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INTERSECTIONS: A Study of the *Private Lives* and *Public Lives* of Selected Women from the Social Movement Organisation, Abahlali baseFreedom Park

THEMBELIHLE MASEKO

University of Johannesburg

A full dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg
in fulfilment of the requirements of Masters in Communication Studies

SUPERVISOR: PROF NYASHA MBOTI
CO SUPERVISOR: DR LUKE SINWELL

UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

January 2017
DECLARATION

I, Thembelihle Maseko, hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work. It is submitted for the Master of Arts in Communication Studies at the University of Johannesburg and has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other University.

January 2017
Thembelihle Maseko
The private lives of women have been relatively neglected in scholarly literature on social movements and social protests. Scholars have a tendency of focusing primarily on the more pronounced and public face of protests instead of looking at how the public intersects with the more hidden private lives of protestors. Also, the concepts of the invited and invented spaces of participation have been discussed in relation to the public sphere, neglecting to look at the private lives of people, particularly those of women. Invited spaces are defined as “occupied by those grassroots actions and their allied non-governmental organisations that are legitimised by donors and government interventions” (Miraftab, 2006: 195). Invented spaces, on the other hand, are defined as “occupied by those collective actions by the poor that directly confront the authorities and challenge the status quo” (Miraftab, 2006: 195). It is necessary to look at the relationship between the invited and invented spaces of participation instead of talking about them as though they are binary opposites (le Roux, 2015; Sinwell, 2010). These concepts tend to be, in the mainstream literature, defined and discussed without giving reference to the private and public lives of women. This study takes as a starting point the existing debates about participatory governance and development and uses these to look at the lives of women within these spaces to show how they interface in Freedom Park.

Historically, black women have been an integral part of protests in South Africa. Since South Africa’s democratic elections in 1994, black women have continued to be at the forefront and background of social movements, social movement organisations and social protests. However, there has been relatively little interest in who the women are, where they live and what they do before and after protests. The experience of women’s resistance has been examined primarily in the limited context of women’s political organisations (e.g., ANC Women’s League). Other scholars such as Benson (2015), Miraftab (2006) and Pointer (2004) have looked closely at the lives of women in the new social movements to examine their role and treatment. They don’t, however, examine their roles in an in-depth manner both at home and in the organisation, thereby explaining how both the private and public lives of women intersect with each other. This dissertation examines how selected women who participate in popular protests in South Africa – for instance, the so-called service delivery protests –
negotiate roles in private spheres at home. It also examines how women who are involved in mixed gendered social movement organisations construct and negotiate both their private and public lives, and what issues of sanitation, water, and housing mean for these women. It uses theories of private and public, social movements, invented and invited spaces, and intersectionality to understand the narratives and counter-narratives of both home and protest in the lives of the selected respondents. The sample of women interviewed is taken from the informal settlement of Freedom Park and from a social movement organisation known as Abahlali baseFreedom Park (AbFP).

This research shows that women in movements are not merely there to give support or take instructions from men. It shows that women’s lives are political, thus they dominate the street committee leadership positions where most of the grassroots work happens. Women also challenge patriarchy by being vocal in community meetings and by organising independently. In order to understand how the public and private lives of women who are activists in AbFP intersect with one another, various qualitative methods were used. These methods are participant-observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, daily conversations, life history and focus group interviews. These methods were helpful in providing a detailed history of Freedom Park which helped to understand where people come from and what they continue to fight for. To further understand the lives of women activists, three life histories are told. These accounts are offered in their own voices because the voices of women in South African literature on protests and activism are underrepresented.

The findings of the research go beyond merely stating that women do most of the grassroots organising. They show why it is necessary to discuss the invited and invented spaces of participation through the lens of the private lives of women. They also reveal that when it comes to community organising women are more dominant in the leadership of the street committee, as opposed to the leadership of the social movement organisation, because that is where most of the grassroots work happens. The research shows how the various invented spaces of participation in Freedom Park overlap, as well as how and why men are the public face of AbFP and women are the face of the street and block committees.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank the comrades from the organisation of Abahlali baseFreedom Park and the community of Freedom Park. This research would not have been possible without you. A special thank you to Thami Hukwe who introduced me to the members of the organisation and to the community in one of the meetings. Thank you to all the participants who set aside time to provide me with all the invaluable information and documents that I would not have accessed anywhere else and allowing me into their private spaces. I would not have been able to do my research without you.

Thank you to my supervisors, Prof. Nyasha Mboti and Dr. Luke Sinwell, for showing interest in my work from the very beginning and supporting me throughout the research project. I would not have made it without your wealth of knowledge and guidance. I appreciate your patience, encouragement, kindness and for believing in me. You both pushed me to take charge of my work, to be more analytical and think critically.

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<tr>
<td>AbFP</td>
<td>Abahlali baseFreedom Park</td>
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<td>AbM</td>
<td>Abahlali baseMjondolo</td>
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<tr>
<td>AEC</td>
<td>Anti-Eviction Campaign</td>
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<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<td>ANCWL</td>
<td>African National Congress Women’s league</td>
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<td>APF</td>
<td>Anti-Privatisation Forum</td>
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<td>ARP</td>
<td>Alexandra Renewal Project</td>
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<td>ARVs</td>
<td>Anti-Retrovirals</td>
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<td>AZAPO</td>
<td>Azanian People’s Organisation</td>
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<td>CBPR</td>
<td>Community Based Participatory Research</td>
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<td>CLING</td>
<td>Community Literacy and Numeracy Group</td>
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<td>CLO</td>
<td>Community Liaison Officer</td>
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<td>COJ</td>
<td>City of Johannesburg</td>
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<td>COSATU</td>
<td>Congress of South African Trade Unions</td>
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<td>CPSA</td>
<td>Communist Party of South Africa</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations</td>
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<td>DUPE</td>
<td>Decline, Unemployment and Polarization Economics</td>
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<td>FEDSAW</td>
<td>Federation of South African Women</td>
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<td>GEAR</td>
<td>Growth, Employment and Restitution</td>
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<td>GOLCCOM</td>
<td>Golden Triangle Community Crisis Committee</td>
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<td>HPP</td>
<td>Homeless People’ Party</td>
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<td>ILRIG</td>
<td>International Labour Research and Information Group</td>
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<td>JCC</td>
<td>Johannesburg City Council</td>
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<td>KZN</td>
<td>KwaZulu Natal</td>
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<td>LPM</td>
<td>Landless People’s Movement</td>
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<td>MPAEC</td>
<td>Mandela Park Anti-Eviction Campaign</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
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<td>NUMSA</td>
<td>National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa</td>
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<td>PEMA</td>
<td>People’s Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIE ACT</td>
<td>Act Prevention of Illegal Eviction</td>
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<tr>
<td>RDP</td>
<td>Reconstruction and Development Programme</td>
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<td>SANCO</td>
<td>South African National Civic Organisational</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>SACP</td>
<td>South African Communist Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>SECC</td>
<td>Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMO</td>
<td>Social Movement Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOPA</td>
<td>Socialist Party of Azania</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRC</td>
<td>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNISA</td>
<td>University of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPG</td>
<td>Women’s Power Group</td>
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<td>ZACF</td>
<td>Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front</td>
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The shortcomings of democracy continue to negatively affect people who are female, black and poor (Benson, 2015: 368). This has led women to create invented spaces of participation (Miraftab, 2006) in the private spaces of their homes that will allow them to share their grievances. In mainstream literature the private and the public sphere are defined as binary opposites and this devalues work that is done by women in the private space (Bergan, 2009; Sadiqi and Ennaji, 2007). Others such as Miraftab (2006), Pointer (2004) and Hassim (1991) have argued that politics do also take place in informal networks of the private homes of the people. Still, this dissertation argues that it is imperative to understand the invited and the invented participatory spaces (see Cornwall, 2004) in the realm of the private lives of the people, particularly those of women.

The study examines the role that a selection of 21st century poor black South African women continue to play in negotiating invisibility, poverty, violence, marginalisation, dehumanisation and oppression, but tries to add a new layer of complexity to the issue by looking at women’s participation in both the public and private sphere. Scholars such as Benson (2015), Miraftab (2006), and Pointer (2004) have already begun doing this by focusing on women’s participation and roles within organisations and movements. However, they have paid less attention to their daily lives at home. Previous studies on the role of women in social protests have focused more on the visible, public face of protest, while appearing to neglect looking at the intersection of the visible, public face with the less known, less accessible and less seen aspects of these women’s lives. Benjamin (2004: 147) has stated that:

(T)he majority of the poor in South Africa are black women. They are also the majority in social movements, yet men still occupy the leadership positions, and women remain “foot soldiers” on the frontlines of the evictions and cut-offs.
As such, if Benjamin is right, black South African women are at the forefront of the “public” and the “private”.

One can see the omnipresence of women at both the “public” event (protest) and the “private” event (where, for example, organising often takes place). That is, poor black women, by default, cut-across and intersect both the public and private (in some sort of hybrid “pubrivate” space). How useful, then, is the strict imposition of public and private? This study may thus be seen as advancing beyond the taken-for-granted dichotomy between the public and private (Bhattacharjiya et al, 2013; Goebel, 2011). How, for instance, do these women negotiate, weave, and balance the private and the public, or their protest and non-protest lives? A general feature of the coverage of “service delivery” protests in South Africa is the preoccupation with the public protest event itself, for instance in the way that they are reported in newspaper articles or live broadcasts. There is little focus on the intimate and private details of the everyday lives of the protestors before, during and after the outbreak of hostilities.

A characteristic of both media and scholarly coverage of service delivery protests is the clear separation imposed between the “private” and the “public”, without allowing for the possibility of passage, connection or intersection between them. There seems to be little sustained interest in the detailed, personal, intimate and ordinary narratives of where the women come from, or what they do before and after the protest. Scholarship on service delivery protests indicates that people demonstrate their dissatisfaction publicly when the government doesn’t respond to their grievances, but this doesn’t go into detail about their daily lives (see, for example, Alexander and Pfaffe, 2014; Langa and Kiguwa 2013; Paret, 2015). There seems to be a gap in studies that examine the experiences, loves, lives, anxieties and intimacies of women protestors in their fullness and ordinariness – by erasing the artificial conceptual border between “private” and “public”. There is a gendered dimension to sanitation, water, electricity and housing. Sanitation, for instance, is an issue that affects women directly as they “have to deal with the complication of non-flushing toilets for use of children and elderly” (Mottiar et al, 2011: 125). Issues of sanitation, water, and housing take place in the private sphere, and research indicates that these issues affect women – carers for men and children – more than men (ibid).
This study examines the intersection\(^1\) between the public and private lives of selected women from an informal settlement near Soweto known as Freedom Park. The women participate in “service delivery” protests in the area. Furthermore, the women belong to the group Abahlali baseFreedom Park (AbFP). This study is, to my knowledge, the first of any kind focused on the women in AbFP, a social movement organisation (SMO) formed in 2014 by residents of the slum area of Freedom Park outside Soweto. Essentially, social movements and SMOs differ. SMOs are singular organisations and are usually issue-based, whereas social movements consist of a broader group of people, action, networks, mobilisations and discussions, and constitute a wider movement (le Roux, 2014; Stoecker, 1995). Social movements specifically use non-institutionalised means, such as protest, in order to generate change, though they have other ways of organising or other tactics which they employ to organise or put pressure on those in power (Della Porta and Diani, 2006; McAdam, 1982). The anti-apartheid movement, for example, involved millions of people and a wide range of organisations, including SMOs such as the African National Congress (ANC).

I also use the term SMO to refer to AbFP because of the fact that the group’s membership and efforts pale into insignificance when compared to those of larger national movements such as Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) and the former Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF). AbFP is neither affiliated with AbM, nor is it well known by civil society organisers in Johannesburg and elsewhere like many other SMOs across the country. AbFP’s goals are focused on its locale and its unique everyday problems. The fact that it floats under the radar and targets the township’s specific challenges has an interesting bearing on questions of “organic-ness”. There is no attempt in AbFP, as far as I can tell, to grow beyond Freedom Park. The movement consists of male and female members, some of whom are politically non-aligned, while others belong to various political parties. Recently, there have been some debates sparked by civil society activist Bandile Mdlalose’s paper in *Politikon* that criticised social movements such as AbM for falling under the spell of outsiders, as well as having strings-attached to funding and white advisors (Mdlalose, 2014). In response to the criticisms raised by Mdlalose, Friedman (2015: 129) has argued that Mdlalose did not

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\(^1\) While there is a great deal of literature on the theory of intersectionality, this paper does not deal with theory in depth but it focuses more on the intersection of the private and public spaces.
clarify her arguments by citing any independent information to substantiate her work, nor did she name the white people concerned in order that they could defend themselves. Bohmke (2013) has referred to the outside influence on social movements as the “social movement hustle”. AbM’s response is that its critics are against AbM being non-governmental organisation-controlled and white-controlled. Whoever is right, the autonomy, politics and independence of social movements in South Africa is a highly contested scholarly terrain.

1.2 Research Questions

This study seeks to address the following two research questions:

1. How do selected women engaging in protests in the mixed gender social movement organisation Abahlali baseFreedom Park construct, negotiate and make sense of their public (“protest”) and private (“non-protest”) lives?

2. In what way does protest intersect with the everyday lived experience, and vice versa, of the selected women?

The research questions were inspired by the following sub questions:

1. What is the role of women in protests?
2. How do women organise?
3. What is life like in Freedom Park?
4. Why do these women protest?
5. How do women find balance in the different spaces they occupy?

The concepts of the invited and the invented participatory spaces will be used to answer aspects of these research questions. The methods of data collection that were used are interviews, focus groups and observations. These research tools helped to provide a deeper understanding of the daily lived experiences of the women involved in protests and how they negotiate their private and public lives. The interviews generated an understanding of how the women perceive their roles both in their public and private spaces and how these roles are interlinked. Focus groups provided insights into the livelihoods of women in the community, while observations allowed

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2 http://heinrichbohmke.com/2013/05/comaroff/#Article
the researcher to watch the daily routines of women who are activists and how they behave and perceive themselves in public and private spaces.

1.3 Location of Study: Freedom Park

Freedom Park is a semi-formal settlement bordering the south west of Soweto. The area is described as semi-formal because the dwellings are a combination of Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses and shacks. Semi-formal settlements are “dwelling structures which are not built according to approved architectural plan are considered to be semi-formal” (Statistics South Africa, online, 1998). Freedom Park was formed in 1994 when a number of poor black South Africans who resided in the backyards of Soweto in the late 1980s were retrenched from work (Sipho, male, interview, 2015). The retrenchedes could no longer afford to pay rent and reasoned that they needed a place to stay where rent would not be required. They thus organised themselves into a grassroots movement in Soweto which they called the Homeless People’s Party (HPP). It is this movement which initiated and led the struggles in 1994 to “illegally” occupy the area now known as Freedom Park.

The area that became Freedom Park was originally privately owned land that was earmarked for industrial expansion (Sipho, male, interview, 2015). The poor residents from Soweto thus went about “reclaiming” the land. They maintain that this reclamation was an historical act at the cusp of 1994 to repossess African land from which they had been alienated by colonialism and apartheid dispossession. This urban reclamation, however, happened outside the purview of the legal process of land claims and restitution. One may thus regard the settlement of Freedom Park as one of the ad hoc forerunners of the Landless People’s Movement (LPM) in South Africa. The LPM was a national social movement which consisted of poor individuals living in rural and urban informal settlements, who organised together in order to reclaim the land which they believed was stolen from them during colonisation and apartheid (Greenberg, 2004: 2).

Reclaiming the land that eventually became Freedom Park meant, for residents, settling the land without municipal or government consent and building themselves shacks using plastics, cardboard boxes and corrugated iron sheets. Shack-building of
this nature has continued to this day (see Figure 1 below). Both government and big businesses reacted to the land occupation by approaching the courts to seek a court order to remove people from the land, which they argued was privately owned and protected by property laws (Hukwe et al., 2014). The legal challenge by big business and the state against the “squatters” of Freedom Park marked the beginning of a lengthy war of attrition that included court challenges and attempted evictions.

The squatter community, however, organised itself to resist the efforts to remove people from the land. Part of the resistance strategy included organising and recruiting more and more people from the backyards of Soweto, and some from flats in Johannesburg, to come and set up their homes in Freedom Park. Some reasoned that, in a new democratic dispensation, the weight of history lay on their side while also believing that there was safety in numbers, particularly when it came to elections. This calculation was proven correct at the introduction of the RDP which saw local government formally recognise Freedom Park and earmark it for the building of RDP houses. Formal recognition meant that part of Freedom Park consisted of formal sections interspersed with “informal” areas dominated by shacks. Today, the community of Freedom Park is comprised of eight sections namely, St.Martin, Siyaya, Mahala Park, Zimbabwe, Lindelani, Freedom Park, Devland Extension 27 and newly-developed bond houses known as Devland Gardens.

1.4 Abahlali baseFreedom Park

The SMO, AbFP, was formed in 2014 by some of the community members who felt that they were excluded from the decision making process of their community on issues of development, housing, electricity and water (Nhlanhla, female, interview, 2015). The members of the movement have also organised themselves into block and street committees whereby they discuss various issues that affect their community. The community embarked on its first major protest on the 19th July 2014 with hopes of getting the attention of local councillors. When that did not happen, those members who were involved in the protest organised themselves into block and street committees to discuss the needs and experiences of the community.
The central objectives of AbFP include:

- To mobilise, organise and unite the community of Freedom Park across party political lines in a common platform to fight for community ownership and control of the development process.
- Establish a community labour desk that would deal with issues of hiring and employment in all development projects happening at Freedom Park.
- Fight for transparency and accountability in ward 119 and 24 from both councillors in Freedom Park with regards to all the developments.

As the empirical evidence will make clear, Freedom Park has witnessed the construction and perseverance of both invited and invented participatory spaces.

Apartheid imposed a state whereby African women were not recognised, relegating them first to reserves and then to Bantustans and subsequently to “homelands”. Platzky and Walker (1985) describe the state of affairs of women’s lives in apartheid South Africa as amounting to “surplusness”. That is, women were a “surplus people”. It was this surplusness and lack of recognition that, historically, many poor and oppressed black women fought to dismantle from every quarter (Walker, 1982; Lapchick and Urdang, 1982; Schmidt, 1986).

