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Of plants, high lines and horses: Civic groups and designers in the relational articulation of values of urban natures

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HIGHLIGHTS

• Civic groups articulate values in urban nature via sociomaterial narrative practices.
• Vernacular narratives help challenge expert categories and city/nature dichotomies.
• Designers can ‘co-author’ new configurations of urban nature with civic groups.
• Inclusive yet specific narratives make linkages to articulate holistic values.
• Narrative value articulations are open, creative, and never neutral—but political.

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses three interventions into urban green spaces—a wetland in Cape Town, a post-industrial site in New York, and a park outside London. Through their different contexts, they help to grasp a wider phenomenon: the protection of urban nature through the development of protective narratives. We analyze these interventions as examples of “value articulation”, which we view as a relational and sociomaterial practice that requires the enrolment of people, plants, and things that together perform, spread, and deploy stories about why given places need protection. For each case study, we also highlight the moments when narrative practices move beyond mere protection and start to change the very context in which they were developed. We refer to these as projective narratives, emphasizing how novel values and uses are projected onto these spaces, opening them up for reworking. Our analyses of these successful attempts to protect land demonstrate how values emerge as part of inclusive, yet specific, narratives that mobilize and broaden support and constituencies. By constructing spatial linkages, such narratives embed places in wider geographical ‘wholes’ and we observe how the physical landscape itself becomes an active narrative element. In contrast to rationalist and external frameworks for analyzing values in relation to urban natures (e.g., ecosystem services), our ‘bottom-up’ mode situates urban nature in specific contexts, helping us to profoundly rethink planning and practice in order to (i) challenge expert categories and city/nature dichotomies; (ii) provide vernacular ways of knowing/understanding; and (iii) rethink the role of urban designers.

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1. Introduction

Urban green space planning and nature conservation has in Western societies been dominated by expert-driven approaches and prescriptive policy (Lachmund, 2013). With a strong modernist legacy, urban planning has been organized in dichotomist terms such as city versus nature, urban versus rural, and built versus unbuilt (Jorgensen, 2005; Tjallingii, 2005). However, given current rates of urbanization and unprecedented ecological crises, a body of work is developing across several disciplines that emphasizes the interconnectedness of the social and the natural, including cultural geography (e.g., Hinchliffe & Whatmore, 2006); environmental history (e.g., Cronon, 1991); urban political ecology (e.g.,...
Heynen, Kaika, & Swyngedouw, 2006); natural resource management and urban ecology (e.g., Niemelä et al., 2011; Pickett et al., 2008); and planning and urban design (e.g., Mostafavi & Doherty, 2010; Reed & Lister, 2014; Waldheim, 2006). Even across such different ideological departure points as systems ecology and critical geography there is a general agreement that urban nature is part-cultural and part-biophysical; the former field emphasizing cities as ecosystems or “social-ecological systems” (e.g., Barthel et al., 2013; Elmqvist et al., 2004; Erixon, Borgström, & Andersson, 2014; Pickett et al., 2008); the latter speaking of “sociornatures” and “cyborgs” to emphasize the impurity of nature produced by capitalist accumulation processes (Gandy, 2005; Swyngedouw, 1996; both drawing on Haraway, 1991).

One important strand within these integrative approaches addresses the central role of how community and civil society groups reshape, protect and sustain urban nature (e.g., Ernstson, Barthel, Anderssson, & Borgström, 2010; Karvonen & Yocom, 2011; Lister, 2000; Spirn, 1984; Svendsen, 2013). These groups and the spaces they engage become key arenas for contesting dichotomist views about urban nature and they provide case studies for understanding how collaborative relations between civic groups, design professionals and government authorities concretely rework urban nature in its material and symbolic manifestations. In this aspect, community groups are seen as alternatives to conventional, top-down forms of urban green space production and management. In particular, it is argued that local residents can bring their extensive social, ecological, and cultural knowledge of particular places to the planning process and create a constituency to manage and sustain local urban environments in the long term (Ernstson & Sörlin, 2009; Ernstson et al., 2010; Grillner, 2013). Several authors have indeed argued that one of the most durable ways to sustain specific urban environments – from large urban green structures to intimate neighborhood parks – is to ensure that they are cared for and used by surrounding residents (Adams, 1996; Erixon et al., 2014; Kühn, 2003).

More theoretically, Karvonen and Yocom (2011, p. 1306) have linked studies of community groups and urban nature to explore what Gandy (2006, p. 72) has called a “new kind of environmental politics” based on a relational ontology that makes relations between people and nature explicit and tangible. The situated and specific ways by which community groups rework urban nature and fuse popular and vernacular narratives with landscapes, can be explored for how they undermine dichotomist and top-down ideas of “managing nature” as a stable entity neatly separated from culture. Case studies of community activism or “civic environmentalism” (as used by Karvonen & Yocom (2011), with reference to John, 2004) can help to understand what this muddling of binaries might mean in practice. In parallel, design disciplines have addressed the role of designers as co-authors where “the architect becomes not the agent of change, but one among many agents” (Schneider & Till, 2009, p. 97, emphasis in original). This plays into the idea of civic environmentalism where designers can participate as co-authors to envision and create new uses of urban space without giving up their expert skills of projecting possible futures.

In this paper we contribute a cross-cultural comparative analysis of how citizen groups have, with differing degrees of cooperation with professional designers, successfully campaigned for nature protection in the city, and how they have thereby blurred conventional distinctions between city and nature. Conceptually, we advance the notion of “value articulation” to refer to the sociomaterial practices through which hitherto neglected spaces become imbued with new meaning and value. We draw upon three case studies (in Cape Town, New York, and Essex/London) to examine how such value articulation proceeds through the creation of politically performative narratives that align artifacts, actors, and social arenas, and that thereby create “spatial linkages” between contested sites and their wider geographical context. In line with Karvonen and Yocom’s (2011) search for a new kind of politics enacted through “sociornatural assemblages”, we view such practices as necessarily cultural since they redefine meaning and symbolic content of urban nature, but also material, as the narratives draw upon biophysical entities and their relationships, including vegetation, animals, wetlands and other non-humans. As a novel contribution, we discuss how such protective narratives move beyond mere protection and start changing the very context in which they are developed. We refer to these as projective narratives to emphasize how novel values and uses are projected onto these spaces, opening them for re-signification and material reworking.

