREN'T ENGAGED IN ANY OF THESE PROJECTS (see list on top),

2.19_ Why aren't you engaged in them?

.....

.....

Module 2.1 – Civic engagement – specific to case study // **This module tries to identify your participation in specific upgrading projects in Monwabisi Park.**

» CO-PRODUCTION HISTORY

2.20_Did you (in the past) participate in developing one of these projects? (for example in the planning or construction phase) - If YES, please select the project that you most participated in developing.

- ☐ Emthonjeni
- ☐ Community Food Garden
- ☐ (Organic) Waste Collection
- ☐ V-Net

2.21_In which phase did you participate (planning, building, maintenance)? And in which role?

.....

.....

.....

2.22_What is/was your motivation to contribute to this project?

.....

.....

.....

2.23_How satisfied are you with the overall experience? Why?

.....

.....

.....

IF YOU DIDN'T PARTICIPATE IN DEVELOPING ONE OF THE PROJECTS (see list on top),

2.24_What would motivate you to participate in one of these projects (or similar projects) in the future?

.....

.....

Module 3 – Social Capital – specific to case study // This module is about your social relationships in the community and how taking part in specific projects affects them.

3.1_Do you feel connected to this neighbourhood/ community?.

☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ I DON'T KNOW

3.2_How has the participation in the before mentioned project changed how you feel about being connected to your neighbourhood/ community?

.....

.....

.....

3.3_E6__How satisfied are you with feeling part of Monwabisi Park?

0 = 😞 not at all satisfied, 10 = 😊 completely satisfied

Please mark on the scale below.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
😞										😊

3.4_How was your experience participating with others in the project?

.....

.....

.....

3.5_Do you meet your project team members also beyond the project activities?

.....

3.6_In how far does/did the project have an influence on your friends and family?

.....

.....

3.7_E4__How satisfied are you with your personal relationships (family and friends)?

0 = 😞 not at all satisfied, 10 = 😊 completely satisfied

Please mark on the scale below.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
😞										😊

4.1_We have already asked you about your participation in an Emthonjeni/ A Community Food Garden/ (Organic) Waste Collection/ V-Net. Could you please specify if you contributed with knowledge, skills and expertise and if yes, with what in particular?

☐ YES ☐ NO

4.3 Please tell us more – what did you (or your household members) learn?

Please mark on the scale below.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
 

☐ YES ☐ NO

4.6 Please tell us more – how does/ did it affect your/ your family members' health?

Please mark on the scale below.

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Module 5 – Economic Capital – related to case study // These questions aim to find out how the projects are affecting your economic situation.

5.1_Since the project that you participated in started, did it help to create income opportunities for you and/ or your household members?

☐ YES ☐ NO

IF Yes,

5.2_What were/are the benefits of the project and your participation in the projects for your economic situation? For example did you directly or indirectly economically benefit through the project?

.....

.....

.....

5.3_E10a__How satisfied are you with your income opportunities?

0 = 😞 not at all satisfied, 10 = 😊 completely satisfied

Please mark on the scale below.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
😞										😊

Module 6 – Physical Capital – related to case study // With these questions, we would like to know more about if and how the projects have an influence on where and how you live/work.

6.1_Has the project that you participated in changed your standard of living (related to housing/ infrastructure provision/ spaces around your house)?

☐ YES ☐ NO

IF Yes,

6.2 Please tell us more – what was/is the effect of the project(s) on your living situation? For example the area around house or the area that you use on the way to your daily activities.

.....

.....

.....

6.3_E1__How satisfied are you with your standard of living?

0 = 😞 not at all satisfied, 10 = 😊 completely satisfied

Please mark on the scale below.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
😞										😊

Module 7 – Natural Capital – related to case study // These questions centre around the quality of nature and the environment around your house and in the settlement..

7.1_Do you think that any of the projects has changed the quality of the natural environment around your house and/ or in your settlement?

☐ YES ☐ NO

IF Yes,

7.2_If yes, please tell us more – what was/is the effect of the project(s) on the natural environment?

.....

.....

.....

.....

7.3_How satisfied are you with the quality of your local environment?

0 = 😞 not at all satisfied, 10 = 😊 completely satisfied

Please mark on the scale below.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
😞										😊

Module 8 – Outlook and Resume

8.1_ Do you think that any of the projects has an effect on your safety from crime (physical security) in the future?

☐ YES ☐ NO

IF Yes,

8.2_ Please tell us more – what benefit does the project bring regarding your physical security?

.....

.....

.....

8.3_ Do you think that any of the projects has an effect on your economic security in the future?

☐ YES ☐ NO

8.4_E7_ How satisfied are you with your future (physical and economic) security?

0 = 😞 not at all satisfied, 10 = 😊 completely satisfied

Please mark on the scale below.

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
😞										😊

8.5_ Based on your learnings from the project - what are your recommendations to help improve people's engagement in a project like this?

.....

.....

8.6_ According to your opinion, what were the most important aspects for the success of the project(s)?

.....

.....

8.7_ Would you participate in a similar project in the future?

.....

.....

Thank you so much for your time and participation in our interview! We do appreciate your help!