The role of African women in bringing about the fall of apartheid is thus justifiably celebrated (Meer, 2005: 35). A well-known example is the women’s anti-pass march to the Union Buildings in Pretoria in 1956. A less well known example is the struggle by black women to end the application of Pass laws in the Orange Free State, and to get full exemption from Pass laws throughout the Union under the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923 (Wells, 1986). Such protests had the effect of bringing to the fore the public role of women as organisers and leaders of social movements (Muchena, 1987). This public role was all the more remarkable considering the “double jeopardy” (Beal, 1970) of black women in South Africa – as both victims of patriarchy and as second class citizens under apartheid. The condition of double, and triple, oppression was also visibly seen in many women’s roles as domestic workers for white families, a role so well spelt out in Jacklyn Cock’s *Maids and Madams: A Study in the Politics of Exploitation* (1980).
Even though apartheid has fallen, black women are still not emancipated in a constitutional democracy. The system of apartheid has continued in other forms, as women labour under what is identified in this dissertation as the four “Ps”: poverty, patriarchy, privatisation and a profit-extracting neoliberal agenda championed by the ANC government since 1994. The majority of the poor in South Africa are black women (Benjamin, 2004) and the collective violence of the four “Ps” has seen them suffering, once again, in conditions of invisibility. Indeed, poor black women are now visible only as distorted actors in the mediated “dramas” of so-called “service delivery” protests. The phrase “service delivery” suggests that protests are motivated by demands for the speedy, corruption-free and adequate “delivery”, by government, of basic services such as electricity, water and housing. There is some scholarly consensus that this may be the case (Botes et al, 2007; Alexander 2010; Alexander and Pfaffe 2014; Manala, 2010; Tsheola, Ramonyai, and Segage 2014). Botes et al (2007) even claim that “service delivery” is the “new struggle”. This study, however, is somewhat sceptical that these protests are all about demands for such delivery. Rather, it proposes that the participation of women in the protests is, in fact, directed at and against the four Ps, which are a core cause of women’s continuing invisibility and imposed voicelessness. Benjamin (2007), for instance, has argued that poverty in South Africa is “feminised”. Furthermore, black women in the townships bear most of the social and economic burdens caused by neoliberal austerity in urban settings.

1.5 Justification and Rationale of the Study

Protests of different orders and magnitudes in South Africa have become “normalised”. Rarely a day goes by without news of a protest of one type or another. The type of protest most prominent has come to be known as the “service delivery protest”. Service delivery protests have emerged due to the dissatisfaction of citizens with the lack of service delivery. Several studies have indicated that, when it comes to activism in poor communities, women do most of the grassroots organising (Hassim and Gouws, 2007; Miraftab, 2006; Lee, 2009; Pointer, 2004). There is, however, a lack of research which adequately addresses the role of women in protest action post-apartheid, with a particular focus on the various spaces that they occupy. The purpose of this research is to begin to fill this gap. I aim to examine how selected women engaging in popular protests balance their private and public lives. The study
addresses a gap in social movement studies where not only the public and private continue to be strictly separated, but the role of women is minimised in the interests of a focus on the social movement as a collective and relatively homogeneous entity.

When the ANC won the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, some people believed that protests would no longer be necessary (Ngwane, 2011). However, after 1994 protests continued taking place, particularly from the late 1990’s to the early 2000’s and thereafter. In particular, a new type of protest, the service delivery protest, appeared to supplant the anti-apartheid protest. Essentially, the transition from apartheid to democratic rule in South Africa did not signal the end of social upheaval or protests (Ballard et al, 2006: 1). Women, typically, have continued to organise, carry out, and be part of protests against corporations, government, municipalities and councils, among others (Meer, 2005: 36). Tripp et al (2008) suggest that, from the 1990s, democratisation did not radically change the situation of women on the African continent and, in some cases, situations worsened. At any rate, the need for social movements has remained.

1.6 Chapter Outline

Chapter two: Literature review – This chapter unpacks the available scholarship on protests, women’s activism and the role of women in protests. The chapter begins by providing an overview of women’s activism in South Africa historically and into present. It highlights women’s struggles in the spaces that they occupy. Existing literature on protests and how various scholars understand the concept are explored providing reasons for people’s participation and women’s contribution to protest.

Chapter three: Theoretical framework – This chapter discusses various theoretical concepts that provide an understanding of the lives of women who are involved in social movements. It begins by theorising the spaces that women occupy. Other concepts that are defined and discussed include: the invited and the invented spaces of participation; the role of social movements in communities and women’s involvement in them; intersectionality; and the private and public spaces.
Chapter four: *Methodology* – This outlines the various qualitative methods that were used to collect data in order to answer the research questions. It explains the reasons for AbFP being chosen as a case study, as well as how and why particular research participants were selected. Research methods that were deployed include in-depth interviews, life history interviews, daily conversations, participant-observation and focus groups interviews. The section also goes into detail about how the researcher built relationships with the participants and overcame the challenges of collecting data in a community that continues to struggle at the margins of society.

Chapter five: *History of Freedom Park and the Formation of Abahlali baseFreedom Park* – This chapter deals with the people and the community of Freedom Park. It begins by providing an in-depth history of the community and how it was established in order to understand their current living conditions. It also discusses the formation and role of AbFP as an SMO by exploring how poor living conditions led to its emergence as an invented space due to failure of existing invited spaces created by the ruling ANC. The chapter also deals with the types of engagements that community members have, together with the SMO. These engagements highlight how things (such as relationships and events in the community) are structured and function in the community.

Chapter six: *The Private and Public Lives of Women in Freedom Park* – This chapter discusses the intersections of the private and public lives of women activists by analysing the qualitative data collected. It provides an overview of people’s living conditions in the community, women’s lives at home and in the organisation. The chapter demonstrates how women do most of the grassroots organising even though they may not be in named leadership positions of AbFP, as well as how that has led to the emergence of an alternative women’s invented space within and outside of the invented space of AbFP. Women who were interviewed highlighted their survival strategies and how they organise daily. The chapter also touches on the importance of women’s involvement in protests and how their activism is perceived, as well as the challenges that they face because of their gender.

Chapter seven: *Life Histories* – This chapter provides the life histories of the women who were observed, both at home and in AbFP meetings, during the research process.
These women are activists and their accounts enable a better understanding of what it is like being a female activist in a poor community struggling for service delivery. The women’s life histories are presented in the first person in order to allow them to tell their extensive stories in an uninterrupted way. This is informed by the research questions which seek to understand how women make sense of their daily lived experiences. The women’s narratives begin by providing their background, upbringing, daily lived experiences and the challenges they face as female activists.

Chapter eight: Conclusion – The final chapter summarises the main points and arguments made in the dissertation, including the intersection of the public and private lives of women in the community and their roles in various spaces. The chapter also outlines the strengths and limitations of the research, as well as providing recommendations for the future.

This introductory chapter has provided the rationale and justification for the research and introduced the main arguments put forward in the dissertation in order to show gaps in the scholarly work of social movements and social protests. It highlighted in detail what the study will examine, the research questions and what each chapter entails. The next section, chapter two, explores existing literature on the lives of women, particularly those who are activists. It begins by unpacking the history of women’s activism providing multiple accounts that discuss women’s lives in the pre-colonial and colonial era in South Africa.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews previous literature on the subject of women’s everyday lives, women and protest, the intersection of gender and protest, and social movements. The chapter begins with a background to the complex histories of women’s everyday lives in Africa, before delving into the place of women and protest in South Africa specifically. The third section considers literature on the current state of “protest”, followed by a study of social movements. The final section deals with several facets of gendered lives, and gender and protest.

The history of women’s activism in South Africa, it would seem, was largely inspired by the fight against apartheid. Feminist writers concur that apartheid sought to rigidly legislate and control the behaviour of women (Britton and Fish, 2009; Well, 1993). The net effect was a general state of invisibility of women, both black and white. Black women, however, faced a greater burden because they had to deal not only with patriarchy but also with poverty and racism. Apartheid specifically subjected black women to double and multiple jeopardies.

The anti-pass march in 1956, however, brought together all black women into the formerly male-dominated space of national politics. A “motherist” vision was drawn on to organise across racial and political divisions, thus promoting progressive change (Hassim, 1991; Britton and Fish, 2009; Walker, 1995). The vision was that all women, regardless of race, were fighting to save the nation for their children (Britton and Fish, 2009). Women were able to bring issues from the private sphere to the highly visible public domain, openly stating that they were against pass laws because they interfered with their domestic roles as mothers and wives, and made it difficult for black women to go into the labour market as domestic workers in white homes (Wells, 1993).

This motherist vision, however, was not a radical challenge to the apartheid state as long as it conflated the problems that black women faced with those of white women. Glossing over racism and racist exploitation of black women in a “colour-blind” way
only perpetuated the subordination of black women. In fact, the first anti-pass march only took place in 1913 in Bloemfontein, when women went to their local municipality to submit a petition against permits. This march did not happen spontaneously. Rather, there were several early attempts to have the law repealed. When these did not succeed, the struggle was escalated to public protest (South African History Online, 2016).

What sets these protests apart from others is that women, in particular, led them in order to bring change to situations that constrained their own lives. Women’s organisations developed as part of the struggle against apartheid, with two key organisations being the African National Congress Women’s League (ANCWL) and the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW). These organisations mobilised women across the country and forced gender issues into the public domain.

Historical tension has always arisen between those analysts who define women’s political participation as inseparable from larger nationalist struggles and those who define it as different and relatively independent (Hassim 2005: 187). Feminist scholars argue that the exclusion of women is rife in the liberal theories of politics anyway (Pateman, 1989). Therefore “nationalism is in many respects a double-edged sword for women, enabling women’s entry into the public sphere while resting on a profoundly gendered model of political society” (Hassim, 2005: 178). Public spaces are typically constructed and framed as a man’s world, considered to be rough and dangerous. Violence is an omnipresent possibility, and it is feared that women may be subjected to physical harm and violation if they play too public a role (Pateman, 1989). Even this assumption, however, may not be entirely true. Women’s activism throughout history (both feminist and non-feminist) has invested in both active and passive national liberation movements.

The African woman in South Africa has enjoyed a largely invisible status. She has either been invisible in the sense of being relegated to the Bantustans and kept out of all-male hostels, or visible only as a domestic worker. In the latter role, black women were tied down to a level lower than the white “madam”, and were two levels removed
from the white baas.\textsuperscript{4} Worse still, their situation was tightly regulated by influx laws that, since the promulgation of the Land Act in 1913, had trapped women in reserves and, in later years, in Bantustans and “homelands”. In the wake of the Union of South Africa, African women had, according to one estimate, to carry at least thirteen permits. In 1913, women in the Orange Free State flooded jails after refusing to accept passes or pay fines for not carrying passes. By 1918 they had forced the system to halt demands for further pass restrictions on women. The women’s victory was only undone some four decades later when the government demanded that women carry pass books, leading to the 1956 march on the Union Buildings.

The post-1948 economic, social and political engineering by successive apartheid governments systematically turned African women into a class of destitute undesirables. To begin with, “migrant men” were not allowed to bring their wives or children to urban areas. The institution of all-male hostels, in particular, spelled out the institutionalised exclusion of women from towns – exclusion which was intended to break up the African family. The provisions of Section 10 of the Bantu (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945 led Kane-Berman in \textit{Soweto: Black Revolt, White Reaction} (1978: 88) to opine that “There is a general embargo on the entry of (African) women into … prescribed areas”. The qualifications required by Section 10(1) made it virtually impossible for women to be legal citizens of “white” South Africa, forcing them – since they were categorised as illegals and “foreigners” – to live a daily life of systematic harassment, arrest and fear of arrest.

In the struggle for liberation in South Africa, women participated as workers, students and community members. Significantly, the struggle against oppressive gender relations was already a key liberation principle (Meer, 2005: 36). An example is the housing legislation in 1967 that did not allow women to place themselves on the state housing waiting list because at the time women were categorically defined as being subordinate to men. Under section 10 of the legislation the position of women was “dependent” on their husbands. In 1985 when Africans earned the legal right to purchase, renovate or tear down their homes as they wanted, women were still at a disadvantage because they earned lower wages which meant that they could not

\textsuperscript{4} A white female boss in the household
afford to buy their own homes (Lee, 2009). Women, however, found ways in the townships to improve their living conditions by participating in *imigalelo* (a rotating credit association) and burial societies as they could not afford to get loans from the bank (*ibid*). For these women the quest for freedom and self-determination, though weighed down by poverty, reflected unwavering commitment to the struggle through sheer perseverance and hard work in order to keep their families from breaking-up under the weight of apartheid and, beyond that, to organise the fight for liberation.

Despite structural hardships, exclusion, and paternalism, women were at both the foreground and background of the movement for liberation (Bohannon, 2015). Furthermore, a range of women’s organisations succeeded in pushing their interests into the negotiations of the early 1990s that created the political settlement of 1994 and the Constitution of South Africa in 1996 (Miraftab 2006: 204). Though official apartheid has been abolished, a majority of Africans continue to live in poverty and subjection. In this regard, women’s participation in the struggle for democratisation has continued in various forms. This is the theme of this study. In Gauteng, for instance, many women are still active members of social movements such as AbFP, the Westcliff Flats Residents Association, the Thembelihle Crisis Committee, and so on. Women today continue to play a defining role in shaping power relations on their own terms, even as gender inequality still remains an acknowledged obstacle (Britton and Fish, 2009: 2).

At the inauguration of democracy in 1994, the newly installed ANC government made promises for a “people-centred” and “people-driven” approach to development (Ngwane, 2011: 46). Democratic elections brought hope for major gains for gender equality, with women acquiring one-third of the seats in parliament, thus securing constitutional safeguards and extensive legislative reform. Indeed, by the third democratic elections, women composed thirty two percent of the national parliament. It cannot be denied that these achievements stemmed from years of women’s activism to end apartheid, ensure gender equality, and improve the status and the quality of life of every South African woman (Britton and Fish, 2009: 2). As Ruiters (2008: 78) has pointed out, however, merely involving women in politics in does not, in itself, guarantee that the lives of the majority of women will improve. Fundamental shifts in power relations, political economy and gender relations are needed. Though women
may be in positions of power in the public sphere or in the movement to make
inequalities of gender less severe, “the struggle continues in the current systems that
have not yet changed in accordance with the public commitment to gender rights”
(Britton and Fish, 2009: 2).

2.2 The Lives of African Women: A General Background

Written scholarly accounts of African women in the precolonial and colonial era tend
to be split down the middle. The first set of accounts presents African women as having
been powerless under patriarchal traditions. This non-agental account, in fact, is the
most pervasive. The second set of accounts come from the opposite spectrum, and
provides evidence that African women had agency. A third set of accounts appears to
be a mix of the two. In order to show the diversity of opinions on the subject, this
section reviews literature showing characteristics of all three kinds of interpretations
of the lives of African women.

Coquery-Vidrovitch (1997) in *African Women* gives an overview of their lives. She
states that African women throughout the years have always had more work to do than
men. This, of course, is not to suggest that men did not do work. Rather, it is an
assertion intended to buttress the view that, in order for one to understand the place
of women in the ancient society in Africa, their place in the family should not only be
defined but also examined. The African continent has a wide variety of family types
which means that there is no one standard way of describing the “African family”, or
the position of a woman in such a family. One can, however, pay attention to
similarities that appear in different regions. Prior to colonisation, most Africans resided
in rural settings. Both men and women were responsible for different tasks. For
instance, men had to participate in war, long distance trade, and help clear land for
farming. Women, on the other hand, took care of farming and household tasks such
as collecting firewood and bringing water, nearby gardening and small scale
subsistence and neighbourhood trading. Simultaneously, women were fully
responsible for reproductive roles, with a fertility rate of about one child every three
years. Polygamy was very common and linked with an important role of women as
both producer and reproducer. This role was highly glorified in society as both the
signs and reality of fertility helped strengthen marriage.
Culture assumes a substantive role in diffusing and entrenching patriarchy. This is evident in Southern Africa where some men look down upon gender equity because of the mistaken belief that “African culture” does not allow women to participate in public spaces or be on the “same level” as men (Isike and Uzodike, 2011). Ironically, there are many instances where Africa appears to exhibit examples of women who were influential and demonstrated leadership in spheres of politics, religion, economy and the military (Isike and Uzodike, 2011). In Zulu history, for instance, women such as Mnkabayi, Mawa, Langazana and Nandi were powerful political leaders who exerted enormous influence (Weir, 2007: 9). In the pre-colonial period women could participate in public spaces. They possessed qualities of morality, sacredness, goodness and tenderness. Mothers and women also presided over ritual and religion (Weir, 2007). There is also evidence that women could own cattle which allowed them to be active in the economy (ibid).

Coquery-Vidrovitch (1997: 39-40) provides evidence of the presence and influence of powerful women in Southern Africa. For instance, she states that both girls and boys in the beginning of the nineteenth century were expected to participate in Shaka’s military forces. Mnkabayi was the first princess of Shaka to play a political role when she supported Shaka’s accession when his own father passed away in 1815. It is also alleged that she blamed Shaka for the death of her mother in 1827 and then supported the plot to get rid of him and have his brother, Dingaan accede the throne. Another powerful Zulu princess, Mawa was in a chief position of a military encampment and town. Women could serve as the head of a Mfecane/Difaqane, a political warfare in the Southern Africa between the 1820s and 1830s, and Queen Mmanthatisi took the regency for her son who was thirteen at the time. This role would normally have been inherited by his brother in-law. Mma Nthatisi declared the independence of the Tlokua the Sotho and even declared war on Moshoeshoe. She famously repelled a surprise attack by the Sotho when most of her fighting troops were away. She reportedly rounded up the few men that were available, put together an army of women and children, and lined them up with hoe handles instead of spears and straw mats as shields. It was her reputation that earned her the right to maintain such a prestigious role on behalf of her son.
Once colonialism was entrenched, African women started suffering from the double burden of being women and black. By the 1930s, for instance, low wage domestic work became feminised. African women were exclusively inserted into the roles of domestic workers for whites, while men sold their labour in the mines, farms and factories. While white women could get employment in the mining, leather and book industries, African women on the other hand continued to remain marginalised in the cities. The law of 1930 granted local authorities the right to get rid of women who could not produce proof of residency in particular cities. This contributed to keeping black women mired in the domestic space.