In our discussion about design professionals, we explore their varying degrees of involvement across the studies. In the first case, “Dressing the Princess,” we analyze a grassroots rehabilitation project in a historically marginalized area of Cape Town where design professionals had little involvement. The second case, “The High Line” in New York, was a product of a civic and governmental partnership in which design and avant-garde design professionals played a key role. The last case “A Horse’s Tale,” in Tilbury, Essex, just east of London, demonstrates how design professionals employed similar methods used by citizen groups in the two previous case studies in order to collaborate closely with local residents to transform a green space considered “worthless” into something worth protecting and re-working. Our aim is not primarily to analyze the case studies in terms of power, class or exclusion, nor is it to be “good” or “bad” in relation to urban sustainability. While we recognize these dimensions, and develop them to some extent, our focus is to understand the articulation of value of urban nature as a sociomaterial practice.

To this end we will first outline our theoretical framework of value articulation as sociomaterial practice and then describe our fieldwork methods. Based on an analysis of each case study’s protective narrative, our discussion develops comparative themes: how each narrative undermines dichotomies in planning and provides alternative ways to think about urban nature; the shift between protective and projective narratives; and the role of design professionals.

1.1. Theoretical framework: value articulation as sociomaterial practice

That a part of nature (or culture) is preserved demonstrates only that it has acquired significant value in a particular society at a particular time (Ernstson & Sörlin, 2009; Sörlin, 1998). Value is thus socially conditioned and here we elaborate a theoretical framework of “value articulation” that has been developed by Ernstson and Sörlin in urban contexts (Ernstson & Sörlin, 2009, 2013). The framework is based on a longer tradition of studying nature protection in Western societies (Sörlin, 1998; Urry, 1995) and emphasizes that the mere idea of separating particular aspects of nature—to even talk about a “part of nature” and judge it as valuable—requires sociomaterial practices, which in turn are influenced by class, race, gender and historical and ideological factors (Pyne, 1998; Sörlin, 1998). Value articulation processes are thus active, creative, selective, and ultimately political.

In Ernstson and Sörlin’s (2009) study of how a large park in Stockholm became protected in the early 1990s, we learn how people mobilized to fight back against motorway and housing projects. This included “picking up” and re-using artifacts and bringing them into different social arenas such as exhibitions, public meetings and media outlets. Across social arenas, an increasingly coherent narrative emerged of a landscape under threat and in need of protection. For instance, a landscape architect’s map from the 1700s, and a GIS-based spatial analysis of species distribution from the
1990s, was linked to articulate how cultural/royal heritage and biodiversity values reinforced one another. Their analysis shows how different constituencies and legal frameworks of protection were mobilized, but also how physical landscapes and non-humans were involved in shaping values and collective action; here, the movement of birds influenced how “spatial linkages” could be articulated to weave together a wider park system to articulate holistic values (Ernstson & Sörlin, 2009). Importantly, this framework pays attention to how professionals such as artists, scientists, designers and journalists knowingly or unknowingly provide artifacts that can be used selectively by others. Artifacts function as mediators which, being material and movable, can connect social arenas and help bring constituencies together.

Value must here be seen as performative and as emerging from narrative. Mattingly (1998; drawing on Ricoeur, 1984) views narrative as a fundamental human activity that connects motives, acts, and consequences to build causal chains to explain what is of value in political and moral terms. On a fundamental level, storytelling is a tool to bring forth memories and experiences in order “to understand and critique [social and political] contexts” (Alfsaker & Josephsson, 2011, p. 55). Values thus need a symbolic context in order to make sense; they are not atomistic, nor derived from intrinsic or essentialist properties but emerge from acts of storytelling where things, events and places are placed in relation to each other (see e.g. Cameron, 2012; Ernstson, 2013b; Hajer, 1995).

There is a wide use of narrative for analysis in environmental studies. They all emphasize its collective form, or “[t]he capacity for stories to trace relations between people, places, and things, as part of a situated practice of transformative change” (Cameron 2012, p. 575). The notion of “story-line” has been used in (rural) nature conservation research (Pyne, 1998; Sörlin, 1998; Urry, 1995), and more recently in urban contexts. Van Herzele (2006) applied “story-line” (from Hajer, 1995) to urban forest activism in Flanders and showed how “appealing” narratives were used to mobilize policy action. Ernstson and Sörlin (2009) developed their “protective narrative” framework in Stockholm (see above); and Svendsen (2010, 2013) examined how US civic groups used discursive techniques and “narrative values” for political mobilization and alliance-building (see Cameron, 2012 for a wider review).

Our article expands three areas of narrative analysis in urban nature studies. First, we follow Karvonen and Yocom (2011) and Svendsen (2013) to better understand the ways in which urban design, mediated through both non-professionals and professionals, becomes part of narrative practices. Second, we emphasize the shift from protective to projective narrative, when the imagined or ‘what if’ changes what could be done at particular sites. Third, we emphasize the sociomaterial aspect of value articulation and narrative, i.e. how materials and materiality participate in collective action and social life, which follows Karvonen and Yocom (2011) and Ernstson (2013a, 2013b), and more generally the “material turn” in the social sciences (e.g. Fenwick & Edwards, 2013 Hinchliffe & Whatmore, 2006). As we will illustrate, when landscape ‘objects’ are engaged, or when artifacts are “picked up”, their own materiality—not in any determinate form, but as participants—influences how people and things are brought together (Latour, 2005), what acts of storytelling can be done, and how people and authorities come to (re-)think the meaning of these landscapes (Law, 2009). Taken together, we view value articulation as a relational and sociomaterial accomplishment that aligns human and non-human actors, including artifacts and social arenas, to assemble a narrative. This narrative in turn works to legitimize and make claims about what is of value, often in contestation to other values and uses (Ernstson, 2013a, 2013b; Fig. 1).

2. Methods

We have used a cross-disciplinary approach to analyze and interpret our findings (Hadorn et al., 2008). This reflects our different backgrounds: one an architect with an interest in sustainable urban planning and design and the other an urban political ecologist interested in critical enquiry. This has influenced the objectives of the study and the interpretation of empirical data. We have adopted a combination of critical and analytical perspectives, such as “how do processes of civic environmentalism transpire and gain power?”, with an interest in suggestive and solution-oriented approaches, such as “what implications might this have for planning and urban design practice?”. The case studies were chosen for their ability to demonstrate value articulation processes, but also because they represented interventions into urban nature as a “traveling urban process” that spans cultural contexts (McFarlane & Robinson, 2012). This follows a “comparative gesture” that Robinson (2011) has argued for in urban studies. Rather than controlling for specific variables, this means to compare “across sometimes quite different cities which participate in specific global processes” with the aim of providing “understanding and theoretical inspiration” (McFarlane & Robinson, 2012, p. 767).