By the 1970s there were more black domestic workers and their working conditions remained unpleasant. Domestic workers were not recognised as part of the working class by the Nationalist laws of 1953 and 1956, thus preventing them from forming unions and limiting their ability to act to safeguard their interests. There was still no minimum wage by the formal end of apartheid in 1994. South African law treated and still treats women married in community of property as minors, who are unable to sue in their own names. This is the case with the Nationalist law. A survey conducted in Grahamstown in 1980 revealed that maids worked about eighty hours a week (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997: 112). It took several hours for some to get to work, where they would be from 7am until 7:30pm. To make things worse, most of them had children. Those “live-in” domestic workers, who lived on the property of their employers, could not have people over for a visit; those whose children were not sent to the Bantustans were only able to visit them on Sundays and time was cut short by the travel distance to reach their destination. The only form of “entertainment” open to live-in domestic workers was conversing with fellow domestics in the neighbourhood when their bosses were away. Work holidays and vacations were non-existent. Lack of social legislation made domestics vulnerable, despite some attempt to alleviate this by organisations such as the Domestic Workers and Employers Project that aimed to encourage them organise in the 1970s (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997: 112-113).

The migrant labour system, which recruited males only to the cities, created a ready market for prostitution. In the early years of the Johannesburg gold rush, most prostitutes were white women, most of whom immigrated to South Africa for that purpose. There were about 113 formal prostitution houses by the late nineteenth
century in Johannesburg with about four hundred women working there. In the first decade of the twentieth century drought and poverty made African peasant women move to the cities. In the city, even domestic work was hard to come by as the women had to compete with men. As a means of survival they soon took part in illegal economic activities such as beer brewing and prostitution. Black prostitution became common, such that in 1910 the police counted two to three hundred of them. Most of them did their work in the poorest communities. With time, prostitution became more informal with greater numbers being African women (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997: 119-120).

The movement of African women from the private domestic sphere to public visibility dates back to the early 20th century when women began to trek to the cities to join factory work. Factory work for African women earned them some independence. As they became financially independent women no longer had to depend on men to take care of the household, the number of divorces increased and connections with their families in the rural areas became tenuous. Salaries effectively encouraged independence for women, hence the nationalist government of 1952 had to impose passes on them as a way of keeping this independence in check. Some 3.5 million African women were deported to the Bantustans between 1960 and 1983 (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997: 131-132).

Bozzoli (1983) examines women's resistance to apartheid in Potchefstroom, arguing that the migration of women to the cities brought to an end the usual pattern of household labour whereby women were confined to rural areas while men had full-time jobs in cities. The demographic profile of protestors who protested against the creation of "locations", methods of rent collection, residential permits and the introduction of pass laws began to include more women. Already African women's participation in politics had begun to symbolise the break-down of the simple dichotomy between the private and the public as their struggles ranged from protests against lack of housing and high rent to protests against forced removals and discrimination in the labour market. The fact that protests in the 1920s and 1930s were caused by extreme poverty that families were subjected to suggests that women were always at the heart of the struggle against apartheid. This is because poverty affected them more intimately than anyone else. Structures of intersectional oppression, which
cut across class, race and gender, and which were buttressed by state, racial and family-based patriarchy, could be shown to have existed in pre-capitalist society and to have taken new forms in industrial and capitalist society (Bradford and Beinart, 1987, in Hetherington, 1993: 251-253).

Despite the changes in the mode of production, men continued to have power over women and children (Hetherington, 1993). In fact, in order to understand the real complexity of gender it is important to unpack the construction of the family (Hetherington, 1993). Burman and Reynolds (1986) suggest that patriarchal privilege is inculcated from childhood and has a different life cycle that may survive changes in the mode of production. Walker (1990) states that it is necessary to study the shift from pre-capitalist forms of gender oppression to the colonial state under settler capitalism, and the nature of the relationship between these two systems. For us to construct a coherent theory of gender, it may be necessary to first understand the trajectories of the lives and experiences of both men and women in society and across cultures (Walker, 1990).

Rebekah Lee (2009) attempts to construct a picture of the evolution of the gendered experience for the South African woman. To do this, she studied the livelihoods of women in Cape Town across three generations during and post-apartheid. The first generation of women was born between the years 1950-1970 and had their lives influenced and limited by the roles they took in conjugal relationships and motherhood. The average level of education they attained was standard six and they had an average of about five children. Working part-time as domestic workers allowed them to help with the household income as they could not be part of other sectors. In addition, levels of marriage increased as women secured an income equal or separate to their male counterparts. Later these women got involved in small businesses which mostly did not do well because of constant change of location. Those who were able to obtain four-roomed council houses could become entrepreneurs and also send their children away for schooling in the Eastern Cape due to school boycotts as they were unable to write their exams. At the end of that period women were financially stable compared to men due to their participation in the informal economy. Men, on the other hand, lost their jobs (Lee, 2009).
Second generation women, particularly those who were able to complete school, had a variety of economic opportunities. They were able to contribute to the household income. Later, the ability to move around allowed them to acquire skills and to be independent in the following generation. Homes that were led by females showed that men abandoned their roles as caretakers in the second and third generation due to alcoholism and lack of employment, causing these family groups to remain with their mothers. In the 1960s and 1970s women faced gendered challenges when it came to settling in the city as Section 10 of the constitution at the time placed them in the role of dependents. This also denied them access to resources such as electricity. They could only acquire residency if they had been working for ten consecutive years, and widows were sent back to the reserves after the death of their husbands. Things changed in 1985 when the state gave “legal” Africans permission to purchase or make changes to their homes. Women were still disadvantaged because they had always earned a lower wage, and because the divorced and the widowed were not part of the financial assistance schemes if their husbands owned property previously. Despite these handicaps, women still contributed to the maintenance of homes by adding ceiling, plastering brick walls and flooring (Lee, 2009).

The second phase took place largely in the 1990s as population pressures increased in cities and space became an issue. Women increasingly felt the need to find more space to build homes for their expanding families. After receiving council houses women participated in informal financial schemes in order to improve their homes. This made sense given that they could afford to get bank loans and have stable employment. For other women it was hard to renovate because they depended on their husbands who were the sole breadwinners. Some women overcame male domination by building their own houses themselves, while others remained constrained by the triple burden of being a breadwinner, carer and active within the community (Lee, 2009).

The introduction of electricity in townships brought a number of changes in the lives of the women. It was not easy for the first generation women to get access to electricity when it was first introduced in the townships given that they were economically marginalised and could not secure title deeds to houses in their names. Many of their
applications for electricity were declined, meaning that they had to revert to depending on men for access (Lee, 2009).

In order to survive women took part in various associations such as umanyano (women’s group or mother’s union) and imigalelo (stokvel or informal financial assistance). A variety of these financial associations continue in the townships to this day. Women used these organisations to help each other to purchase goods, save money and assist with burials. The most common one has always been the burial society. Typically, women were the ones in charge of the burial societies because of their role in traditional funerals. They supplied herbs for funeral rites, coffins, cars and buses for mourners, flowers and candles. They sewed the shrouds to cover the body of the deceased. Also, they typically helped with the supervision of the cleansing of the house, washing clothes, floors, curtains and blankets and providing catering (Lee, 2009: 136).

Burial societies were important because formal insurance schemes had terms and conditions that African women could not fulfil. African burial societies, for instance, allowed for late, irregular and cash payments. Imigalelo, on the other hand, saved money for different reasons and events. These savings schemes, which had different categories such as back-to-school, Christmas, initiation or birthday parties, allowed the women to save and plan for their events without having to worry about running short of money. Women could also hire trucks that could reach stores that they could not. Other associations that women belonged to were for spiritual reasons. These organisations are known as umanyano. They met weekly to pray and share advice and support. They also engaged in various activities such as home visits for the sick, fund raising and many more. Being a part of umanyano gave women a space where they could all meet and let out their feelings of anger and frustration. Some of the women have suggested that involvement in umanyano saved them from alcoholism and family break ups (Lee, 2009).

First generation women had nothing but positive things to say about umanyano and those who joined them never left. It gave women a sense of identity and belonging, while also guaranteeing that the women’s social, spiritual and psychological state remained stable. Second and third generation women also had the same perception
about *imanyano*; they found them to be spiritually helpful. However, for the third generation women there was a lack of involvement in church activities. Because they associated *imanyano* with strictness and conservatism, they delayed joining (Lee, 2009).

As the geographical and social mobility of women increased, their identities also changed. They began to show a progressive lack of interest in their natal homes, for instance. The first generation women stated that they kept in touch with their families through letters and rare trips. The relative absence or presence of non-kin relations, however, affected the way they perceived “home”, and when one’s friends and family passed away that changed their conceptualisation of home. After losing those connections they no longer committed to their natal homes. Others migrated to Cape Town so that they could join their husbands who were already working and were residents of the city. The obligations of marriage made women commit to city life. Children also played an important role, as those who were born in the city identified with urban life and made them reluctant to move back to home. Acquiring council houses gave women the sense of being settled and they were aware of their lack of economic opportunities in their natal homes. Second generation women tended to have negative perceptions of the rural areas, as did third generation women who viewed the rural in a far more negative way compared to the second generation (Lee, 2009).

In order to understand the real complexities of gender, it is important to unpack the deconstruction of the family (Hetherington 1993: 266). In order to do this one needs to first understand the experiences of both men and women in society and across cultures (Hetherington, 1993: 267). Moser highlights that men and women take on, and therefore carry, different responsibilities. In most low-income societies women tend to perform the triple role of: (1) reproductive, (2) productive and (3) community managing activities. Men, on the other hand, primarily undertake productive and community politics activities (Moser, 1993: 230).

In the reproductive role, women are responsible for child-bearing and domestic tasks. This includes not only biological reproduction, but also the care of the present workforce (their male partner) and the future workforce (their children). This role
suggests that women need basic services in order to better care for their children and partners. If these services are not delivered, it affects their private lives which may lead them to organise a protest (Moser, 1993: 230). The productive role refers to “the work done by both men and women for pay in cash or in kind”. It includes both market production with an exchange-value and potential exchange value (Moser, 1993: 230). Community managing activities are “activities undertaken primarily by women at the community level, as an extension of their reproductive role to ensure the provision and maintenance of the scarce resources of collective consumption, such as the collection of water, and it is voluntary unpaid work” (Moser, 1993: 230). The community politics role, finally, refers to “activities taken primarily by men at the community level, organising at the formal political level, often within the framework of national politics. This is usually paid work, either directly or indirectly, through status or power” (Moser, 1993: 230). It’s these different responsibilities in society that lead to women being active in politics because of the dynamics at home which tend to be political in their nature.

2.3 A History of Women’s Activism and Protest in South Africa

Women have always been a part of narratives of protest from the earliest histories of resistance against colonialism, to the climactic stages of apartheid in the latter half of the 20th century. Cherryl Walker’s (1982) Women and Resistance in South Africa and Julia Wells’s (1993) We Now Demand: The History of Women’s Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa provide ample evidence of these cases.

Protests took place because the role of women in the economy, in social life and in politics was severely restricted. Their position as black women, wives, and mothers denied them full and equal participation in private and public spaces. Poverty, patriarchy and racial discrimination conspired to make the lives of women hell, and it came as no surprise that African women naturally felt compelled to take matters into their own hands by organising so that they could deal with the issues that affected them directly. In the beginning women’s organising within the trade unions and the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) was not taken seriously and did not seem promising as they were stereotyped as being apolitical and domestic (Walker, 1982: 20-67).
One major site of protest was the fight against pass laws. This should come as no surprise since pass laws tended to touch the “nation, community and household”. Pass laws date back to the beginning of the nineteenth century when the Caledon Code was introduced in the Cape Colony in 1809 to limit the Khoisan’s servants of their movement (Wells, 1993: 5). The system was expanded in order to apply to ex-slaves. The pass as a labour device carried details of expected work duration, employer’s identity and compensation terms. After the discovery of minerals in the latter half of the 19th century in Kimberley and Johannesburg the pass system evolved and took on different forms, later to be euphemistically known as influx control. The overall plan was to tightly regulate the lives of contracted black workers since Africans were numerically superior to whites.

Ironically, black women were not included in the pass laws before the 1890s. This indicates the way in which women were largely invisible and non-existent in the colonial world. It was the male world which mattered. Furthermore, the presence of women in cities would have caused Africans to put down roots and settle in urban areas. In order for cities to remain “white”, women had to be kept out of urban areas. The accidental discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 also led to the accidental (that is, unplanned) pulling in of black women into the male colonial world. While the deep gold mines needed cheap male African labour, the gold rush had increased the population of whites in Johannesburg and surrounding areas. The population explosion created its own economic pull, which drew African women into the cities. As we earlier noted, poverty and drought was a push factor necessitating the migration of women to the cities. Women’s resistance against pass law reflects the unbearable conditions that came with the system which affected both their private and public lives. In 1952, legislation introduced pass provision for women, stating who was and was not allowed to live and work in the urban areas. For Wells, women chose to resist because the restrictive laws began to directly affect the sacred place of their private homes and families. Black women had rarely taken a break from their traditional roles as homemakers, mothers and wives, but Apartheid was to cause a major change to that history (Wells, 1993: 4-9).

Wells (1993) examines three case studies to show not only how the pass law affected the lives of women but also why this led to protests. The first case she looks at is
Bloemfontein. In 1913 African women over the age of sixteen were required to be in possession of residential passes which had to be purchased every month at a cost of one shilling. Labourers were required to report to the Native Pass Office within three days of beginning and ending a job. It was compulsory to obtain a pass each and every month which was dreary and costly as people could be stopped at any time and be asked to produce them. Getting a pass meant standing in a long queue for hours or a couple of days otherwise one could get expelled from entering the city. These residential permits, laundry permits and service books limited women’s freedom of movement and also made it difficult to reside in the city. The municipal authorities argued that it was necessary to apply the pass law to women in order to help fight against illegal prostitution and beer brewing. It was clear, however, that the pass law was applied to women as well in order to regulate domestic services and to jail those who broke the contract (Wells, 1993: 24-29).

Fed up with this situation, women started strategising to oppose the passes. They circulated petitions around the villages and towns of the Orange Free State, then sent female delegates to Cape Town to question and petition the government officials about women’s passes. They handed over five thousand signatures on the petition which demanded a short term immediate relief from the system that caused the oppression and inferiority of women. The officials instead responded heavy-handedly, arresting many of the women. On the afternoon of May 1913 they held a mass meeting in the location of Waaihoek and came to a conclusion that the only way of getting rid of passes was passive resistance. The women got rid of their passes and waited for the authorities’ next move.

Upon being told that there was nothing that the officials could do about the law and being warned to desist from defiance, the women proceeded to Waaihoek and surrounded the police station, tore up their passes and threw them on the ground. They told the police that they would rather suffer the untold pain and imprisonment than carry passes. As a sign of determination, they wore blue ribbons to show their struggles and that they did not want to carry passes. Eventually women faced imprisonment, and the State Native and the Coloured Women’s Association sent a petition to the Governor-general of South Africa urging him to resolve the issue. In March 1914, the Prime Minister requested an investigation into the pass law
throughout South Africa and in June a draft Bill to Amend Pass Laws was produced. Even though in some towns the harassment that came with pass laws was reduced, women continued to suffer economic pressures placed on them by municipal officials (Wells, 1993: 31-49).

The Potchefstroom case study was different to that of the Orange Free State due to there being a surplus of labour instead of shortage. Though the monthly fee payments for permits affected both men and women in similar ways, it was the women who initiated and led the resistance. Though it was not just a “women’s struggle”, it was a resistance led by women who could no longer bear being at the margins of the complex interrelations between race, class and gender (Wells, 1993: 66-67).

In Johannesburg, black women were denied opportunities of employment because of racial and gender discrimination. Put simply, authorities were opposed to them coming into the city. In 1930, the Pact government had accepted the movement of black women into the city on condition that they were joining their husbands or father who has been working for two consecutive years and had “proper” housing. To further restrict women in the city, a provision was made that women who entered the city for the first time should possess a certificate from the authorities in her district indicating that she had been given permission to leave in the first place. When they arrived in Johannesburg, African women discovered that most people in this “land of opportunity” lived below the poverty line. The generalised poverty amongst urban Africans spurred the women to start welfare organisations from the 1930s onwards to help alleviate poverty. Ironically, this was also the time of the First Carnegie report on “Poor Whites”. While the government was instituting policy to eliminate poverty among whites, it was doing so by making blacks poorer. From the 1930s onwards African women in urban areas had to deal with increased poverty as the low wages of African workers increasingly subsidised poor whites.

One of the biggest problems was the shortage of housing. Women managed to get the city council to build breeze-block houses with water and sanitation services at low cost. Tenants paid five shillings a month for rent. The increase in the numbers of African men and women in the city alarmed the authorities. In 1950 the Population Registration Act, which required men and women of all races to have identity
documents was passed. In 1952 the law required Africans to have special permits in order to be in an urban area for no more than 72 hours. At the same time, women belonging to various organisations, including the just formed ANC Women’s League (ANCWL), held conferences to discuss their rights and the full participation of women in the economy. In 1958, women of all races, though predominantly black, participated in what is described as one of the most dramatic protests in the history of South Africa: the women’s anti-pass march to the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

In all three case studies, the use of the pass not only interfered with the lives of African women, but made their lives impossible, leaving them no other option but to resist. Oppression was more likely to become the last straw if it made the lives of women untenable because of the intersectional nature of their burdens: gender, race, and class. Oppressed men could always be shielded by women at home. As we saw in the study by Lee (2009), women often found ways to make ends meet. The studies by Walker (1982) and Wells (1993) are important in this regard because they show women as the imbokodo. If one struck a woman, they struck a rock. The perceived weakness of Walker and Wells’ monographs, as with much of the historiography of South African women, however, is that they are by white women writing about black women’s experiences. This is a weakness that has not been completely addressed. Rarely have black women written about their own experiences.

It is clear that women were not passive at all during the anti-apartheid struggle. Women have been an integral part of resistance actions, such as the boycotts against fare increases in 1943 and 1944 in Alexandra Township, or the shantytown movement in 1944 and 1947 for the right to housing in Cape Town and Crossroads. The visibility of women in protests from the 1950s to the 1990s ebbed and flowed, with there being fewer protests led by women in the post-1960s period. Seekings (1991) suggests that the reason why women seemed to be less involved in the protests of the 1980s compared to the 1950s was because women were denied systematically the opportunities to lead. Again, the fact that women were still legally treated as minors made them seem less visible as they could not own homes or even legally stay in them. They were not wanted in the cities. Nevertheless, invisibility in leadership positions did not prevent women from participating in organising (Seekings, 1991: 79). Basically, women were active in the very places where civic organisations start
(Seekings, 1992: 79) and played an important role in organising street and yard committees. The purpose of street committees was varied but broadly served to unite the people and offer them a space to debate collective solutions to their problems. They also encouraged discipline, served to conscientise the people about the struggle and fostered democracy (Jochelson, 1988: 138). There was evidence of this during the carrying out of this study since AbFP have continued to make extensive use of street committees to represent each section in Freedom Park. Each committee holds its own meeting and the needs of each section are represented in the leadership meeting.

Struggles over housing intensified in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Gasa, 2007). In Soweto, for instance, most people rented in the backyards which eventually became an unbearable struggle. A group of homeless people, mainly women in Dobsonville built themselves shacks because they felt exploited as tenants. It is stated that women built the shacks on purpose so that they could draw attention to the difficult situation faced by the homeless (Meintjes, 2007: 347). The Dobsonville town clerk, Tony Roux acquired a court order that allowed him to get rid of the squatters because the settlement was declared illegal. On the 12 July 1990, when the Soweto Municipal Police together with the South African Police came to evict people, they were in possession of teargas, dogs, casspir and a bulldozer. As they were evicting them and dismantling their shacks, the younger female shack dwellers “stripped off their clothes, taunted the police, ululated, shouted in anger about their plight and their pain, sang and danced, and held up printed placards demanding homes and security or tenure” (Meintjes, 2007: 347). It was also noted that during the protest men were very few, and were bystanders (ibid).

Lack of proper housing was not the only struggle that African women were facing in the 1980s and 1990s. African women in sports also protested against racial discrimination and exclusion (Pelak, 2009: 99). In the 1990s when the national netball players were selected, black players were not included and thus they protested because they perceived this to be racial discrimination. In response to the protest, the leaders of netball implemented affirmative policies to increase black women’s participation and influence. In 1999, a more diverse executive committee was formed after an African woman was appointed as president (Pelak, 2009:103)
After the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was introduced, women did not apply for amnesty and in 1996 the new constitution introduced women’s rights and gender equality (South African History Online, 2015). However, women continue to live in poverty and deal with multiple injustices. African women continue to join SMOs and make use of a variety of strategies and tactics to have their issues addressed in the new democracy. “The private sphere remains the most serious obstacle to realising the public victories of democracy” (Fish, 2009: 150). Almost exactly twenty years after democracy, the women of Diepkloof, Soweto made use of the “bare bum” strategy to communicate their grievances to the officials. On the 11 June 2014, women revealed their buttocks to the passing motorists and police on the main road Chris Hani, as a way of expressing their anger at not receiving proper sanitation (IOL news, 2014). Ngwane argued in the article that the lady, Hlongwane, whose picture went viral, bared her body publicly as a way to show that she “felt socially and economically exposed and vulnerable”.

In January 2016 women were seen again baring their bodies in a protest. A group of about 16 women from the ANC in Pretoria bared their buttocks at their branch offices to protest against unfair treatment within the committee (Dispatch Live, 2016). Women claimed that they were denied participation in the voting process to elect a new branch committee. When they were escorted out by armed bouncers, they were groped and slapped on their buttocks in the process (Dispatch Live, 2016). Even though literature on protests post-1994 does not distinguish between the male and female protests, women tend to suffer the injustices of lack of service delivery the most. It should come as no surprise that they do most of the grassroots organising in the new social movement organisations, street committees and in protests. Authors such as Benson (2015), Miraftab (2006) and Pointer (2004) have looked at women’s activism, social movements and participation in the new democracy.

Women mobilise for various reasons and their actions are framed in terms of various identities whether as workers, students, Africans or by race (Hassim, 2006: 350). At the community level, many women are part of social movements that have emerged in order to fight against poor service delivery. They also address a number of issues even though they lack resources. For Hassim (2006: 361), the new social movements that have emerged since 1994 tend to rely on women’s mobilisation for basic needs
such as land, electricity and housing but have not paid attention to how these issues relate to a gendered division of labour. Social movements such as Anti Privatisation Forum (APF) and Mandela Park Anti Eviction Campaign (MPAEC) have more women than men, yet men are more dominant and women’s voices are poorly represented (Hassim, 2006; Pointer, 2004).

Women have also formed their own social movements without men since 1994 to fight against poor service delivery and recognition. Some of them include the National Women’s Council, Crossroads Women’s Power Group (WPG) and Sikhala Sonke, just to name a few. “The National Women’s Council together with various organisations fought for the inclusion of women and their interests in the early 1990 negotiations which led to the laws and formal structures of the 1994 political settlement and to the 1996 constitution; as a result the number of women’s participation in formal government went up” (Miraftab, 2006: 204). WPG emerged in 1997 when the show houses of the first post-apartheid units were completed and the service fees were announced. Women were not pleased with the size of the houses and organised themselves to invade the City Council offices to address grievances and participated in protest actions. The women, however, were let down by council officials. They were told that they were confused and did not understand how local government works (Benson, 2015). Sikhala Sonke was formed in 2002 in the Western Cape, it defines itself as a “women-led social movement trade union”, and its focus is on the livelihood challenges that are faced by women farmworkers (Anciano, 2012: 146). The trade union goes beyond just addressing issues that affect women and children to focus on their socio-economic development needs and challenge unfair labour practice (ibid). Women’s role in social movements and protests should be recognised more, as the above examples illustrate.

2.4 Protest in South Africa

South Africa is acknowledged by some to be the “protest capital of the world” (Alexander, 2010; Matlala and Benit-Gbaffou, 2012: 209). Duncan (2016) has referred to South Africa as a “protest nation” because of the way protests dominate politics, society and discourse. Though there is no definitive history of protests in South Africa, there is a plausible case to be made for tracing popular protests to the apartheid era.
Apartheid was more or less universally unpopular in the eyes of ordinary South Africans, generating a common cause and discontent which frequently manifested in outbreaks of protest. As apartheid reached its nadir in the 1980s, such outbreaks became more frequent, leading to the declaration of a state of emergency. Since 2004, however, there has been a new wave of protests (Alexander, 2010; Duncan, 2016), and evidence suggests that popular protest in South African communities has increased exponentially since then (Von Holdt et al, 2011).

Protest is a tactic that people use to show discontent at the slow delivery of basic services (Goebel, 2011:371). It is often the last resort that a collective considers when they fail to receive change through formal means (Cook et al, 1995). Alexander (2015) has defined protest as popular mobilisation in support of a collective grievance. There is even a school of thought that regards protests as a form of communication that people use to address their grievances (Alexander, 2010; Ngwane, 2011). Recently, Duncan (2016) has referred to protest as an expressive communicative act. In some sense, this definition is apt given the newsworthy nature of protests which often appear in the media and apply pressure to public officials. Duncan (2016: 142) refers to the fascination of the media with protest, particularly when it is violent, as “riot porn”.

Popular protests in South Africa are explained by the press as being the result of people’s discontent at the slow, corrupt and inefficient “delivery” of basic services such as housing and sanitation (Alexander, 2010; Ngwane, 2011). This discontent is framed as being at its most salient in disadvantaged communities, many of which are identified as informal settlements (Goebel, 2011: 371).

In the post-apartheid era, three distinct phases of protest movements have been identified (Ngwane, 2011). The first phase took place between the mid-to-late 1990s, energised by dissatisfaction with “services” from the municipality, housing and the lack of infrastructure. The second phase occurred in the early 2000s. This phase is connected with the rise of the new social movements, such as the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC). The third phase is the current wave of protest action which includes community protests and militant national strikes. Alexander and Pfaffe (2014), however, have distinguished between workers’ protest and the protest of the poor. Worker’s protest primarily focuses on working conditions; the organising happens in the work place and does not involve those without employment. The poor, on the other
hand, may organise for the community as a whole, including workers. Protests also appear to show recognisable characteristics in terms of organisation, causes of grievances, demographics and tactics. It is common, for instance, for protests to be organised from within poor communities, for protesters to give the reason for protesting as a lack of “service delivery”, and for the methods of protest to include the burning of tyres and barricading of roads. In this regard, a service delivery protest is much more likely to happen in Alexandra Township than in Sandton, for instance.

“Service delivery” as a cause of protest is often associated with a general failure of local government. In particular terms, it is associated with the failure of local government to timeously and adequately provide “basic services”, such as sanitation, drainage, sewage, water, electricity and street lights, as well to eradicate corruption, nepotism and incompetence (Langa and Kiguwa, 2013; Booysen, 2007). Alexander and Pfaffe (2014) add that failure to “deliver” has led to the proliferation of other demands relating to housing, the quality of roads, electricity pricing and disconnections, schooling and the proper demarcation of local councils. A general assumption is that what often causes protests is the fact that community members have little choice but to demonstrate publicly after having waited a long time to have their grievances addressed by local government. There appears to be consensus in scholarly literature on protest around the view that social struggles in South Africa are motivated by government’s failure to deliver on basic services and government policies (Ballard et al, 2006: 2).

Part of the rationale for this study is in fact to find out whether the reasons for “service delivery” protest are merely limited to “basic services”. Can people not simultaneously protest for other things as well? Friedman (1997) has questioned whether receiving a particular service from the government necessarily makes one’s quality of life better. I am also not at ease with the blanket-definition of “service delivery protest”. For instance, the moniker “service delivery protest” is not always the term of choice for all scholars writing on this subject. Other scholars have referred to protests, rather, as “the rebellion of the poor” (Alexander, 2010; Benjamin, 2012).

Protests, whether for service delivery or other issues, appear to be a form of generalised demand for recognition from the state (Friedman, 1997; Pithouse, 2008).
They are taken to be a reflection of South Africa’s economic and political problems, particularly issues of development and democracy (Ngwane, 2011). Indeed, community protests are interpreted as a “form of insurgent citizenship in which citizens who feel excluded in the new democratic dispensation are forcefully demanding to enjoy full rights of citizenship to have access to work opportunities and to all basic services as enshrined in the Constitution” (Langa and Kiguwa, 2013: 21). When the government fails to respond efficiently or in time to the chronic problems bedevilling poor people, and when attempts to draw attention to these problems are rebuffed, frustrated and ignored, public protests are resorted to, often in desperation. There is evidence that protests have more or less been successful in drawing public attention and getting services “delivered” (Alexander, 2010). Violence is often explained by protesters as a justifiable way to make the government responsive (Von Holdt, 2014: 136).

The nature of the post-2004 popular protests are the subject of scholarly introspection. What sort of political phenomenon are these protests? Are they an alternative politics; or an alternative to politics? Are they even political? To begin with, the subjects of protest seem to be generally economic in nature. In anti-apartheid protests, part of the motivation of black people was to bring down the political system of apartheid and replace it with an electoral democracy for all. The fact that the protests are considered to be part of citizens’ democratic rights would suggest that the protests are not motivated by a need to dismantle the political system as such, as was the case in popular anti-apartheid struggles, but, rather, by a limited scope of needs that are currently being frustrated. Matters concerning a change of government are generally left to peaceful means in the form of voting and elections. There are others, however, who regard contemporary protests not only to be “an alternative to formal democratic channels such as voting” (Paret, 2015: 108) but also to be an extension of struggles for equity that were waged during the apartheid era. For instance, the violence in protests is attributed to unresolved problems carried over from the apartheid era, particularly since the violence is mostly limited to disadvantaged communities (Langa and Kiguwa, 2013). For other scholars, protests do not provide an alternative to politics, but are themselves actually a component of politics (Lodge and Mottiar, 2015). People mobilise and create their own spaces where they are be able to address issues to their relative satisfaction.
Protests take a variety of forms including marching, barricading the roads, looting, toyi-toyiing, and burning of tires (Alexander, 2010). Different tactics are favoured for different issues and circumstances. For instance, the early stages of a problem are characterised by more peaceful means of demonstrating discontent, such as petitions and meetings. On the other hand, burning tyres and barricading roads are favoured to escalate issues and for confronting endemic service delivery failures and lack of political accountability. Workers appear to favour strikes, marching, and demonstrating. Students appear to employ strikes, boycotts, marches, vandalism and disruption (Alexander, 2010). Scholars distinguish between peaceful protests, disruptive protests and unrest, with a general distinction being made between violent and non-violent protests (Karamoko and Jain, 2011; Paret, 2015).

Are protests always violent? Paret (2015) posits that protests are not only growing in numbers, but are also growing in violence. Between 2004 and 2008 peaceful protests declined while the violent and disruptive protests increased (Paret 2015?). However, the sense that protests are always violent is partly cultivated by media outlets that focus more on the form and content of violent protests (Duncan, 2016; Paret, 2015). Duncan (2016) argues that the perception that protests are always violent is not only a creation of the media, but feeds into the discourse which justifies police brutality and government suppression and interference with the right to protest. In reality, citizens often make efforts to communicate their grievances peacefully before resorting to disruptive protest. This type of “if-it-bleeds-it-leads” reporting leaves out some of the important information about what really goes on in communities, leading to the impression that poor people tend to exclusively use violence in order to make their voices heard. There is evidence that many peaceful protests remain unreported for not being “newsworthy” (Duncan, 2014 in Mail & Guardian; 2016). Paret (2015: 111), in a study that examined actions that were described as violent in four major newspapers from 1 January 2014 to 30 June 2014, which included a total of eighty five articles, found that the term “violent” is vaguely defined, if at all. In these articles, “violence” did not relate to any particular action but tended to describe all protests in general. That is, there was an incorrect and unwarranted conflation of protest with violence. In reality, the two are vastly different. In South Africa protest is a constitutional right, protected under the Regulation of Gatherings Act.
That said, there seems to be some evidence that disruptive and violent protests are being resorted to more and more, not only due to their perceived success but also due to the fact that local government indifference is entrenched (Duncan, 2016). AbFP, for instance, have resorted to confrontational protest methods to get the attention of the local authorities. Statements such as the one below are quite common:

On the 19th of July 2014 frustrated by the lack of response by the Councillors of both ward 24 and 119, we decided to embark on a mass protest against electricity cut off in our community with the hope of getting the necessary attention of those responsible to address our electricity needs (Hukwe and Mahlamvu, 2015).

For Von Holdt (2014), violence in protests is the result of a system that has failed its citizens. Paret (2015) and Von Holdt (2014) each also contend that it is democracy itself that is failing people, a state of affairs that ultimately ends in violence. The existence of extreme levels of poverty and inequality in a democracy ought to be untenable. That such extreme levels of poverty and inequality are tolerated and even perpetuated in a democracy is a root cause of desperation, frustration and violence. Democracy in theory “promises a government that represents citizens and is responsive to them” (Von Holdt, 2014). When there is no response, then violence becomes an alternative language that is used to communicate anger and urgency to officials (Von Holdt, 2014). The continual rise of unemployment, inequality, poverty, ecological degradation, abuse of women and children, crime and xenophobic attacks are taken as signs not just of the loss of the vision of the “Rainbow Nation” but also of the violence of democracy itself (Bond and Mottiar, 2013: 283).

A large corpus of literature now exists on service delivery protests in South Africa (Ballard et al, 2006; Bond and Mottiar, 2013; Friedman, 1997; Langa and Kiguwa, 2013; Paret, 2015; Runciman, 2012; Von Holdt, 2014). The tendency, however, is to focus on the protest as a public, collective, community event. Little attention is paid to the individuals who are involved in these protests (Langa and Kiguwa, 2013). A constant concern is lack of genuine consultation over the individual needs of the poor. There is an assumption in policy making circles that all poor people are the same and need the same services at the same rate. This assumption has perpetuated the official tendency to throw money at a problem or wait passively for it to go away.
Government not only appears to have limited knowledge about its citizens, but tends to treat them paternalistically (Friedman, 1997). This tendency appears to have increased with the adoption of neoliberal approaches by the ANC government, particularly when it adopted the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy whilst drawing away from the Reconstruction and Development Programme (Ngwane, 2011).

2.5 Conclusion

The literature explored in this chapter examines the history of the lives of women in various locations in South Africa. It has provided a general background of their lives, upbringing and their participation in protests by referring to various scholars who acknowledge their contribution to improving the living conditions of black people. This literature is valuable for this research in providing a general understanding of women’s lives in disadvantaged communities. As the ones who consume basic services on behalf of their entire families there is an identifiable need for them to protest. Thus literature on women’s protests is viewed in a positive light. Scholars who write on popular protests tend to focus on the needs of basic services and struggles around them and not the daily lives of individuals, including women. Chapter three provides a theoretical framework that focuses on the daily lived experiences, as well as the role of space, in women’s lives.
CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter constitutes the theoretical framework of the study. It presents a triangulated set of theoretical frames against which the subject of women’s lives in Freedom Park can be understood in relation to protest and non-protest. These frames draw on notions of “space”, “the public” and “the private”, and “the invited” and “the invented”, respectively. The kind of protest action in which women participate in Freedom Park seems to not only utilise space in a variety of ways, but also cuts across both the public and private realm. The chapter therefore argues that the concepts of the invited and invented spaces of participation should not only focus on the public sphere where people are trying to bring change, but should also focus on the private lives of women as well. In the existing literature, these concepts are largely understood in the public realm where the most visible and accessible activities occur.

This chapter looks at the different forms of space, for example the invented and invited spaces, as well as the social and the physical space. The public and private uses of spaces in Freedom Park are complex and appear to reflect gendered aspirations to move from marginality to a more fulfilling humanity. Marginality itself is a complex site of deprivation, radical possibility and a space of resistance (Hooks, 1990: 341). To be on the margins means “to be part of the whole but outside the main body” (Hooks, 1990: 341).