For each case study, and following Ernstson (2013a), we analyzed the empirical material to create a record of how artifacts were used, including how they were placed and interpreted in relation to particular places; how social arenas were used or created and how this influenced value articulation; and which actors (individuals, organizations, institutions, and non-humans as in plants, water, horses etc.) took part in producing particular arguments or shaping more cohesive narratives. This meant analyzing plans, maps, design entries, newspaper articles, reports, webpages; and conduct open-ended, semi-structured interviews with people with central roles (Appendix A, Table A1). At least one of us made repeated visits to each locality between 2008 and 2012. One commonality between the case study sites—a wetland, a built structure and a park—was that all were under threat of demolition and change. It was this threat in each case that sparked the value articulation processes that we have analyzed. The sites also initially had a quality of “terrain vague” (cf. De Solà Morales, 2014), i.e. they were perceived by
local media and public opinion as leftover spaces of uncontrolled occupation by humans and non-humans alike.

3. Case studies

3.1. Dressing the Princess: the craft of weaving a protective story

In August 2008, the “Dressing the Princess” project was initiated at a wetland in southeast Cape Town, South Africa (Ernstson, 2013b). When plans emerged in 2009 to build a shopping center at the wetland, the Princess Vlei Forum was formed, which in 2014 managed to stop the shopping mall. This was partly achieved through a community-driven articulation of landscape design, or what they called the “People’s Plan” (Fig. 2). Our analysis emphasizes how memories of oppression and spatial linkages were woven into a powerful narrative that mobilized across racial divisions and combined dignity and environmental values in post-apartheid South Africa.

Cape Town’s historical geography played a role in this process of value articulation. Apartheid spatial planning, starting with the Group Areas Act of the 1950s that separated those classified as so-called White, Coloured, African Black/Bantu, and Indian, not only influenced people, but also urban nature (see Western, 1996; note that when these racial categories are not capitalized in our text, we interpret them as social identities as used by interviewees, see note 1, Appendix A). For instance, Table Mountain became encircled during the 20th century by White privileged areas, whereas the inhospitable Cape Flats (an area of sand dunes, wetlands, flooding, and harsh winds) was from the 1950s a “dumping ground” where Coloured and African residents were forcefully relocated into poorly-serviced shanty towns and slums (Besteman, 2008). Following racist planning logic, wetlands, or vleis, were considered amenities that should be placed within White areas. However, since Princess Vlei was lying further out on Cape Flats it became the only wetland during apartheid that bordered a White and a Coloured area. Whereas furthermore most ocean beaches were classified as “Whites only”, Princess Vlei became a popular recreational space for working-class Coloureds where they would fish, swim and organize family barbecues, so called braais. During the campaign to save Princess Vlei, these apartheid injustices were mobilized but a rallying call was also to articulate Princess Vlei as “[o]ne of the few public open spaces with the potential to bring our divided city together” (Princess Vlei Forum, 2014).

The mobilization to save Princess Vlei can be traced back to the creation of a nearby community park at Bottom Road in 2005 (Ernstson, 2013b). Here a local baker (Interview Person 1) mobilized his neighbors to not build security walls between their properties (a common practice among house owners in Cape Town), but instead work with nature conservators to create a community garden and rehabilitate fynbos, a highly diverse vegetation endemic to the Western Cape (Anderson, Avlonitis, & Ernstson, 2014). The community park that developed at Bottom Road eventually also included walkways, park benches, and places for braai, creating mixed-use space for people and conservation (Fig. 3).

For the “Dressing the Princess” project, Bottom Road served as a “blueprint” for design, but also as a social arena where politicians and journalists could be taken to see for themselves what could happen at the much larger Princess Vlei and how community and conservation interests could be combined. As the baker phrased it, “It’s better to show than tell.” (Interview Person 1). However, not everyone was convinced that the shopping mall at Princess Vlei was a bad idea. Over the years local media had created an image of Princess Vlei as a place for drugs and even murder. Local gangs had at times dumped dead bodies on the wetland’s shore. For some, the “securitization” and “development” promised by the developer seemed like a good choice. To mobilize support among locals, the “Dressing the Princess” project organized obligation letter days and planting days (Fig. 4). An “adopt a plot” scheme brought in school classes from the surrounding working-class coloured and black neighborhoods so that kids caring for fynbos could also spread the message of the struggle to their parents. This broke with cultural ideas that only whites could care for nature (Van Sittert, 2008), and signaled an active idea of citizenship:

“I will green the Cape Flats and restore it, and restore the dignity of my people, [...] I am of the Cape Flats. I am not of the green plush areas. And I’m saying: ‘Here is the Cape Flats, that’s in a state of, not disrepair [but] Cape Flats is in a state of repair. So we need to actively get involved, in terms of that, you know. Otherwise we lose everything’” (Interview Person 1).

As the struggle intensified (including legal help to investigate fraud charges against the municipality), better-resourced groups joined, including white-based environmental groups, a local ratepayer’s association led by coloured anti-apartheid stalwarts, and old labor union activists. In 2012, the Princess Vlei Forum was formed, which launched the “Imagine Princess Vlei” campaign as a community-led planning process to develop the “People’s Plan” further.

A key artifact in these efforts was a legend of how European sailors had raped and killed, or in some versions “abducted”, an Indigenous “Khoi Princess” over 500 years ago. The legend places the Princess in the Elephant’s Eye Cave on Table Mountain, which gating hole can be seen from the shores of Princess Vlei, and in one powerful version, her tears flowed down the mountain to fill up the wetland to give it its name. By circulating this legend, soon taken up in the press (e.g., Groenewald, 2009), the fynbos rehabilitation and the project received a layered meaning. To fight the shopping mall was to place oneself in a wider struggle against colonial abuse and violence. To plant fynbos was to clothe the Princess with her indigenous vegetation, which in extension meant to bring back her dignity and the dignity of her descendants, those of mixed descent...
from Indigenous KhoiSan, Europeans and African/Malaysian slaves and who, classified as Coloureds were forced out of the city from the 1950s. The legend was reified in the “People’s Plan” by envisioning a hiking trail that lead from the mountain to the wetland along a small stream with guided walks exploring the history of colonialism, apartheid, and ecological rehabilitation. The trail also connected Princess Vlei to a wider hydrological/ecological system, and socially with environmental groups upstream.