Protest action by women, as a form of public participation (Booysen, 2009) makes use of marginality to reduce marginality. Through protesting women may “find alternatives to elusive formal channels of access through “inventing” their own spaces and eliciting “highly visible” redress from senior politicians” (Lodge and Mottiar, 2015: 2). Emergence from the margins facilitates participation, which in turn brings about “empowerment” (Cornwall, 2002: 2), a process for helping the marginalised “recognise and exercise their agency” (Cornwall, 2004: 77). One of the aims of participation is that radical projects that seek to engage with underlying processes of “social change” must also be aimed specifically at securing full citizenship, rights and participation of
marginal or dispossessed groups (Hickey and Mohan 2004, cited in Sinwell, 2010). Participation elicits spaces for genuine involvement to take place for people who are habitually denied opportunities (Cornwall, 2004: 77).

3.2 Theorising the “Spaces” of Women

This section theorises the notion of “space” in relation to women who protest. It considers in some depth the notions of “invited” and “invented” space (Miraftab, 2006) and relates them to how participants of the study in Freedom Park use such “space”. Research has continued to suggest, on the one hand, that women suffer from being fixed to home, hearth and domesticity (Rothman, 1978) and, on the other hand, that public and open spaces are perilous spaces for women (Day, 2001; Nager and Nelson-Shulman, 1980; Mozingo, 1989). Day, in an article titled “Constructing Masculinity and Women's Fear in Public Space in Irvine, California” (2001), says that while the general sense of fear that many women have in public spaces is a result of factors such as race, age, gender and life circumstances, for most black women it reflects histories of racial domination by white men, and hyper-sexualisation, often by white men and women but also by black men. What also promotes fear in public spheres are social factors such as overly protective actions to “protect” women in the public spaces.

Space is not just a flat surface that people walk on. Rather, it is a place where we live our lives, make connections with each other and create our stories (Massey, 2013). Space is not only a physical but also a social territory whereby challenges of power take place. Scholars have distinguished between the social and the physical spaces of power, and have suggested that it’s important to understand the concept of space as it provides an understanding of participatory processes (Sinwell, 2009: 82). Social space is a participatory space which refers to “a dynamic, humanely constructed means of control and hence of domination, of power” (Lefebvre 1974: 24). In Freedom Park there are street committees and a SMO that functions as a social space created by people as they don’t have control over the dominant forms of physical or social space created by municipal officials. The way that things are arranged is referred to as the physical space. This space is important in terms of power relations but power alone cannot be reduced to space (Massey, 2013).
For Bozzoli (1999) what made the township of Alexandra so memorable was its “feel of decay” (1999: 3). Rubbish was never collected, it piled up and it stank. Raw sewerage flowed down the streets. In Alexandra each major house had multiple one-roomed shacks in the yard. There was literally no space left anywhere. Alexandra’s was an ironic space. For instance, there was no employment within the township’s spaces even though it was surrounded by factories nearby. Over time, space develops a different meaning to those who inhabit it from those who rule. Cultural meanings and identities are created within the space and hold a deep meaning to specific parts of the space. With no physical space to expand to, residents made collective memories in areas such as squares, the stadium, church, club premises and at schools. Indeed, for people living in the township the space and its smells became normal to them. It is struggles such as these which may lead people to create their own invented spaces of participation which allows them to share their grievances.

3.3 Invited and Invented Spaces

This study draws on Miraftab’s notions of the invited and the invented spaces to discuss the everyday lives of women living in an informal settlement. Invited and invented spaces refer broadly to participatory spaces of citizenship whereby people engage and participate in politics to discuss how to deal with the social struggles. Participatory spaces as “social arenas in which the community has the potential to have an impact on policies, discourse and practices of development” (Sinwell, 2009: 439) can be divided into invited and invented spaces. Invited and invented spaces are distinct in important ways, even though they both refer to social spaces where people are allowed to participate. Invited spaces are defined as being “occupied by those grassroots actions and their allied non-governmental organisations that are legitimised by donors and government interventions” (Miraftab, 2006: 195). Invented spaces, on the other hand, are defined as being “occupied by those collective actions by the poor that directly confront the authorities and challenge the status quo” (Miraftab, 2006: 195).

The salient difference between invited and invented spaces is that within the invited spaces there are formal structures that are created by the government and formal authorities, whilst in invented spaces there is a great deal of informality. Both the
invited and the invented spaces give people the opportunity to participate, but in the invented spaces there is a re-making of space from below. Cornwall (2002) argues that the invited space is a space where those who are marginalised literally get “invited” to participate in issues to do with development, democracy and social justice. This form of participation takes place, for instance, when people are invited to vote or a government official invites them for a community meeting. It is plausible to argue that the most visible form of invited spaces in South Africa are the ones offered by the ward committees, imbizos and development forums.

In invented spaces, citizens decide for themselves how to deal with issues that directly affect them. This “space emerges when residents mobilise collectively with the intention of exerting power over the development processes” (Sinwell, 2009: 441). Unlike the invited space, the invented space is autonomously created at the grassroots level (Sinwell, 2010: 67). For instance, when government is not responsive to its citizens, they may decide to get involved in a public protest to draw government’s attention. Ngwane (2011) has argued that invented spaces emerge in opposition to participation in invited spaces which fall within the framework of preconceived neoliberal plans. Literature on participation in South Africa suggests that the ANC’s managerial approach to development does not allow citizens to participate fully in shaping processes (Miraftab, 2006; Ngwane, 2011).

The adoption of “neoliberal policies has often been associated with a top-down approach that undermines people’s participation in development” (Sinwell, 2010). The fact that citizens are presented with few choices in a neoliberal order motivates them to take matters into their own hands as they create their own spaces for change to voice their grievances. Poor people’s choices in the physical spaces about where to live, where to send their children to school, what to eat, and so on, are constrained. This forces them to mobilise and invent their own spaces. The invented spaces may also be understood as resulting from the failure of the invited spaces. Because of their informality, invented spaces may contain both activists and non-activists networked to one another (Stoecker, 1995). Invented spaces are social spaces that people create to bring change regardless of their position or political parties.
Another way to look at invited and invented spaces is to regard them as co-existing alongside one another. In such an account, the two spaces cannot be separated, but, rather, what happens in one space affects what happens in the other. The nature of this co-existence is reflected in the words of Booysen (2007) on the politics of service delivery in South Africa:

(T)he politics of service delivery in South Africa is both a top-down and a bottom-up process. From top-down perspectives, the government determines policy frameworks and mechanism of implementation, sets budgets and interprets mandates. Bottom-up perspectives illuminate the struggles of ordinary people for service (Booysen, 2007: 21).

There is mutual exchange involved. In the end, participation extends beyond making active use of invitations to participate, to “autonomous forms of action through which citizens create their own opportunities and terms of engagement” (Cornwall, 2002: 3).

In as far as they are co-existent, invited and invented spaces are defined by those who are invited into them and those who do the inviting. For instance in Freedom Park, AbFP is an invented space because they are the ones who request the officials to respond to their demands or seek their attention. Furthermore, neither the invited nor the invented spaces are ever neutral (Cornwall, 2004). Rather, there are always contradictions at play. These contradictions are often caused by hierarchies and inequalities within these spaces. As Sinwell (2009) notes, processes of participation are constrained, shaped and determined by power relations. In a way, participation is never a static process, but is constantly fluid and ever-changing.

This study will investigate the public and private lives of women and how these elements of their lives relate to the invented space. Is this theory adequate to the reality? Does the theory fit the reality? I will evaluate, firstly, how the women interact with and relate to invited spaces, particularly those made available by ANC councillors in Freedom Park and in the larger constitutional democracy of South Africa and, secondly, how the women invent their own spaces and why. Through this study I intend to test theory against reality, and to reflect on how the two modify and shape each other, if at all.
The literature on spaces of participation tends to focus mostly on the public domain where the most visible activities take place. The concepts of the invited and invented spaces are investigated by scholars, but have not yet been investigated thoroughly in the private spaces of people’s homes. For instance, Bonnin (2010) explores links between the private and public by looking at women’s political involvement in ensuring safety in their area in Mpumalanga Township, KwaZulu Natal (KZN). The research shows that women who are involved in protests are strategic and they occupy both private and public spaces, but it doesn’t deal adequately with their daily lived experiences at home. Pointer (2004), also investigates women in the social movement MPAEC. Pointer addresses the fact that gender dynamics are not explored in social movement literature, and that this re-silences women in society, but she doesn’t indicate how the failure to explore the everyday lives of women may contribute to this re-silencing.

Miraftab (2006), on the other hand, argues that women do most of the grassroots work and are larger in numbers but they don’t get the credit they deserve in the AEC social movement in Cape Town. The above examples indicate that even though the lives of women are investigated within invented spaces or in their neighbourhoods, they still only focus on the public domain. The daily lived experiences of women in their private homes is neglected. Yet the most important work takes place there, as Miraftab (2006) has pointed out that politics does take place in the informal networks of the home. Social movement scholars also need to investigate the lives of activists at home as it has been argued by other authors that the private and public are interconnected. Neglecting to look at the private lives of people at home may also be problematic in that it can continue to separate the private from the public, which is important if we are to understand women’s activism more fully.

### 3.4 Social Movements

One way to define invented spaces is to categorise them under the rubric of *social movements*. Della Porta and Diani (2006: 20) state that the characteristics of social movements are that they are “involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents, are linked by the dense informal networks, they share a distinct collective identity.” This definition distinguishes social movements from other related concepts.
such as political parties or interest groups (Runciman, 2012: 30). In one definition, social movements are made up of an organised set of constituents pursuing a common political agenda of change over time (Batliwala, 2012: 3). In another, they can also be defined as “those organised efforts, on the part of excluded groups, to promote or resist changes in the structure of society that involve recourse to non-institutional forms of political participation” (McAdam, 1982: 25). Sinwell (2010) points out simply that social movements are an alternative space for participation of citizens. It can be gleaned from these definitions that social movements are organised yet informal bodies that are aimed at bringing change.

Historically, social movements were seen as “representing the new: new ideas, new politics, new organisations and new visions” (Ngwane, 2011: 27). This is because such movements emerged at precisely the junctures when social democratic parties and labour movements were struggling to find an adequate answer to neoliberalism’s systemic attack on the living standards of ordinary people (Ngwane, 2011). Movements, it appears, transpire when people become aware that they have a common problem, and find that they have to make means to change or make the situation better (Runciman 2011: 608). As such, movements have been framed as including characteristics or qualities such as togetherness and collective identity, social solidarity, and bringing and fighting for change. Social movement scholars seem to concur that these movements are good for democracy (Runciman, 2012; Sinwell, 2009; Miraftab, 2006).

Sinwell (2011: 62) has pointed out that movements are mostly concerned about getting services rather than challenging the state itself. He then makes an example of the APF in Alexandra, which sought to obtain housing opportunities in the Alexandra Renewal Project (ARP) without necessarily challenging the state. For Sinwell, this highlights that even the strong and militant movements tend to only seek services from the state rather than challenge it. In South Africa social movements have emerged due to the basic needs of services from the state, and when the government provides residents with these services it does not consult with them (Sinwell, 2011). Social movement scholars have paid little attention to the internal dynamics of movements and the state, as well as the alternatives they offer to neoliberalism. Runciman (2011) responds to Sinwell by arguing that the aim of new social movements like the APF is to pose critical
challenge to capitalism, privatisation and neoliberalism to the current development of the ANC. Sinwell’s (2012) response to Runciman (2011) is that her focus is on the APF’s organisational formation rather than the broader implications of their political trajectory.

Other social movement scholars distinguish between “social movement” and “social movement organisation”. Stoecker (1995) suggests that SMOs consists of a smaller number of people as compared to social movements which requires “greater commitment of time, risk and energy”. For le Roux (2014: 33) a SMO is a structure that assists the wheels of the social movement to turn. Social movements, on the other hand, consist of all the broader actions, people, networks, mobilisations, discussions and protests that take place and which themselves form the whole movement. SMOs adopt characteristics of a social movement in that they may share similar interests and goals. The SMO body deals with practical aspects of activism such as mobilising, discussion of daily struggles and engaging with authorities in order to achieve their common goal (le Roux, 2014: 33). It can be suggested that civics in the township are made up of SMOs and invented spaces of participation.

For Mayekiso (1996: 13), civics in the 1980s developed because of residents’ daily struggles and not because of apartheid or black local authorities. For him, residents would continue to be in need of civics to represent them even in a society that is democratic. Mayekiso warned that just because the ANC at the time seemed progressive, it did not necessarily mean that it would remain like that. He made a reference to Zimbabwe, a country that self-identified as socialist and whose president came into power as a “Marxist-Leninist”. In spite of these slogans, Zimbabwe was trapped because the economy was dictated by international financial institutions. Similarly, the ANC was bound to come into conflict with the working class as it was participating in a “mixed economy” which can be seen as a euphemism for continuing with an apartheid economy. Being in support of private property essentially clashes with the interests of the working class. If the ANC government was fully committed to the interests of the working-class it would allow for a working-class civil society to implement a progressive approach that will challenge the interests of capital to move from a mixed economy to a socialist economy (1996:149).
Most scholars who study social movements in which women are involved tend not to look at the singular experiences of women beyond the work of the movements themselves. Scholars have not looked at women’s experiences within the movements in their research (Bhattacharjya et al, 2013; Goebel, 2011; Runciman, 2012). This gap is expressed in the framing of the question of studying of social movements. The study of social movements, it is suggested, makes use of three aspects of analysis (McAdam et al, 1996):

The first considers political opportunities, wherein movements are understood within the broader set of political constraints and opportunities unique to the context in which they are placed. The second considers mobilising structures, i.e. those formal and informal collective vehicles through which people mobilise and engage in collective action. The third considers framing processes which essentially account for collective action: it is argued that ‘at a minimum people need to feel both aggrieved about some aspects of their lives and optimistic that, acting collectively, they can redress the problem (cited in Mottiar and Bond, 2011: 5)

This concept is often discussed without giving reference to women. Also, this gap tends to hide not just the subordination of women’s issues to the collective social justice agenda, but also processes that unwittingly elide the everyday experience and personal narratives of women. Just because it is a social movement with women in its ranks does not guarantee that the end result will benefit women. A study by Bhattacharjya et al (2013: 278) in the Middle East and North Africa indicates that even though women are active members in social mobilisation, it does not necessarily mean that “women’s rights and gender justice are priority areas for movements”. This is particularly the case where women face the double or multiple jeopardies of being female, oppressed and poor (Beal, 1970). Lemmer (1989: 30) argues that the place for women in South Africa is made complicated by the distinction of both race and sex. This situation is also sometimes referred to in feminist studies as “intersectionality” (Collins, 2000). In the next section I discuss intersectionality and its relation to this study. The usefulness of considering questions of agency and of drawing on women’s own narratives and stories will, hopefully, be made clearer by reflecting not only on the AbFP as a social movement organisation, but also on the individual women who define and shape it. I shall seek to explore how and why the women see themselves the way they do.
3.5 Intersectionality

The theory of intersectionality was pioneered and popularised by Crenshaw (1989). It was first propounded in her journal article “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex”, subtitled “A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics”. Intersectionality as a concept refers to multiple or compound disadvantages that come together to shape the lives and experiences of the oppressed, particularly black women. It is a mode of black feminist experiential readings of unequal and unjust societies that draws on texts, accounts and narratives by black women that throw light on the ways in which different forms of inequality come together (Grabham et al, 2009: 1) to burden and subordinate black women. These compound inequalities are derived from race, ethnicity, class, and gender (Dill and Zambrana, 2009: 3). When it comes to the situation of black women, it is possible to speak of the simultaneous and mutual co-constitution of experience shaped by these intersections, which are socially constructed (Lutz, Vivar and Supik, 2011: 2).

Historically, South African black women have had to contend with the triple oppression deriving from poverty, gender discrimination and racism (Lemmer, 1989: 31). Applying the lens of intersectionality to social movements will allow a reflection on the problems of solidarity, particularly between activists from within civil society who may or may not be white and who nevertheless live privileged lives far away from the daily grind of Freedom Park. Spending time with the participants of the study allowed me to experience for myself the kind of “intersectional” lives that the women live. As Hassim and Gouws have pointed out, everyone may have a constitutional right to participate, but the responsibilities of women in the private sphere and the social stereotypes of the roles of women in the public sphere tend to make it difficult and prohibitive for women to participate as equals in the public sphere (2007: 56). The theory of intersectionality helps to fill in the gaps that exist between what is seen in public and what is experienced intimately in private spaces.

3.6 The Public and the Private

The notions of the “public” and the “private’ are linked to the idea of “civil society”. Civil society is understood as a social sphere that is not affiliated with the state or the market. Civil Society Organisations (CSO) are thus non-state and voluntary
organisations created by people in a particular social sphere (World Health Organisation, 2001: 1). Certain versions of liberal democratic theory suggest that the public sphere is a privileged space where all citizens have equal rights, guided by the “modern values” of rationality and fairness. The private sphere, where the ideal of “privacy” is located, is protected by the constitution and is not supposed to be invaded.

As far as civil society is concerned, the modern democratic citizen enjoys participation in the public and the private spheres equally. Clearly, the liberal notion of citizenship is based on the idea of a public sphere that is distinct from the private sphere. Others, such as Bonnin (2010), however, argue against conceptualising the public and the private spheres “and spaces associated with them” as binary opposites. This splitting, Bonnin (2010: 303) argues, “denies their interconnectedness and simplifies their relationship.”

The dichotomy between the public and the private “is central to almost two centuries of feminism writing and political struggle” (Pateman, 1989: 118.) The dichotomy is traced to a Greek legend where spaces that human beings live in were divided in two. First is the public space, which is the visible male world called the Hermean. Second is the private space, which is the invisible feminine world called the Hestian. These dichotomies in spheres suggest that there are struggles of power, hierarchy, and gender going on, and that socially constructed views of men and women create expectations where women are usually responsible for taking care of the home while men are expected to be at “work” (Bergan, 2009: 220). The work that is done by women is not valued most of the time, sometimes derogatorily referred to as a “pastime” or hobby.

Women’s protests indicate that politics intersect with the private spaces. For instance, women in their private spaces have to go to the public to fight against the unpleasant living conditions at home for the benefit of their entire families. Also, when women were required to carry passes it meant that the police could perform body-searches on them which is an intrusion. Violating the law also meant that they could be detained, leaving children alone and vulnerable. The safety of their homes was threatened by the police when they raided homes, put children away into detention, and tear gas and shooting happened on the streets. For some, the gendered distinction of the private and public sphere legitimises the exclusion of women from particular spaces and
justifies inequalities in the economic and political power system. The gender and space relationship, as it has been suggested, goes beyond a simple binary between the public and the private, and it is consequently problematic to simply define them in such terms. There are various factors that determine the way in which individuals experience race, class and space (Massey, 1994: 2).

There is a connection between space and place with gender, and the way that gender is constructed in society. This is seen in the division of labour between genders. As Massey (1994: 126) states, "spaces and place, and our senses of them are gendered through and through". They are gendered in multiple ways, which differ between cultures and over time. The way that space and place are gendered not only reflects but affects the way that gender is both constructed and understood in society (1994: 186). For instance the theory of the private and public has suggested that women belong in the private and men in the public, and this affects the way that gender is understood in society both in the physical and social spaces.

The difference between the public and the private spheres as it has been defined has been criticised for the way that it excludes public participation (Hassim and Gouws, 1998). Firstly, understanding the public sphere as a sphere where all are free equals, away from the inequalities of the private sphere does not bring out the inequalities women have to deal with. Inequalities such as childcare, for example, influence their public participation and bring out issues of private inequalities and oppression. Under apartheid, middle class white families experienced their household as a private space whereas poorer black families did not experience any level of privacy. Some activists and researchers have shown that even though the private is associated with safety, women are likely to be abused in their homes by someone they know rather than by a stranger.

The ideal of an equal civil society and an equal citizenship is not without its critics. Some scholars argue, for instance, that the ability to participate in civil society is not equally shared (Britton and Fish, 2009). Thus:

(H)ad civil society theorists engaged more with the feminist problematisation of the public/private divide, they might have been better equipped conceptually to
explore how the family shapes norms and practices in the sphere of civil society, how gendered power relations pervade the spheres of state, market, civil society and family (Howell 2005: 4).

In a democratic society everyone is in principle equal before the law. If gender equality is enshrined in democracy, then the participation of women in civil society should ideally be recognised. In reality, people’s everyday lives are lived far away from these lofty ideals. In “real life”, therefore, women may be oppressed even when the constitution says that no one should be oppressed. Hassim and Gouws (2007: 55) have observed, for instance, that gender inequality is a problem even in liberal democracies.

It is a fact that civic affairs and political decision making are dominated by men. In fact, these spheres are highly differentiated not only by race and class, but also by gender (Britton and Fish, 2009). Pointer, in her research on new social movements, discovered that many of the women in the social movement of MPAEC did not participate because they were ignored most of the time. If they dared to say something that contradicted the most visible activists, they would not be called on again (2004: 275).

During apartheid, citizenship was a privilege of whites, with non-white races excluded from participation in national affairs by being denied the franchise, by influx and efflux controls, banning of political parties, and by systemic violence in a virtual police state. However, black men could at least count on the dubious “privilege” of being accorded visibility in the public space as cheap labour for creating wealth for whites in the cities. Black women, on the other hand, were completely invisible in the so-called “Labour Question”, or even the much larger “Native Question”. Both the “Labour Question” and the “Native Question” were about black men. Women were invisible, categorised alongside children and the old and infirm (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997).

Can we speak of the “public” and the “private” with regards to black people in South Africa? Generally, black people under apartheid had no privacy. Influx and efflux controls saw to it that the lives of black people were always under the microscope. In other words, the lives of black people were always public in the sense of always being under surveillance. The lives of black people were therefore public by default – a
“publicness” of humiliation. For black women, it was worse. The invisibility of many black women was regulated by the law which demanded that they be “endorsed-out” first to “reserves”, then to Bantustans and finally to “homelands”. In “white” areas, the invisibility of black women in public spaces was complicated by their subordination as domestics (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997). The domestic worker was an invisible appendage that existed in the private space (home) of whites without being meant to be seen. The public and private spheres, for her were not exactly known or standardly understood. Whereas a white middle-class South African family employing a domestic would be more likely to experience its home as private, for the black domestic worker the private household of the white family was a public sphere (Bonnin, 2010: 303).

The private sphere and public sphere do not just co-exist, but are also political and gendered. That is, people “not only confront, interpret and/or act on political events in terms of their class position or racial identity; their political behaviour is also shaped consciously or unconsciously by gender” (Hassim, 1991: 72). The private sphere is defined in terms of the home, family, and the domestic. In the case of women, it is a place where they belong because it is considered safe (Sadiqi and Ennaji, 2007:3; Hassim, 1991: 73).

The public sphere, on the other hand, is defined in terms of work and politics. Mostly, men visibly inhabit this sphere hence in protests it is men who are usually visible. Women, who often do most of the grassroots organising, are usually invisible. This sphere is regarded as intense, violent and dangerous, a factor which marginalises women because they are seen as vulnerable and weak. Men enter the private space when they have to fulfil needs such as providing for the family, relaxation and procreation. Women enter the public space when they walk on the streets, for instance, but without necessarily finding the space to express themselves freely. They are expected to do their “business” and go back to their sphere where they belong (Sadiqi and Ennaji, 2007). For Hassim (1991) it is patriarchy that creates a barrier between the two spheres.

Is South Africa a patriarchal society? A society that is patriarchal is defined in terms of the way that sexes are defined. For instance, “labour is divided into the male sphere of economic production” and the “female domain is anchored in the area of
reproduction and the preservation of domestic felicity” (Lemmer, 1989: 31). The work that women perform in the private sphere of their households is termed “reproductive labour” which means labour that is performed for the family (Disney, 2008: 21). Paid and unpaid labour globally is based on a sexual division of labour, whereby paid labour takes place in the public sphere of the market, dominated by men, and is considered to be productive. Unpaid labour, on the other hand, is performed mostly by women in the private sphere of the home and family, and is not considered to be productive. The work that the women do in their homes is not standardly considered as work because it is not wage labour. In as far as the mainstream economy is concerned, women are responsible for what may seem to be valueless activities associated with the household (Benston, 1989). South Africa, needless to say, fits this definition of a patriarchal society (Bonnin, 2010; Hassim and Gouws, 2007; Walker, 1990; Wells, 1993).

Women and men experience poverty differently. For women poverty tends to be more severe because it is women who bear the burden of having to take care of children in such conditions (Bentley, 2004: 247). Conditions of inequality, poverty, privatisation, and the state of the economy impinge strongly on gender inequalities, helping to “perpetuate the unequal treatment of women-in the home, the family and the mainstream economy” (Bentley 2004: 248). Many protest actions, of course, show that politics directly intrudes the private sphere. Bonnin (2010) refers to the historic existence of the pass law as an example of how this may happen. The pass law required that African women carry a pass at all times. Not adhering to this law could result in detention; and detention meant that children would be left alone and vulnerable. A second example would be the laws that made beer brewing illegal. These laws denied women the opportunity to make an income; and without an income families sunk deeper into poverty. Finally, the unexpected detentions of children and shooting in the streets put the whole fabric of the home and the family at risk. It is therefore important to discuss what goes on in the private sphere particularly because it is women who have to deal “privately” with the problems created in the public sphere.

3.7 Theorising the Home: Families we live “with” and families we live “by”

Weima (2012: 3) suggests that “we all have two families, one that we live with another we live by”. The first one is “the external”, the one that we live with and the second
one is “the internal” the one that we lived by, or rather the psychological. This means that one has two families that exist simultaneously. The two families are not binary oppositions; instead they are intertwined and they coexist. Also, they evolve over time. For Weima, her experience with her lived by family has gone through four different stages from a nuclear family, to a single-parent family, to a common law family and currently a step-parent family. Her internal family has also evolved over time as a psychological response to circumstances that confronted her lived with family. The concept of two families relates to women in Freedom Park as well. Their lived by families have evolved over time from various backgrounds to being mothers who have to take care of their households. As women who have the responsibility of taking care of the home, they have their notions of what an ideal family should live like. Weima (2012, 5) states that:

I believe that my internal lived by notions of an ideal family continually informed my perceptions about my lived with family. And because my internal lived by notions of family evolved more gradually, in response to my lived with family circumstances, differences have always existed between them.

Women in Freedom Park believe that a family should live in a house and not in a shack, with clean running water and electricity. When these things don’t happen, their lived by and lived with family are then in conflict. This is why they create invented spaces of participation whereby they come up with ways to bring change in their private spaces. The study by Corinne Nadine Hoag in collaboration with the Golden Triangle Community Crisis Committee (GOLCCOM) (2009) indicated that more than 63% of families live on less than R2000 per month, and over 80% live on less than R3000 per month. Female headed homes earn less than R1000 per month 47.7% of the time compared to only 28.6% of the time for male-headed homes. It also indicated that social grants make up a big portion of families’ monthly incomes (see appendix F for full research). These statistics drive home the realities of women in Freedom Park (Hukwe et al, 2014).

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has explored theories on the lives of women in both the public and private spheres. It provides an understanding of the roles and responsibilities that women take
on when they are at home and when they are in their organisations. The literature is thus valuable as it indicates that even though women do most of the work in both spheres, they are still marginalised. Various scholars have indicated the reasons for women not being recognised. They have also tended to discuss the concepts of the invited and the invented spaces through the lens of the public sphere, rather than extending these concepts to the private lives of women which are intimately linked to their daily activities. Benson (2015), Miraftab (2006), and Pointer (2004) have pioneered research on the lives of women in post-apartheid South Africa. These accounts are important in providing knowledge about how women are treated within these spaces and the contributions that they make.

It should not be clear that the private and public spaces are not binary opposites. Studies have rarely focused on how the two concepts intersect with one another, with exceptions such as Hassim (1991) and Miraftab (2006) who have noted and described the ways in which the formal and informal spaces that women occupy affect each other. Social spaces of people’s private lives intersect with the public because when living conditions in the private are unpleasant they often have to go to the public sphere to express their grievances. Also, invented spaces exist within the private homes of women as well, and not just in the public space emphasised by scholars. This research aims to look at the relationship between the two concepts by focusing on both the role of women at home, which has been defined as the private sphere, as well as their lives as activists, considered as the public sphere. The following chapter introduces the methods used to collect data in Freedom Park.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and describes how data was collected and analysed. The study explores how selected women living in an informal settlement organised their private and public lives at a time when the community was also involved in organising protests for social change and social justice. The private and the public lives of the women who are involved in public protests in South Africa has not been explored in an in-depth manner. Since a number of studies indicate that women do most of the grassroots organising (Walker, 1982; Wells, 1993; Seekings, 1992), it was necessary to spend time with the women in the private spaces of their homes as well as in public spaces, and to focus particularly on their participation in AbFP which was conceptualised as an invented space.

All the primary data was collected in Freedom Park. In order for me to explore the lives of women in both the public and private sphere, I made use of a mixed-method research design. A single method does not provide a richer answer to the research question and in a qualitative-driven project mixed methods are used to avoid limitations by providing multiple perspectives (Richards and Morse, 2007: 93). I used qualitative mixed methods which included interviews, focus groups and participant observation. The location, Freedom Park, was selected for a number of reasons. Firstly, the role of women in mobilisations in Freedom Park is pronounced. Secondly, the area has recently experienced “service delivery” protests on numerous occasions. Thirdly, Freedom Park has gone through what Tarrow (1998) calls “cycles of protest” whereby it has had moments when it was both strong and weak in terms of organising.

4.2 Entry to the Field

Doing research means that the one thing a person is relying on is herself. My study was partially ethnographic in nature. Ethnography means studying people in their natural setting or fields. The researcher is directly involved in the setting if not also in their activities in order to collect data (Bryman, 2001: ix). Ethnography may include participant observation, interviews and focus groups, and the purpose is to understand
people’s everyday lived experiences (Cook and Crang, 1995: 4). Doing participant observation means one is interacting with people on a daily basis. It is therefore important to make an effort when entering the field to understand not just oneself and one’s values but to have an awareness of the environment; only when one has this awareness can he or she make informed choices about what to look out for and how to behave (Angrosino, 2007: 28). There are personal factors which are under one’s control and can thus be modified (ibid). For me, it was putting on minimal makeup and dressing down. Freedom Park is a poor area where one does not need to become a spectacle by drawing too much attention to themselves. I also felt that a plain style, apart from indicating that I was in Freedom Park for a serious goal (not pleasure), endeared me to my hosts. I was also aware that I had no control over my age and gender, and maybe the people also saw me as one of the young black girls in their community.

In the beginning of my research I had my own ideas of what it was going to be like in the field, particularly because I had read about the importance of remaining objective and had listened to people’s experiences of how difficult it is to get people in communities to give one an interview. I started planning what I was going to do on my first day and how I was going to approach people in order to get them to want to talk to me. When I got to the field I realised how wrong I was to think that being strategic was to going to help me. However, getting to Freedom Park and allowing myself to get to know the research participants before conducting the actual research was the best strategy, although it wasn’t part of my plan. Bloor and Wood (2006: 87) warn against “the belief that the truth lies beneath waiting for the skilled researcher to access it”, and suggests the importance of building good relationships. While there is nothing wrong with planning every detail, my experience was that all the best laid plans often went out of the window the moment one stepped on the dusty ground of the township. The screams of the playing children, the shouts of the mothers, the loud music of the youths, the smoke from fires, the smell of cooking, and the general hustle and bustle of township life prevent you from staying on script. One learns to just play it by the ear. Furthermore, Bloor and Wood (2006) warn against the limitations of relying on a textbook when doing fieldwork and this approach suggests that it should be a one-way of extracting information that is done objectively and in a detached manner.
Freedom Park was a space that was quite familiar to me, having also grown up in a township, Orange Farm, where there are similar struggles particularly around housing. I therefore felt at ease: I was not a total stranger and there was no culture shock. Anyone who has ever lived eKasi (township) knows how to get around there. Luckily, I could draw on my knowledge of 'Kasi lingo and mannerisms. Like many children who grew up in a township, I can also speak Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa and Tswana, fluently. As such, I did not need a translator for either language or culture. Since it was like I was at home, I had to learn to step back and be mildly detached in order not to appear over-familiar. I concluded that you do not learn as much when you think you know a place and that you have got it figured out.

The first person that I spoke to was comrade Sipho and he introduced me to the other comrades. Activists in Freedom Park called each other comrades. On the day that I introduced myself to the female comrades and told them about the purpose of my research, I was a bit anxious because I already had my own perceptions about doing research in the community. Even though my research was not a pure form of community-based participatory research (CBPR), I adopted some of the principles of the method. Delemos (2006: 331) offers four primary goals of doing CBPR which are (1) conducting research in a reciprocal manner that is both mutually beneficial to researchers and communities, (2) make use of culturally competent and appropriate methods, (3) be open about one’s expectations and roles from the community members and the role of the researcher, (4) respect the research process.

I had to work extra hard to convince the comrades about the relevance of my study as I already sensed that they were going to make it difficult for me to do the research. After attending a few meetings I adopted an ethnographic approach of minimising the “distance” and “objective separateness” between me and the research participants (Creswell, 2007: 18), as this approach seeks to understand people’s meanings from their own perspective (Bloor and Wood, 2006: 70). Building good relationships with the people that one observes during data collection and those who are in the leadership is crucial because they are the ones who will refer you to the right people.

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5 In the South African context, many groups of activists refer and greet each other by the name “comrade”. The term is also associated with people who are fighting for liberation.
to talk to should they not be able to provide the information themselves. I did not think that I was going to spend so much time in Freedom Park before conducting my interviews. I merely thought I was going to attend a few meetings, conduct interviews and observations and maybe later go back to the field to conduct more interviews if there was a need to do so.

**Image: 4.2 AbFP members attending a book launch at UJ Bunting Road campus**

As I spent time with the AbFP, we built a respectful, even trusting, relationship. They felt I could be trusted with their viewpoints, and I felt I could trust them to host me. For someone who was going to be entering their shacks and houses, eating their food, sitting in on their informal discussions, lying down on their mats, and listening to their stories, the importance of cultivating trust and respect could not be overstated. To this day we still see each other, we talk on the phone and I still attend community meetings sometimes. I invited them to a book launch by Dr Leo Zeiling that took place at UJ Bunting Road campus and was organised by the Centre for Social Change. I
organised transport for them and even got a copy of the book for the organisation. I also invited them to a meeting that was held in Balfour, in Mpumalanga which was on protests and the Egyptian revolution, by an Egyptian activist sociologist, Sameh Naguib. I saw this an opportunity for AbFP to share their knowledge and compare South African and Egyptian experiences, as they had told me that they are interested in working with other organisations. My role as participant observer which I define in later sections, meant that I was involved with the organisation to an extent. For instance, inviting them to meetings that are relevant to their work, offering to make copies and small financial contributions was, for me, a way of conducting my research in a reciprocal manner. Considering the nature of the organisation, and also as a researcher, I was aware that I was benefiting from the information that I was receiving.

4.3 Case Study

AbFP was selected as a case study for this research because case study research allows the researcher to focus on specific and interesting cases (Shuttleworth, 2008). In my case I was interested in women of the organisation. In the first meeting those who were there spoke briefly about their experiences. As no study, to my knowledge, has looked into their private and public lives, I was interested in finding out more about them. I got to know of AbFP after attending one of the International Labour Research and Information Group (ILRIG) conference’s in Johannesburg with Dr Carin Runciman who introduced me to one of the activists from the movement whom later introduced me to virtually the entire organisation. I attended one of the meetings and my interest grew from there.

A case study focuses on a single unit of analysis such as an individual, a group or an organisation (Saldana, 2011: 8), and they are studied intensively (Huysamen, 1994: 168). Case studies are aimed at having an “understanding of the uniqueness and the idiosyncrasy of a particular case and in all its complexity” (ibid). Other researchers call this method “peeling the onion” in order to be able to examine each layer (Lapan et al, 2012). By using the case study design I was able to understand the living conditions of the people in the community, especially the women that I was observing. A case study design can be used when the “how” or “why” questions are posed, when the researcher does not have much control over events and when the focus is on a
contemporary phenomenon within some “real-life context” (Atkinson and Delamont, 2011: 338). Case studies allow the use of multiple sources and methods of data collection (Yin, 1993: xi). This research employed semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus groups, participant observations and everyday conversations.