Circulating the legend also brought support from the emergent KhoiSan indigenous movement. When the “People’s Plan for Princess Vlei” was launched on Youth Day in 2012 it was opened with a KhoiSan leader burning incense and performing a ceremony in the KhoiKhoi language. Soon after, rappers Emile YX7 (sic.) and Mixed Mense used the legend to record a song. Rapping their rhymes, they melded colonial and apartheid abuses with those of today: “They again intend to ‘mall’ and rape us. From our legacy and common ancestry. Here they plan to concrete away our memory.” This placed the wetland within a more antagonistic context of apartheid and colonialism (Ernstson, 2014). However, the “People’s Plan” intended to be more reconciliatory and to fit within the wider “rainbow nation” paradigm to “bridge old divisions”. It included a hiking trail to the Elephants Eye Cave, a Sunset Concert Park, and a Khoi heritage and environmental center (Fig. 2). The narrative emerging from these multiple activities over the course of only 4–5 years interwove cultural, environmental and historical threads. In particular, memories of oppression from colonial and apartheid years were interlaced with contemporary notions of caring for nature (Ernstson, 2013b). This made the emergent narrative to resonate with powerful constituencies, both green (and often white-based) environmentalists, and previously marginalized communities. Even anti-apartheid hero Desmond Tutu, a champion of reconciliation, came to the vlei to show his support.

In late 2014 the shopping mall plan was dropped. The Forum has continued its community-driven planning process and volunteer design professionals have become more directly involved for the first time, partly in relation to Cape Town becoming the World Design Capital in 2014.

3.2. The High Line: from “eyesore” to “model public space”

Built on a section of a disused elevated railway in Manhattan, the High Line Park in New York, our second case study, can be viewed as shaped by civic and governmental partnerships, but also by elite networks. The last train ran on the structure in the 1980s, and the disused railway had become a self-sown landscape in which seeds, “dropped by trains, birds, and breezes grew in the gravel ballast” (Friends of the High Line, 2008, p. 26). Since opening in 2009 the park, inspired by the Promenade Plantée in Paris, has become one of the most visited tourist sites in New York and is touted as a “model public space” for other cities to emulate (Taylor, 2010). However, the desire to preserve the overgrown post-industrial structure was not always apparent. A community meeting in 2000 recorded starkly differing opinions. Some saw an “eyesore” that made its neighbors feel “like we’re standing behind a prison bar” (Lobbia, 2000) and some recalled the homes that were torn down when the High Line was built for rail traffic in the 1930s. Others saw a “one-of-a-kind monument” that was “full of botanical treasures” (Lobbia, 2000). How was public opinion turned from considering the structure to be an “eyesore” and hence in need of demolition, to viewing it as a “model public space” worthy of protection in such a short time?

In this case, as with the previous case study, the value articulation processes started with a few engaged individuals. Two residents in particular worked to protect the structure: freelance writer Joshua David and artist/entrepreneur Robert Hammond. They eventually founded the non-profit organization “Friends of the High Line” (FHL), and their story has become almost mythical. Starting at a community meeting in 1999, they describe an organic process (Interview Person 5). At first there was no other vision than to save the structure. Their emphasis was to keep it open to different opportunities, to spread awareness and gather support from the community (Interview Person 5). Traversing the upper surface of the High Line was prohibited, but with permission from the rail road company, FHL invited government officials and others onto the structure to make visible this illicit, self-seeded world (David & Hammond, 2011).

Two early artifacts became important in creating social arenas and in bringing support from various constituencies. The first key artifact was a series of photographs that told the story of the High Line. FHL commissioned a professional photographer, Joel Sternfeld, to photograph the abandoned structure over the course of a year (Fig. 5). The series of photographs created a sense of wonderment at a new kind of wilderness right in the middle of the city. The photographs “help[ed] people imagine and visualize the potential of the structure as a prospective landscape and park in the sky. People had never seen it in that way.” (Interview Person 7). The photos were “picked up” and reprinted on websites and in the Media, spreading the story of how the forgotten structure could manifest a new kind of beauty. In 2001 the images were exhibited at the Pace Wildenstein Gallery and reproduced in a book (Sternfeld, 2001), and FHL handed out copies of the photographs to followers and funders. The photographs were also reviewed by prestigious journalists and art critics, which boosted the project’s status in design and art circles. While evaluating Sternfeld’s artistry, these
reviews also contained interwoven arguments for the structure's preservation. The New York Times' art critic Smith (2001) wrote:

“Joel Sternfeld's photographs of the rusty, overgrown elevated railroad known as the High Line (...) are a good argument for preserving this iron-girder structure, but also for leaving it as untouched as possible. Turning it into a safe, accessible public park would be great, and more than enough in the way of use-conversion.”

This reimagining contains direct parallels to how the legend of the Khoi princess in Cape Town opened up a new and suprising layer of the place's story and a means to understand the depth of a place that many had simply driven by in the past. The second key artifact was the economic feasibility study that FHL commissioned in 2002. The study found that to save the High Line as a park would raise more finances for the city via increased taxes and property values than the release of the land for development would, which was contrary to what critics had said. The city owned the structure of the High Line, but the ground below was made up of a patchwork of plots and private owners, who would need to be convinced of the benefits of keeping the structure as a park instead of tearing it down. The city's strong support of FHL's agenda was predicated on this economic feasibility study (Interview Person 6) and it built support among bureaucrats and landowners. It was one of the most important artifacts to create momentum for preserving the structure. In 2003, FHL organized an open design competition, further generating artifacts and social arenas for value articulation. Using its extended networks in the design and art circles of New York, the FHL competition received over 720 proposals from 36 countries (David & Hammond, 2011). The proposals were exhibited at Grand Central Station and were imaginative and visionary rather than realistic: one suggested turning the linear structure into a mile-long swimming pool; another proposed leaving it untouched but with a rollercoaster suspended over it. In contrast to Cape Town, design was used here much more actively as a "discursive tactic" (Svendsen, 2013) to generate buzz and imagination about what could happen to the structure. In addition, FHL worked closely with museums and art curators:

“They [FHL] just have a whole, I don't want to say PR in a bad way, just a whole staff of people that are creating materials and presentations and just going out and tapping the right people. They take this stuff really seriously and its very high quality, and it is also expensive but they feel like it is worth it.” (Interview Person 8 from the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation).