In order to reduce uncertainties in the findings, the triangulation method was used. Triangulation is the application of more than one method in order to analyse data in greater depth and it may determine the accuracy of findings (Bloor and Wood, 2006: 170). The use of different forms of data collection allowed in-depth information to be obtained. For instance I was able to verify what was said in the interviews by becoming a participant observer. Also interviewing the women and observing them in both their private and public spaces allowed me to understand them better. A researcher may choose to become either a participant observer or a non-participant observer. A non-participant observer is recognised by the research participants as a legitimate scholar and follows certain rules when conducting research, and their relationship, in the most extreme circumstances, is more like a business transaction. On the other hand, a participant observer builds a relationship with the research participants and makes an effort to be part of the group (Angrosino, 2007: 17). In my case non-participant observation was not adequate because I wanted to study the group in-depth and I needed to interact with my research hosts. Gans (1986) argues that participant observation allows a direct and personal insight into the social world from the participant’s perspective.

I started by attending community meetings that take place every Wednesday, both in the morning and in the evening. Previously they took place every Wednesday and Sunday evening. However the dates had to change because some members were unable to commit to Sundays. The meetings then moved to Wednesday morning. Attending those meetings helped me to become familiar with the activists before conducting the actual interviews and observations. In the morning meetings there is what they call “The Saturday Struggle School”. What happens is that there are readings that are handed out in advance so that the members can prepare. They discuss issues of participation, apartheid, capitalism, and power struggles to name a few. The evening meetings, on the other hand, are about the general community
issues. They discuss issues of development, education and the struggles in Freedom Park.

The first meeting I attended was in May 2015 at 17h00. There were seven (7) men and two (2) women. Before and after the meeting I had preliminary conversations with the activists. It was these introductory meetings whereby they informed me that I should try as far as possible to feel comfortable and know that I was welcome. The real ice-breaker for me was when those present asked if they could call me “comrade” or if I preferred being called by my real name. My response was that I did not mind being called “comrade”. From that point on, I was called “comrade Lihle” or “comrade”. In return, I referred to everyone as “comrade such-and-such”. For me, this small detail signalled that I had been accepted into their circle.

As I went to subsequent meetings I got to meet both male and female members who would later participate in the in-depth interviews. As part of the study, I also went to the homes of these female comrades and observed their daily routines and activities. This allowed them to be comfortable with me and they opened up. I got to know about their lives at home as mothers and their lives outside their homes as activists. Spending time with them helped to grow our relationship as it was not practical to remain completely distant. During this process I took on a role of being a “participant observer”. Relationships between fieldworkers and community meetings are made stronger by the act of going away and returning as promised (Wolcott, 1999: 57), hence visiting before conducting my actual research and maintaining an ongoing connection was beneficial.

I managed to build a great relationship with members of the organisation even though they are older than me. After the interview we would go buy “amakota” (bunny chow) or send a child to go buy for us. When I had more than one interview in one day the comrades would sometimes drive or walk me to another comrade’s house for my next interview, which I found to be very generous. Whoever I interviewed or observed last would walk me to the taxis. There was a particular day when I went for my observations

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6 My full name is Thembelihle, but I prefer introducing myself as Lihle because that is who I’m commonly known as.
and one of the comrades came by to fetch his car that he had left earlier. He came in to greet, we decided we were hungry and that we were going to buy amakota. While we waited for amakota to get ready the comrades drove me around, they showed me the local primary schools, library and the clinic. They told me how those were not built with the budget that was formally allocated for the purpose; the councillors had corruptly used the rest of the money to further their own nests. These kinds of engagements allowed me as a participant observer to get to know the community well, particularly from the activist’s perspective.

Members of the community of Freedom Park seemed to be generally welcoming. After being introduced to the comrades, I never struggled with the fact that I was an outsider. I remember one Wednesday morning I went for the Saturday Struggle School meeting and they had been moved to the community centre. I unfortunately got into the wrong container. The people there made space for me to sit and the leader asked me if I was there to visit and I said “yes”. They opened the meeting with prayer and only then did I realise that I was in the wrong meeting. I had also noticed that there were a lot people with disabilities. After the prayer I told them that I think I might be in the wrong place because I had not seen a familiar face. They politely asked me to go check with the group that was in the other container. These encounters also made me question the stereotypical portrayals of protestors from townships as nothing but road-blocking, toyi-toying arsonists and violent thugs. At no time did I see anyone who was perpetually in this violent mode. I have since learnt that violence is utilised in very limited amounts, and only then as a last resort.

4.4 Observations

Participation observation is when the researcher is intimately involved in the social setting of her research (Harding, 2013: 21). Wolcott (1999) has suggested that researchers can only understand the complexity of the movements by immersing themselves. By the end of the data collection period, I had gained a close and intimate familiarity with the women and the flow of their everyday lives. With time I got to know my participants well. The method was employed because it requires the researcher to be involved in informal conversations and interactions with the participants, write down field notes in depth, and participate in the community activities (Kawulich, 2005). I observed, conversed with, and participated in the everyday lives of Nhlanhla, Sibongile
and Poppy, my three main female participants, over ten months. I followed them around like a dutiful sister, noting their social discourse with their families and with the community. I noted the conversations they had with their neighbours, and recorded some of the discussions. Initially, there was an awkwardness due to the fact that I was there as a researcher. The women also did not seem to know how to respond to me or to my prying questions at this early stage. I did two things that helped deal with the social awkwardness. Firstly, I took care to attend and participate in meetings as often and as much as they did. Secondly, as I am fluent in Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho and Tswana, I took care to speak to them in their own indigenous languages. This, I felt, was a major advantage.

Throughout, I did not need an interpreter or a translator. Finally, I noted that they were fascinated with me when I mentioned that I came from Orange Farm. This detail took care of any trust issues that may have arisen. Orange Farm is as poor an area as Freedom Park. We could thus exchange stories as equals. I was not just a University of Johannesburg student. Instead, I was much more like their little sister. That, I think, is how I became, to a significant extent, one of them. This was an important moment for me in my attempt to understand the researcher-researched relationship. That piece of detail (ngihlala eOrange Farm) was like a switch that had been turned on. I was no longer just a researcher. I was now an empathetic human being, a younger sister and a comrade. Not only could I ask them questions about Freedom Park, but they could ask me questions about Orange Farm.

Throughout the whole period of the data collection I morphed from researcher to researched, and vice versa. With subsequent visits, the uneasiness completely disappeared, replaced with an interest in me as a person and with a familiarity that made them sometimes forget that I was there or that I was a researcher. All three women were comfortable with me “prying” into their private lives and routines, and with my asking personal questions. I took copious notes and recorded conversations on my mobile phone. My enquiries were directed at knowing about their lives at home as mothers and their lives outside their homes as activists. Spending time with them narrowed the distance between us. During this process I learnt to take on the role of a reflexive “participant observer”. We shared stories, the same roof, and meals. I recorded observations of every little detail that I possibly could in my journal.
This approach allows the researcher to engage with the people and to be fully integrated into the life of the group being studied. Still, the role of the researcher is acknowledged (Angrosino, 2007: 55). Of all social science methods of obtaining data, observing is one of the most natural (Richards and Morse, 2007: 115) because the participant observer is simultaneously a member of a group under study and a researcher doing the study (Babbie and Mouton, 2001: 293). In the community meeting that took place on the 14\textsuperscript{th} of August 2016 comrade Sipho introduced me to the community members as “Comrade Lihle” who is a University student doing research with them \textit{ekuhlaleni} (community), and gave me a platform to further introduce myself. For me this was both exciting and overwhelming because it meant that people officially knew who I was and I had been accepted.

Some of the advantages of this method as discussed by Crano and Brewer (2001) are that the observer is forced to familiarise with the participants; aspects that may have been unnoticed or ignored can now be seen, observations are valuable in that they may tell you more than what you can get from conversations, and they allow for intimacy between the researcher and the researched. The method is also unobtrusive (2001: 202 - 203). Being a participant observer allowed me to get familiar with the dynamics of the movement, and to also allow myself to identify with them. That, however did not mean that I had forgotten about my role as a researcher. For me being involved and even sympathising with the residents and the women did not necessarily make me become biased instead it made me aware of the challenges that they are facing and to also understand these challenges from their perspective. Comrades asked me not to just come and get information from them, rather they expect some level of commitment from me as well. Therefore doing my research in Freedom Park has made it easy for me to commit to a certain extent. I visit and attend meetings even when I am not collecting data. What I liked about the comrades is that they were aware that I had no power and that I was not there to bring substantive change.

Comrade Mabaso asked me if I could come earlier to help prepare for Saturday Struggle School or make copies for the comrades. Even though I participated, my role as a researcher was respected. I also felt honoured when I was asked to participate in the meetings and got added to the WhatsApp group of AbFP Park Saturday Struggle
School. I had interesting conversations with the women during my stay and aspects of these as well as observations were written down in my journal.

**Image 4.4 Shack in Lindelani section with no electricity, tap and toilet**

4.5 Introduction to the Female Participants/Activists

The three women were chosen deliberately for observations because, through the conversations we had before and after the community meetings, they mentioned their commitment to the struggle and how they got attacked by the police and, at times, even arrested. From those conversations I got the impression that they are the most active female members of the organisation. There are not many female members who attend the meetings, and even those who attend do not speak a lot. This observation made me want to really get to know them in their private spaces. The core three women chosen for the life history aspect of this study, however, were also the most active female members of the organisation in terms of attendance and grassroots organising. The three are as follows:
4.5.1 Woman 1: Nhlanhla

Nhlanhla is a single mother of two – she has a boy and a girl. She stays in an RDP house that she inherited from her brother with her daughter and nephew. What makes Nhlanhla unique is her strength and resilience in the community. She was one of the first women to take on a leadership role in AbFP. She is not formally employed. She is a fulltime activist and has recently initiated a movement in the community for women only, which operates, in my own understanding, both inside and outside of AbFP. This will be explained in-depth much later in the dissertation, in chapter six.

4.5.2 Woman 2: Poppy

Poppy lives with her long-time lover whom she considers to be her husband. They have four children. As a leadership member of the street committee in Lindelani section, she was approached by the development company to take charge of the development processes in the section and employ other people. In the beginning, the development company did not pay much attention to, nor involve, the community in the development process. However, due to Poppy’s lengthy confrontation with the company, she finally got their recognition. She is not formally employed, besides the temporary job that she will take on in the community, and she survives on grant money.

4.5.3 Woman 3: Sibongile

Sibongile moved from a two room shack to an RDP house with her husband and two children. She is the leadership member of the street committee in Lindelani, one of the eight sections in Freedom Park and has been arrested because she was fighting for the houses that were allocated to people who she believes were not deserving of them. In 2016 she finally received her own RDP house after fighting for many years. She volunteers as a care worker at the community clinic.
4.6 Life Histories

In life history research, the teller of the tale creatively selects the kind of stories she shares with the listener of the tale. In the process the teller creates her own impression of who she is, whether consciously or subconsciously (Dhunpath and Samuel, 2009: 03). The researcher then makes an attempt to structure the stories told in a way that will provide rich, in-depth details about the specific life experiences, memories and interpretations produced by the individuals. The point of doing life history research is that the researcher is able to highlight particular experiences of the individuals that are studied (Dhunpath and Samuel, 2009: 04).

Life history is valuable in that it allows the inclusion of marginalised voices in the research process. It also allows the interviewee to tell the story in their own words and is based on a few key topics that are part of the research questions, and may need more than just one meeting (University of Dar es Salaam, notes, 2007). To tell the stories of women, I made frequent visits in order to observe and have conversations
with them so that I could get to know them better before doing interviews. I conducted multiple in-depth interviews with the three women so that I could gather as much information about their lives as I possibly could. Doing frequent visits and observations in advance of the interviews was advantageous because relationships were established and they shaped my interview guide.

The three women who were observed have different home lives but they are dealing with similar struggles of service delivery. Their life stories represent how single mothers, married women and women cohabiting survive each day and still combine that with organising on behalf of the community and participating in its public life. Life history interviewing “is a qualitative research method for gathering information on the subjective essence of one person’s entire life” (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002: 125). Life history can be defined as a pedagogical approach drawing on life experiences (Kouritzin, 2000: 3). The main focus of this research method is in the way that the individual understands and recollects the events that have had a significant impact in his/her life (Kouritzin, 2000: 4). It can also be referred to as a method of ethnography whereby the researcher is attempting to generate an autobiography of a single participant, usually through multiple informal interviews or obtaining written documents by the participants (Harvey, 2012).

The stories represent a typical home-life and protest life of women in a disadvantaged community. The life of an individual and role that she or he plays in the community are understood best through a story; people become both fully aware and conscious of their own lives through the process of putting them in a story (Geertz, 1973). Telling the story of the women from their own experience will thus provide a “thick description” (ibid). The main aim of this research was to draw a fuller picture of ordinary women whose lives combine the “hearth” and activism; I am interested in relating how activism intersects with their private life. In order to grasp our experiences more fully, meaning has to be made out of it and the way to do that is by structuring our lives into stories (Dhunpath and Samuels, 2009). Writing life stories enriches and at the same time provides a clear understanding of complex matters (Dhunpath and Samuels, 2009).

Biographical testimonies should be prioritised as a data gathering method for three reasons. Firstly, because “complete” and “ultimate history” does not exist. Instead
when it is submitted the expectation is that it will add to what already exists. Secondly, in history generally stories of people are not often told and where they are told they tend to be fragmented. Thirdly, and most importantly, oral history and life history allows the respondents the freedom to more fully express and reflect on their own lives (Nite and Stuart, 2012: 5). According to Kouritzin (2000) human beings want to tell their own stories and to be able to explain their behaviour in their own terms. Undertaking life histories was an interesting process. When I first started, the women were in a particular phase in their activism life and towards the end of the research project they were in another. It was interesting and amazing to see their progress across a period of seventeen months.

4.7 Interviews

Another method that was used to collect data was semi-structured in-depth interviews. They were undertaken with ten participants: five of them were men and five were women. These interviews were conducted in person and the telephone was used to do follow ups and this was usually very informal. In-depth interviewing can be described as “a conversation with a specific purpose – a conversation between researcher and informants focusing on the informant’s perception of the self, life, and experience and expressed in his or her own words” (Merriam and Associates, 2002: 272). It is through this method of interviewing that the researcher is able to gain access, and the understanding of the private interpretations of social reality that individuals hold (ibid). Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to ask for more elaboration on answers that the interviewer may find unclear, or allow the interviewer to use probes with a view of clearing up vague responses (Huysamen, 1994: 145). This method was useful for me because of its flexible nature, it allowed me to ask questions in a natural way, more like a conversation. However, I did not pretend to be having a conversation with the participants. They were fully aware that they were being interviewed.

I conducted these interviews eight months into the research. Meeting the women and the men well in advance made it easier for them to open up because I was there almost every week for the first four months. Attending meetings, participating and telephoning them encouraged trust between the comrades and I. Participating in the meetings
meant that I was sharing my personal thoughts and that way they got to know me. I made sure that the questions were as simple as possible and concepts were explained properly. Participants were comfortable enough to ask if they felt something was unclear or to ask me to repeat myself if they did not hear me properly the first time. The activists that were selected to participate in the interview were chosen purposively. In purposive sampling the researcher seeks out participants who can best answer the questions that are asked (Lapan et al, 2012: 334). The selection was based on their committed relationship to both the organisation and the community. All the participants were interviewed at different times and the interviews were recorded on my mobile phone which has an app that records interviews in high fidelity.

The interviews were transcribed and translated by me in English, because I did my interviews in the vernacular language. I had also prepared an interview guide so that my interviews would have structure and so that I did not leave out any necessary information. The questions were standardised and open-ended. The three women who are the main informants were requested to provide information on their demographics – such as age, household members and income – and then open ended questions followed. I also attended some meetings with them. In some of the community meeting recordings my voice is heard. This is because I was asked to participate. However I did not add my opinions in the individual interviews in order to avoid shaping the responses. The recordings, and later transcriptions, made it easier to get all the information as I was not going to remember everything that was said by my participants. Both the interviews and the observations were scheduled in advance so that the participants could make time for me.

The research uses a qualitative method because it is designed to study a small number of people in-depth and in their natural settings in order to understand, explore and clarify situations, behaviours and experiences of the group of people (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008: 4; Harding, 2013: 8; Kumar, 2011: 104). This method allowed me to understand issues from the perspective of participants and also to shed light on how women involved in SMOs negotiate and live out their private and public roles. “Qualitative researchers strive to thoroughly explore day-to-day interactions, how things transpire and the individual meanings of these events for the people involved” (Lapan et al, 2012: 8).
There are six characteristics that a qualitative approach consists of; (1) it is flexible and data-driven. Emphasis is placed more on creating and developing descriptions as well as explanations. (2) It makes use of various forms of unstructured data. Researchers do not have to make use of ranking, counting and measurements. For instance when doing observations, researchers carefully observe what is going on around them and write detailed descriptions in a natural language that captures relevant features of what is observed and how the event occurred. With interviews it encourages follow up questions in order to reach detailed explanation. (3) It has some form of subjectivity in the research process. It is acceptable that data and inferences from them always shape the researcher’s social and personal characteristics. It is recognised that it is not possible to eliminate the effect that they have. (4) Studies are conducted in a natural setting. Qualitative work usually investigates what happens in the ordinary spaces where people live and work. It also makes use of interviews that are close to ordinary conversation. (5) It is used when a small case is studied. Qualitative inquiry usually investigates a small number or one case that is naturally occurring. This emerges from the need to examine each case in-depth and to be able to document its complexity. (6) It makes use of verbal rather than statistical data. The commonly used form of data analysis is verbal description and interpretation, which are supported by illustrative examples. Descriptions such as these are sometimes seen as having the ability to offer theoretical advances or thick description (Hammersley, 2012: 14).

The research questions are:

1. How do selected women engaging in protests in the mixed gender social movement organisation Abahlali baseFreedom Park construct, negotiate and make sense of their public (“protest”) and private (“non-protest”) lives?
2. In what way does protest intersect with the everyday lived experience, and vice versa, of the selected women?