In her analysis, Svendsen (2010, p. 91) calls this quite rightfully a “sophisticated marketing campaign,” which was driven by urban design. However, it is important to note that FHL also used the designer as a profession with agency. Designers used their expertise, their stamp of approval to guarantee quality, to lend weight and legitimacy to the project. Building on this momentum, in 2004 FHL co-organized a final design competition with the City of New
York. A team led by James Corner Field Operations, in collaboration with Diller Scofidio + Renfro and Piet Oudolf, were selected from a number of avant-garde “star” designers to win the design for the first section of the park. Their design balanced the essence of the abandoned structure with the demands of a publically accessible park.

In our interview, the lead designer of the project at Field Operations clarified that to have a civic group as their client was both challenging and rewarding. Importantly, FHL built a constituency around the High Line through gathering a community of activists; whether it was those mobilizing for the very specific aesthetic idea of “preservation and turning unused into something useful,” or environmentalists seeing the “ecological benefits at large of the city,” or those sensing a revival of how “community activism [was] able to say something in New York” (Interview Person 7). FHL brought a set of sub-narratives into the design process that articulated different types of values, all with their own subtleties. With this input, the winning design proposal aimed to respect the innate character of the High Line itself, but also bring new life, sociability, and vitality to the structure. The mantra throughout the design process was “keep it simple, keep it wild, keep it slow, and keep it quiet,” aspects that resonated with existing “terrain vague” characteristics (Kamvasinou, 2006). However, in an ironic twist, “saving” the wild required that all vegetation and soil be scraped off the structure when constructing the park. Although seeds from some of the self-sown plants were collected, stored and later replanted in the park, this heightens how urban nature is always "mongrel", part-cultural and part-biophysical with no easy delimitations to be found in-between.

3.3. A horse’s tale: building a constituency through projecting stories

Our third example is a project by the London-based art and architecture practice muf (written in lower case). This case is interesting since it demonstrates how professional designers, in collaboration with local residents, have worked with similar narrative methods as those observed in our previous two case studies. Through a collaborative practice a marginalized group and its local culture was made visible and celebrated to articulate values of urban nature.

The area, situated in a rundown part of Tilbury, east of London, was a void green space between a series of buildings that form part of the Broadway Estate; a temporary housing development built in the 1980s that is still in use some thirty years later. In contrast to the two previous case studies, there were initially few citizens who articulated the value of the open space. The area had been blighted by vandalism and local council was searching for ways to turn the down-spiraling trajectory of the area around. The first in-house solution from the council was simply to fence off the space between the buildings. The Tenant Participation Manager from the council, however, felt that this would not solve anything: “They will just knock it down. What we need to do is be more innovative in how we solve the issue.” (Interview Person 10).

Subsequently, a multi-agency partnership led by the council in interaction with local tenants and the police was formed and a design tendering process was initiated. Local residents were on the committee board and in 2003 muf architecture was appointed to make a proposal for the site. Tenant representatives choose them
for their enthusiastic and different way of working (Interview Person 10). In one of her first visits to the site, a muf co-founder recalled:

“One of the first things we did was to notice that the green [space] was used for huge amounts of antisocial behavior; there were black patches on the ground were young men and women had stolen cars and burnt them out. It was covered in glass, and there was a little children’s playground with a really broken fence around it [...]. Then we noticed that in the playground there were horse droppings, and we thought – that’s a bit odd. We [also] noticed that there were quite a few children around who were riding ponies or leading ponies through the estate” (Interview Person 9).

Through conversations with residents, muf learnt that many residents belonged to the rich and varied community of Travellers in the UK (on usage, see note 2 in the Appendix A). The Estate had been a temporary place to overwinter but with time people had settled more permanently. They had retained their Traveller heritage, particularly the tradition of keeping horses, which were kept at the edges of roads and in other areas not designed for housing animals. As a legitimate part of local culture, muf’s designers saw the potential for horse-related activity to become an integrated part of the park. An early community event, a gymkhana, was organized by muf, a sort of “fun-day” built around the theme of horses. Over thirty children turned up on their ponies. During the day it became clear that horses represented a particular spatial use of the area, and they formed a positive part of young people’s life at the Estate, nurturing sharing and communal interaction.

The council’s attitude had, however, so far been to try to outlaw horse keeping on the Estate. Since the horses did not have a designated space, it was seen as misbehavior (Interview Person 9). The Tenant Participation Manager recalls: “Certainly the council, certain parts of the council, I had to work with to convince. It was very strange that the council should support a project of this sort” (Interview Person 10). In response, muf created an independent project that ran in parallel to their official commission. This project was called “Local Stories” and it was structured around the questions “What does history mean for you?” and “What are your roots?”. Through multiple activities a wider story was being woven into the site, based on the residents’ strong interest in horses. In one activity, children were asked to collect stories and physical artifacts from their neighborhood. These were then mapped spatially on an interactive map (Fig. 6). In other activities, they constructed artifacts such as horse costumes, effigies, animations, and choreographed performances, as well as taking photographs of themselves in the costumes (Fig. 7). These were posted on billboards at local bus shelters.

Instead of organizing traditional stakeholder meetings, muf, following a deeper thread of their practice, ran a variety of community events from where shared understandings could emerge:

“They [muf] would actually be doing their consultation with people during activities. In your typical project you get focus groups, and you sit them all in a room and give them lots of paper work, and you know – people shut down. Whereas their [muf’s] methods were very interactive, and very creative, they pushed the boundaries.” (Interview Person 10)

In 2005 the park opened, now including a garden and dressage area for horse riding. For the Tenant Participation Manager, it was clear that the collaborative work by muf had convinced the council to include horses as a legitimate part of the park (Interview person 10). At the opening, the children marched in procession in their horse costumes from the public space of the Tilbury old fort, where it was legal to let horses graze (Long, 2005), to the peripheral Broadway Estate (Fig. 8).

When muf returned to do a follow-up on the project some years later, several things had changed. The park was used more extensively, the car burning had stopped, and people from outside the neighborhood were using the park. However, a new type of conflict had emerged. People were asking things like: “Why is there no place in the park for those who like flowers and horticulture? Why is there nothing for elderly people to do? Why are people with horses disadvantaged?” (Interview Person 9). The green space, which initially had so few advocates that it was at risk of being demolished, had now become the subject of an increasing number of demands from residents to have their say about what was to be considered of value. In our interviews, muf describes these conflicts as constituting a kind of “proof” that the project had succeeded in its value-creation process (Interview Person 9). As former muf member Dodd argues in her PhD thesis, the final project could be seen as initation of a new “constituency of space, one that had arguably altered its trajectory from the undesirable to the desirable” (Dodd, 2011, p. 52).

4. Discussion

We argue that the protection of urban nature can be viewed as a “traveling urban process,” — an innovative and multifaceted urban planning practice that spans cultural contexts (McFarlane and Robinson, 2012). We view it as part of any society and city, but manifested in different ways. It is a contested and power-laden process that works across government, private and civic groups, including design professionals, to articulate certain aspects of urban nature as valuable. Here in the discussion we will draw upon what McFarlane and Robinson (2012) have called “experiments in comparative urbanism”, which encourages the comparison of case studies from quite different settings. We will pull out crosscutting themes and contribute towards wider understanding by focusing on how narrative practices provide an alternative language to challenge society/nature and city/nature dichotomies; how protective narratives shift to projective narratives; and the role of urban design professions.
4.1. Collective narrative practices challenging nature/culture divides

When narrative is viewed as a sociomaterial practice, i.e. something beyond words or texts, then the physical landscape, and the physicality of things, can become active narrative elements. This is crucial to keep in mind when trying to understand just how important local culture and power relationships are in articulating certain values and building mobilization.

4.1.1. Non-humans as active elements

In Cape Town, the Princess legend, which our informants viewed as a “slave legend” (Interview Person 1, 3 and 4), acted as a metaphor to instill the notion that fynbos rehabilitation at the wetland was more than simply protecting biodiversity. In “dressing” her by planting fynbos – the Princess, the mismanaged wetland – came to resonate with wider struggles of marginalized communities, as we noted above, but it also turned their school kids into capable environmentalists and the campaign gained support and funding from environmentalist institutions and groups from more affluent areas. However, the very physicality of fynbos, or perhaps more correctly, their “bio-physicality” played a role in mobilization. For instance, the fynbos plants were planted in spaces where the city planned to locate the shopping mall. This planting required care and the testing out of what plants could grow in this particular soil. But the plants also came to function as extended or surrogate “activists”; they were mobilized or enrolled to mark out a space of community and resistance when human activists had to leave the vlei and return home. We can note this non-human agency in the other case studies as well. At the High Line in New York, the self-sown landscape on top of the structure became a narrative element in its own right, as a “terrain vague” that was performatively productive of values and imaginations (see also Millington, 2015).

In Tilbury, the physical landscape played a slightly less important role in constructing the narrative. Here instead, small ‘clues’, like noticing horse droppings at the site, became part of an alternative tactic for reconnecting people to the landscape by building a sense of ownership amongst a population that had historically been disenfranchised in relation to its surroundings. Growing plants, self-sown seeds, and horse droppings enter these narrative practices. They provide cues to human actors for how to spell out connections to other spaces, time-lines and life forms (Hinchliffe & Whatmore, 2006). They configure the symbolic content of the narratives in particular and real ways, earning Latour’s (2005) more general naming of humans and non-humans as “actants”; entities that weave material and symbolic context together (see Law, 2009 and Ernstson, 2013b on material semiotics). Non-humans are not simply mute biophysical ‘objects’ in these narratives, on to which humans can project meanings and ideas, but they actively participate in shaping how humans symbolically understand the world, asserting their own agency, however slight.

4.1.2. Narratives as inclusive, yet specific

Interpreting across the case studies, successful narratives are inclusive (open, broad and general) yet specific (with a distinct character and direction). In this way they can assemble a multitude of actors, agendas, and sub-narratives in order to bring together diverse constituencies and push projects forward. In the High Line process, narratives that were built solely around single elements such as railroad history, or the botanical aspects of the site for example, would likely have excluded too many actors and interests to give the project momentum. The “terrain vague” narrative—captured by Sternfeld’s photos and later translated by Field Operations and partners into the four design principles of the park—was poignant, yet also broad enough (both conceptually and aesthetically) to accommodate multiple sub-narratives and give stakeholders a strong common voice.

This follows other theorists e.g. Hajer (1995, p. 56) who posited that a key function of a story-line is its ability to “suggest unity in the bewildering variety of separate discursive components”. Van Herzele, analyzing urban forestry movements, emphasized the need for “balance” between ‘commonality’ and ‘autonomy’ that allows followers to “maintain their differences as long as it is compatible with the common project” (2006, p.693). However, to this we would add a more generative and design-focused aspect of narrative – how narratives may be transformed into a comprehensible and coherent plot. Landscape theorist Czerniak has provided the useful term “legibility” to understand this dual capacity, describing the ability of a park or a green space to accommodate complexity and change yet concurrently be understood in relation to its intention, identity, image, or (in her words) marketing strategies (Czerniak, 2007, p. 215). She means that a legible design logic can
“sustain a dialogue with multiple contexts, accommodating and growing from the pressures put upon it” (p. 230) which is especially important in the context of contested urban natures (see also Erixon et al., 2014).

4.1.3. Spatial linkages and wider connections

Successful or influential narratives seem to also contain explicit spatial dimensions, what Ernstsson and Sörlin conceptualized as “spatial linkages” (2009). The slave legend in Cape Town spatially linked the Princess Vlei wetland on Cape Flats with Table Mountain. The tears of the Princess that flowed across old racial barriers such as railway lines and motorways (and also alluded to hydrological properties), worked as a metaphor to argue that Princess Vlei could bridge racial divides. It simultaneously allowed historically marginalized people of Cape Flats to lay claim to Table Mountain, a space of the elite with already well-protected nature areas. In a similar manner, muf expanded the scope of its commission by constructing strategic spatial linkages between the Broadway Estate and more established neighborhoods of Tilbury. Mapping artifacts and stories of horse keeping, and the procession of horse-costumes, connected the marginalized Broadway Estate to a well-known and prestigious public space where grazing of horses was allowed. Similarly, recognition that the High Line not only had value as a single object (a railroad structure), but also benefitted surrounding neighborhoods and the city at large (demonstrated by the economic feasibility study), cemented momentum for protection. It is important to note here that the High Line project, quite unsurprisingly when it turned successful, contributed to accelerate gentrification that had already begun in the area, and pushed out poorer households and minority groups (Millington, 2015; Patrick, 2013; Svendsen, 2013). However, regardless of socioeconomic outcomes, to understand why and how certain narratives become powerful (and not others), we see that in all cases, spatial linkages help to narrate the site as part of holistic or wider entities, which seems to have the effect of “borrowing” protective value from adjacent areas deemed to have higher social status. Infringement on the site becomes a threat to the values of the wider area as a whole, demonstrating how spatial linkages are key in weaving protective stories (Ernstsson & Sörlin, 2009).

Finally, rather than opposing change (common in not-in-my-backyard protests, or so called NIMBYism), the narrative-based interventions studied here are generative, imaginative, and at times spectacular. Importantly, these case studies challenge the prevailing conceptual diad of city/nature in which the “city” is typically considered to be active, articulate, and expansive, whilst “nature” in turn is seen as passive, static, and inarticulate. Indeed, assuming such an opposition, it usually means that when trade-offs must be made, green spaces often weigh lighter. Through these narrative practices, urban nature and green public spaces are (re)constituted as active, creative, and dynamic components of urban life, set in a constant flow of negotiation and renegotiation, stabilization and destabilization.

4.2. The dynamics of protective and projective narratives

There is consequently a distinct performativity to these narratives as sociomaterial practice. As with all storytelling, these narratives contain elements of testing and trying out new futures. In narrative theory, Mattingly (1998) refers to this capacity as the “what if,” or “subjunctive” mode. In cultural theory, Thrift (2000, p. 215) speaks of the “power of imagination” as “the capacity to posit that which is not, to see in something that which is not there” (quoting from Castoriadis, 1997, p. 151). In our case studies we identify moments through which these imaginative powers come into effect, when protective narratives turn into what we earlier referred to as projective narratives. This is when initiatives move beyond the mere protection of urban nature, towards the remaking of spaces, materially and symbolically. Simply put, protective stories can gradually become projective when they start changing the very context on which they feed, and in which they are expressed. Theoretically, we mean, this turns the story itself into an actor.

Take for example the economic feasibility study commissioned in relation to the High Line. Situated in a cut-throat real estate market like Manhattan, once the elite took an interest, the feasibility study became a self-fulfilling prophecy. As with the stock market, expectations arising from the expected outcomes of repurposing the structure into a park—before anything had been built or even ratified—spurred development of the area which in turn gave the story credibility and authority. It is as if the story of the High Line became an actor in itself, where the future-park-in-the-making spoke for its own becoming (one might consider Latour’s study of the Aramis train (Latour, 1996)). Similarly, the 2003 open design competition, which sparked the High Line’s development and which was intended to attract attention and provoke dialogue about its future, worked to change residents and wider citizenry’s ideas about the site. From having been an “either-or” question, firmly inscribed in habitual dualism of city/nature in which the structure was imagined to either be demolished or protected – sacrificed or saved – the High Line instead was translated into a site for the projection of a range of different possibilities. The many submitted proposals shifted collective focus away from the question of what would happen on the site, to understanding that something (anything) could happen, hence making visible the site’s inherent potential and its accompanying (protective) value.

The Princess Vlei Forum also developed a projective narrative from a protective one. Organizing under the motto “it’s better to show than tell”, Bottom Road was re-worked into a community garden that fused (marginalized) people and plants, where the plants, by changing soil characteristics and attracting pollinators (Anderson et al., 2014), also re-worked the biophysical properties of the site. In Tilbury, muf’s designers conceptualized this in terms of “use predicts use.” Their project explored the staging of various activities and actions—even occupations—to “test” possible snapshots of the site’s future:

“What the horse project did was [that it] enabled people to see that there was a real value and legitimacy in the way they had a relationship to their home [...] and that they could take control of that and start projecting their own stories on to it. Previously, the story [that] had been projected was, this is a ‘no go area’. This is a “bad place”, “no one wants to go here” and everyone wanted to move out. And then the story [was] reframed and [it] brought a kind of new value to how people were able to conceptualize where they lived” (Interview Person 9).

Similar to the first two cases, muf’s projective narrative strategy at Tilbury worked to “reboot” the value system, or rather to ground it among its actual residents to nurture a sense of ownership.

4.3. The role of the professional: towards “co-authoring” tools

The recognition of nature conservation as a selective and active process as outlined above opens up alternative ways for designers and planners to use their skills in order to relate to (or challenge) current urban power structures. In our view this implies the adoption of more humble, yet concurrently more active, approaches and the development of what we call “co-authoring tools”.

A more humble approach, firstly, in that nature protection could take place, as in Cape Town, without much involvement from design professionals at all. Design professionals can learn from others, including grassroots and citizen groups, how to transform their own practice of design. Architecture’s traditional focus of the “looks and making” of objects could thus potentially shift to (also) include...
co-authoring tools; what scholars at the London-based Agency Research Centre discuss in terms of “spatial agency”. This is the ability to critique and change (or at least tweak or hack) how urban space and nature is produced, and it addresses empowerment, or how to work as designer in “allowing others to ‘take control’ over their environment” (Scheider & Till, 2009, p. 99; Awan, Scheider, & Till, 2011). At a wider urban scale, this implies to develop modes of working in urban planning practice that, to a larger extent, can take care of and support initiatives that arise from community groups and others. Such a transition, however, begs greater awareness of who in fact has the agency to participate in the production of urban space – and who is possibly excluded, prompting the need for critical and reflective perspectives to be integrated into design and planning practices.

Secondly, our analysis of narrative practice brings out a more active role for design professionals. Design practitioners’ particular skills (to e.g. combine writing, sketching, conceptual images, and physical models to project new futures onto space), are central to weaving protective and projective narratives. In this context, the capacity in good design to transform what has been perceived as negative or problematic into something positive should not be underestimated. This means design professionals, as argued by Awan et al. (2011) do not need to diminish their expert skills, but humbly turn them into what can be referred to as "co-authoring tools". Such tools, we mean, should empower others to articulate values, as we saw in all three case studies. Crucially, co-authoring tools, from idea sketches to the activities arranged by muf around horses, can help citizen groups to test out, and be confronted by their own ideas and how they can transform physical spaces. For urban design, such a practice might more specifically involve alternative ways of acquiring commissions, by working not only with friendship groups and community activists (i.e., through participatory planning methods), but to also work directly for such groups. Its elite status apart, the High Line process demonstrates how a civil society group became the actual client with power and spatial agency to influence urban development.

Internationally, there is a growing group of design professionals that are putting co-authoring tools into practice. They develop alternative ways to acquire commissions and projects and through this defy existing, often economically dictated, power structures (Awan et al., 2011). Indeed, our case studies demonstrate quite different narrative practices involving struggles over which values to establish, which land-use activities, people, plants, and things should be permitted and what kind of urban space and urban nature should be produced or nurtured. As ‘thought pieces’, they can help design professionals to understand spatial agency and envision co-authoring tools.

5. Conclusion

In our case study analyses in Cape Town, New York, and Essex/London, we demonstrate the ability of narrative to weave together actors, artifacts, and arenas, and to tell stories through which values are articulated and, in public discourse, de facto created. Indeed, the interventions addressed here did manage to change spatial urban planning decisions, stop building plans, and mobilize state and private capital to rework urban nature. They all demonstrated how values are accorded to urban nature as they are performed in public discourse, changing real decisions in the city. We view such bottom-up analysis of how values emerge as complementary to, for instance, economic-based analyses of the ecosystem services framework (see critique in Ernstson & Sörlin, 2013). In contrast, our bottom-up analysis embeds interpretation of what value is within the social, political, and cultural conditions of particular places and cities (Ernstson & Sörlin, 2013), thereby contributing an important research strategy to the task of rethinking what urban sustainable design and planning could be in practice. This mode of analysis helps to dislodge singular, essentialist, and universalist ideas of nature, and instead emphasizes that “multiple natures are locally embedded in historically specific social practices” (Lachmund, 2013, p. 237). We believe that this can help to profoundly rethink policy, planning, and practice in terms of: (i) how urban nature can be re-humanized and historicized by being embedded in vernacular stories about the city; (ii) how expert categorizations, such as city versus nature, can be undermined; and (iii) how various skills and ways of knowing can be brought into planning processes.

Indeed, rather than external or universalist frameworks that either “value” or “save” nature, our mode of analysis contributes to thinking through ways to achieve longer lasting protection of urban nature across cultural contexts. Specificity or particularity is not a problem for this mode of analysis, but the very material through which nature protection is understood and carried out. At its core, our approach advocates a necessary rethinking of the role of urban design professionals in relation to urban nature protection and politics. Our case studies infer that design professionals should adopt a more humble, yet concurrently more active approach, and our analysis spells out a quite important, and possibly powerful, alliance between design professionals and civil society groups. Citizen groups have the capacity to transform Nature from a singular and scientific object placed in opposition to City, into “natures”—a pluralized, lowercased configuration in which social and biophysical things are woven together to form part of everyday relations and city-living. Importantly, such work, which muddles the binaries of nature and culture, is not only required in grassroots struggles, but also in larger societal planning institutions. While empowering others, design professionals could work—and some already are—to make room in the planning context for an anti-essentialist, situated, and ultimately a more democratic view of urban nature.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix A.

The Table A1 provides an overview of interviews and empirical material from each case study in Cape Town, New York and Essex-London.
Table A1
Overview of empirical material, including interviews that were used for each case study. Interviews for case study 1 was done by Henrik Ernstson, and for case study 2 and 3, by Hanna Erixon Aalto.

Case study 1) “Dressing the Princess” – a wetland in Cape Town, South Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer</th>
<th>Role in the case study</th>
<th>Type of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Person 1</td>
<td>Local baker. Initiator of Bottom Road Sanctuary in 2005; Co-initiator of Princess Vlei Forum in 2010.</td>
<td>Five recorded interviews from 2008 to 2010; one together with Interview Person 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Person 3</td>
<td>Chairman during the time of the research of three civil society organizations, including the Princess Vlei Forum, the local ratepayer’s association LOGRA, and the Greater Cape Town Civic Alliance.</td>
<td>Multiple interviews with field notes at several Princess Vlei Forum meetings from 2010 to 2012. Recorded interview in October 2010 with Interview Person 1; and filmed interview in March 2015 with Interview Person 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Person 4</td>
<td>Hip-hop artist and youth/popular pedagogue. Active in Princess Vlei Forum. Founder of the Heal the Hood Project.</td>
<td>Multiple interviews with field notes from several Princess Vlei Forum meetings from 2010 to 2012. Two filmed interviews in March 2015.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other materials include: Newspaper articles, organizational documents, planning documents from the City of Cape Town, websites, objection letters, and participatory observations from 2007 to 2012 at various locations. Note: This study is part of a longer ethnographic study.

Case study 2) “The High Line” – built railway structure, New York City, USA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer</th>
<th>Role in the case study</th>
<th>Type of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Person 5</td>
<td>Co-founder of Friends of the High Line.</td>
<td>Semi-structured interview in February 2009. Notes taken as recording was not possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Person 6</td>
<td>Chief Planner for Manhattan Special Projects for the New York City Department of City Planning, Manhattan Office.</td>
<td>Recorded interview in March 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Person 7</td>
<td>Principal and lead designer for the High Line working for design firm James Corner Field Operations.</td>
<td>Recorded interview in March 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Person 8</td>
<td>Program Manager for Department of Parks and Recreation, New York City.</td>
<td>Recorded interview in March 2011.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other materials include: Newspaper articles, organizational documents, design competition entries, websites, planning documents and field site visits.

Case study 3) “A Horse’s Tale” – residential park area, Tilbury, Thurrock, London, UK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewer</th>
<th>Role in the case study</th>
<th>Type of interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview Person 9</td>
<td>Co-founder and artist partner of muf architecture/art, London.</td>
<td>Recorded interview in June 2010 and written follow-up in March 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Person 10</td>
<td>Tenant Participation Manager, Thurrock Council</td>
<td>Recorded interview in March 2016.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other materials include: Newspaper articles, organizational documents, websites, planning documents and field site visits.

Note 1: White race and racial categories are social constructions, they have real cultural and material effects and influence both social scientific and everyday understandings. We have kept references to racial categorizations in our Cape Town study since they were used by our interviewees for self-identification and in making sense of their city. This also captures the racialized landscape through which the contested values of Princess Vlei were articulated. Fully aware of the debates on whether to use capital or lower case spelling of racial and ethnic categories, we have here used capital letters as in Coloured, White, African, Indian when referring to apartheid-era imposed classifications (as in “Coloured township”), and lower case when we have interpreted these same words as social identities used by those we have interviewed. This usage also makes scare quotes less necessary.

Note 2: According to Matthews (2008) there are around “300,000 Gypsies and Travellers” in the UK (p. 1), including a range of subgroups. We use Travellers as the term in this paper for these varied communities that have lived, worked and travelled throughout the UK for over 500 years. (Matthews, 2008, p. 1)

References