Using a qualitative method helps to answer the “how” and the “what” of the research questions (Given, 2008: xxix). I do acknowledge that the findings are only limited to a qualitative method, however, “they will comprise expressions of the experiences of the lives of women who may have similar experiences” (Gadbois et al, 1999: 8).
4.8 Focus Group

On 3rd of August 2016 the Municipal Elections took place in South Africa and I was interested in finding out what informs women’s voting decisions, particularly those in Freedom Park considering their living conditions. This was necessary as it was going to help verify the information that I had from the interviews, meetings and observations. On the day of the elections I was also conducting surveys for the Centre for Social Change. Fortunately people in the voting stations were coming out in groups and I selected groups based on their willingness to tell me about their stories. For instance, after I asked them questions on the survey and they provided detailed answers I would then ask if I could ask them more questions and perhaps even record their responses. Two groups were interviewed and they both said that I could even take the recording to the officials because they might finally hear their grievances. However, I chose not to do so because I did not think that it was appropriate.

Focus groups are useful for a number of reasons. Firstly, participants are less likely to hold back when they interact with members of their own group. Taking turns when answering questions creates conversations and has the ability to explore emotional experiences effectively (Tracy, 2013: 167). Doing research in an area that is going through a difficult phase may cause trauma for individuals. For instance, after I had conducted my first focus group on the day of the municipal elections, we were told to leave the school yard and when we got outside members of the ANC came up to me and my group members whom I was conducting the surveys with. They surrounded us and yelled at us. I became scared and I tried to remain calm as much as I could and explained that the surveys had no influence over people’s voting decisions.

Others understood but still demanded us to leave Freedom Park before they get us arrested. We left and decided to go to another voting station far from the first one. When we got there, the first people that we approached were the police and the members of the ANC to inform them about our work. Even though many were not pleased, some allowed us to continue on condition that we conduct the surveys with them. Focus groups can also be used when studying sensitive topics and bringing together people who may be hard to access (Angrosino, 2007: 85). Two focus group interviews in Freedom Park were conducted in two different voting stations but both
were in ward 119. In the first voting station the group of five women were below the age of 45 and in the second station there were six participants, each over the age of 50.

4.9 Data Analysis

To analyse data, a thematic approach was used. Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) define it as a way of “identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data”. This approach involves coding, which means nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of one’s data so that the researcher can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data. The designations can be single words, letters, numbers, phrases, colours, or combinations of these (Merriam, 2009: 173). Data was analysed manually by me. The process of transcribing, listening to the audio recording again to ensure accuracy and reading the transcripts multiple times was time-consuming. However it was helpful in the long-run because I was able to compare my transcripts and code them for particular themes. Transcripts were coded according to the responses provided by the research participants, and the common themes that emerged across the interview were highlighted (Mack *et al.*, 2005: 30).

4.10 Fieldwork Challenges

Conducting research in a community that is dealing with struggles of service delivery and participating in protests is not an easy task as it means that I had to visit often in order to be able to keep up to date with what was happening. For instance, most of the semi-structured interviews were completed in January 2016 but I had to continue attending meetings and following up. On the first day the comrades seemed a bit sceptical of me as a young academic coming to do research in their community and they warned me, at that time, not to come to extract information and then disappear. Also, as a researcher I had to consider the fact that the participants were going through a difficult time trying to fight for what they believed was denied to them. The women that I observed are disadvantaged in terms of finances and living conditions. What helped me manage to carry on doing fieldwork was the spirit of the comrades and how comfortable they were talking about their lives. Therefore spending so much time in Freedom Park made me consider my own biases that might affect the way that I told their lived story.
Due to the nature of my research methods, with time I learnt that I did not have to try hard to manage relationships by keeping my distance because the textbook alone can never truly prepare one for fieldwork. There are three stages that a participant observer goes through when doing fieldwork: a stranger, acquaintance and intimate stage (Muck, 1998, cited in Runciman, 2012). In the stranger phase, rules and language for social interaction are learnt. For me, I learnt that those who are in the ruling party or are corrupt are referred to as “these guys”. The acquaintance phase means that one has been generally accepted. In this phase I was asked for contributions like helping with “The Saturday Struggle School”. Finally, the intimate stage is one in which the relationship of the researcher and the participants is strong. When I got to this stage I was able to invite them for protests meetings which could have potentially benefitted them. The following section describes some of the challenges that I faced, namely: use of public transport, time constraints and managing relationships.

Using public transport was a challenge for me because I was unable to get to the homes of the participants as early as I would have liked to watch them prepare for their day. I also had to leave earlier because of safety issues. I was unable to attend the evening meetings during school holidays because I depended on the UJ school bus to take me home late in evenings, but there were days when the activists would ask me not to leave and volunteer to take me home (to the UJ student residence).

It was challenging to complete my observations within the period that I had set myself because within that period the women that I was observing would have to cancel our meeting and attend to other things. One female participant who I interviewed volunteered at the clinic and she knocked off at 2pm. This made it hard for me to spend the hours that I would have liked with her because I also had to leave before sunset. I was also not able to do my interviews consecutively as planned. However the spaces in between allowed me to think about what had been said and I followed up at the next interview.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, I had my own ideas of what it was going to be like in the field. The one thing that I was mainly concerned about was managing relationships and expectations with my research participants. A fellow researcher
recalled to me that her “subjects” wanted to keep in touch with her after her field work. I was worried that my participants might also want to keep in touch or want to be friends with me after my field work and, at the time, I was concerned that this might distract me or interfere with my objectivity. But working with people in a disadvantaged community taught me the importance of treating people with dignity and not just as machines that I can extract information and walk away from soon after that.

4.11 Ethical Considerations

Permission to attend meetings was sought from the relevant activists within the organisation, who are of a legal age. The researcher took into consideration the ethical obligations of the participants and that of the discipline. Research participants are obliged to know and fully understand what the research is about in order to make a decision that is informed about whether or not they wish to take part in the study (Bryman, 2004: 511). This process was done through the use of informed consent forms. The privacy and confidentiality of the research participants was respected and kept in the strictest confidentiality. Also this research makes use of pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the participants. This extends to keeping the identities and records of the participants confidential (Bryman, 2004: 510). As a researcher I was aware that it may not be possible to remain totally objective in a political sphere. However, being totally objective means one has failed to act (Fanon, 1963: 25).

Research participants received consent forms stating the nature of the study and it also provided an option to remain Anonymous. Consent forms were given to the participants before commencing with data collection in order to get permission to record and transcribe the interviews. Participants were also made aware that they can choose to discontinue with the study should they feel uncomfortable and that there would be no penalties (Bryman, 2012). They were also made aware that the study is entirely voluntary and that they will not receive any rewards for participating.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the researcher’s experience in the field. It began by reflecting on the ideas I had about doing fieldwork and the realities I came across in the field. It then provided an overview of the case study, and how and why it was
selected. The chapter discussed the various research methods that were employed, with a detailed description for each one of them. The research methods used were interviews, focus groups and participant observation. All these qualitative methods were necessary as they helped to answer the research questions and to understand the relations between the private and the public sphere of women in Freedom Park. Chapter five provides the context and agency in which AbFP, as the invented space of participation, was formed, before describing in chapter six the intersections of the public and private lives of women imbued in that space.
CHAPTER FIVE

HISTORY OF FREEDOM PARK AND THE FORMATION OF ABAHLALI BASEFREEDOM PARK

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of Freedom Park and how the SMO of AbFP as an invented space came into existence. The chapter begins by explaining how the community originally formed and continues on to discuss the formation of the SMO and the role of women within the organisation. It is necessary to provide this information not only because there has been no research of this nature about the community of Freedom Park, but also to give an outline of the kinds of struggles, negotiations, and fault-lines that give birth to semi-informal settlements such as this one. Essentially, the birth of Freedom Park was not straightforward and the life of the community itself is, up to this day, quite complex. This background will hopefully give the reader a deeper understanding of the community and provide some context to the issues raised in the subsequent chapter regarding how women have to deal with particular struggles on a daily basis.

5.2 The Beginning of Freedom Park

Freedom Park is a semi-formal settlement situated on the South-West border of Soweto. It is comprised of different sections, namely, St.Martin, Siyaya, Mahala Park, Zimbabwe, Lindelani, Freedom Park and Devland Ext.27 and the new bond houses developed, known as Devland Gardens. The depressed economic situation of the early 1990s coupled with the joy of the possibility of freedom that filled South Africans in 1994 led to the formation of an SMO in Soweto known as the Homeless People’s Party (HPP). The movement led the struggles to occupy Freedom Park in 1994 under the leadership of Mr Bongani Dube who was the leader of the Freedom Park section and is currently a councillor of ward 24 in Region G, Johannesburg South. Mr Dube stated that a number of people who stayed in the backyard shacks of Soweto organised themselves into a movement called the HPP, which was an invented space created in order to eliminate homelessness after people were retrenched from their jobs and could no longer afford to pay rent (Hukwe et al, 2014).
The people first held a meeting at an informal settlement called Motsoaledi to negotiate the possibility of dwelling there, but the community leader told them that the place was already full and that they should consider looking elsewhere. A former Freedom Park leader, Mr Moeleti, mentioned that members of the Azanian People’s Organisation (AZAPO), who were part of the main organisers in Motsoaledi, were very suspicious and did not trust members of the HPP, and therefore denied them a place to stay. These suspicions seem to have emerged due to ongoing political battles at the time in Motsoaledi between the ANC, Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), AZAPO, and other political parties (Hukwe et al, 2014).

From there, they decided to occupy some privately owned land at Devland which had been earmarked for industrial development. This land is what is now known as Freedom Park. People camped in plastics, cardboard boxes and corrugated iron sheets. The government and the corporate owners of the land were not pleased about the move and therefore went to the court to seek court orders to evict the “land invaders”. The community managed to resist these attempts and more people were emboldened to come and occupy the land. As the land occupation process became successful the HPP in Soweto became the Development Committee in Freedom Park. This was the first leadership of the Development Committee, which was elected democratically, and many did not question whether it was legitimate or not. Those who were part of the Committee were partly rewarded for their role financially in the co-opted consulting company for development hired by the City of Johannesburg (COJ). They were compensated for the role that they played in opening up opportunities for development in the community (Sipho, male, interview, 2016). The Committee was a non-partisan organisation primarily concerned only with the welfare of the homeless and poor people. The only people who were in the leadership positions were males, mostly from the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA).

This profile of the Committee leadership might partly explain the success of the land occupation movement. NUMSA was a member of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) which is an integral part of the ANC alliance. In the leadership there were about ten people. The HPP was not membership based. Those who were in the leadership were aware of the main challenges affecting their community and operated on the basis that they represented all the people of Freedom Park. They also made
claims that they were going to collapse the Development Committee as soon as they eliminated homelessness. This was based on the mandate they were given when they left Soweto. As time went by, the community grew, power struggles emerged and there were internal conflicts amongst the community leaders (Hukwe et al, 2014).

Map 5.2 Map of Freedom Park

Some of the fault lines that emerged resulted from the spectre of partisan politics. One group of people sought to launch an ANC branch in Freedom Park towards the end of 1994. This attempt to politicise the new-born settlement caused conflicts between this group and the Development Committee who wanted to keep Freedom Park free of political leanings. The poor at this time belonged to the ANC but also to IFP and other smaller parties. Others were non-aligned. The decision was thus made to refuse to entertain this group and, in fact, to bar it from Freedom Park. The group trying to form an ANC branch then decided to move to another section currently known as St Martins, on the land that was partially owned by the Roman Catholic Church and by the COJ. The Roman Catholic Church took this St. Martins group to court for occupying its land and after a long period of resistance, the priest Father Mokoena told the leaders of the community that he would withdraw the case on condition that they settle the legal costs
which amounted to about R10 000 and also not allow further occupation on the remaining land of the church.

The leadership of the ANC branch in St. Martins was then elected in 1995. The chairperson of the ANC Women's League in St. Martins, Palesa Kgatlhanye, believed that those who were displeased about not getting elected in the leadership positions within the ANC became part of the South African National Civics Organisation (SANCO) in 1999. Later the Roman Catholic Church and the leaders of both the ANC and SANCO held negotiations and came to an agreement to release the land to the residents of Freedom Park. They appealed to the Johannesburg City Council (JCC) to take responsibility for the infrastructure development. This decision forced the government to recognise and restructure the community of Freedom Park as a whole, including St. Martins, to recognise Freedom Park as a residential instead of an industrial area.

The first school in Freedom Park was built in the year 2000 and was named Freedom Park Primary School in honour and respect of the contribution made by those who participated in the community struggle. The school was built in St. Martins as a donation made by the New Way organisation to the first democratic elected President of South Africa, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. In 2007 another primary school was built and was named “Sinqobile” meaning “we have conquered” though the name was later changed by the Gauteng Department of Education to “Somelulwazi” meaning “we are thirsty for knowledge”. A community clinic was built in 2013 and officially opened in 2014. Another school was built, and it was named Freedom Park High and it starts from grade eight to ten. The community has a library as well. The people who camped in plastics, cardboard boxes and corrugated iron sheets now either stay in their own shacks or RDP houses.

5.2.1 Analysis of How Freedom Park Began

We can therefore note that Freedom Park was a product of land occupation struggles and not a gift from government or from private interests. This land occupation was organised as a SMO which can be understood as an invented space. It was also the product of what one might call strategic opportunism. The land occupiers saw in the
dawning era of the new South Africa a window of opportunity to reclaim land that was being reserved for private, industrial use. Their action was a way of testing the new establishment’s resolve, particularly at a time when it was faced by three pressing needs: to ensure justice for the oppressed majority, to shore up its support base, and to signal to the international community that it would respect private property laws. The success of the land occupation was due to negotiation between these three imperatives. According to Saul (1997: 220) the 1994 elections were thought of as a “liberation election” from white minority rule. Land hunger is still a pressing concern in South Africa, but is in constant tension with private ownership of land and other vested corporate interests.

The occupiers of Freedom Park were all poor people who had been discarded by corporate capitalism at a time of euphoria about the birth of the new South Africa. This is a salient contradiction that still marks the country. Neoliberal policies continue to make the poor poorer even as the success of the transition to a rainbow nation is being proclaimed. The acronym GEAR should be revised to DUPE (Decline, Unemployment and Polarization Economics) which is more accurate considering that the number of people living in poverty keeps growing and GEAR did not benefit the poor (Saul and Bond, 2014: 155). At the cusp of freedom in 1994, we can see that there were people who were at that very moment losing their livelihoods. More than 20 years later, little has changed in the lives of these poor people. Indeed, it is these same people who are at the forefront of service delivery protests. Freedom Park may thus be taken as a purposive sample of the failure-to-launch the new South Africa, at least from the point of view of the poor majority.

At the same time, the community was already showcasing in the mid-1990s the kind of political awareness and strategic opportunism that has allowed it to survive and carry on despite bitter odds. Belonging in Freedom Park is a function of being umhlali (a resident) of the area. To a certain extent, it does not matter if one is ANC, DA, IFP or EFF. There is thus a running thread of non-alignment and non-partisanship that allows an organisation such as AbFP to emerge, but also that enables voters to use their votes to bargain for service delivery. When all fails, protests are resorted to as a strategy. Sometimes it works, and other times it does not.
5.3 The Formation of Abahlali baseFreedom Park

The community of Freedom Park has been organising since its formation. Because the existence of their community arose out of this very organisational imperative and ethos, to this day they still organise in order to remain alive as a community and to bargain for the improvement of their living conditions. One Anonymous female resident (female 1, interview, 2016) explained that “we want our councillors to be considerate and stop doing as they like”. Struggles for housing, electricity, water and sanitation animate the community’s resistance. The history of Freedom Park shows a proactive and organic organising spirit, but the absence of women from the official leadership of the SMO is a point that I will turn to throughout this thesis. Where were the women during this early period? To this day, there are women in the leadership of AbFP even though they are much fewer than men. In the early period there were no women at all in the leadership.

The interesting observation is that, as the next chapter will show, women were and are still at the heart of driving the land occupations, and are the lifeblood of the so-called service delivery protests. This is because the lack of a roof over a family’s head in the rain season, lack of heating in winter, dust, lack of water, sanitation, rents, and hungry mouths to feed are all issues that touch women personally and unavoidably. It is these issues that explode into the public domain as protests and land occupations. So the answer to the question “where were the women?” is complex. The fact that the women still do their domestic work such as keeping the house clean, cooking, getting water and taking care of the husband and children and, for those who live in shacks, making sure that the food is prepared before sunset or just before the children return from school due to not having electricity, should alert us to the important rupture of the dividing line between private and public. I wish, then, to propose that service delivery protests tend to begin and end in the private arena of the home. It seems apt to suggest that there would be no service delivery protests without the home.

Therefore the invented spaces of participation should be understood in the realm of the private homes of the people, since most issues take place there and women are mostly responsible for them, at least in the case of Freedom Park. As noted in chapter 3, the concept of the invited and the invented spaces of participation are explored in
the public realm because that’s where most activities are seen taking place (in the public domain). The forms of invited spaces in Freedom Park include ward committees, development forums and NGOs. AbFP argue that they have not been allowed to participate in the decisions in these spaces, such as being a part of the development process when houses are built.

Social movements and SMOs are invented participatory spaces that take place in the public arena, but where private issues are discussed. When looking at the case of Freedom Park, women do most of the organising in the street committees, located in people’s yards, and report back to the AbFP leadership. Nhanhla (female, conversation, 2016) says the block committee members meet before community meetings to discuss and set the agenda, brief each other about issues in various sections, and give each other tasks depending on what needs to be done. Poppy (female, conversation, 2016) says in Lindelani section they meet weekly to discuss their struggles. Therefore, writing about women’s struggles only within social movements, and neglecting street and block committees and private homes where most groundwork is done, also, to a certain extent overlooks the relationship between the private and the public.

AbFP was formed in July 2014 after a prolonged electricity crisis, whereby the supply was inadequate. The community on its own decided to protest publicly after trying and failing to engage with councillors, ward committee members and City Power. The community felt that it was being undermined so they decided to invoke their right to protest: they would go to the streets and protest to try to get “these people” to listen and respond to the issue of electricity (Anonymous, female 2, Interview, 2015). After the protest the community decided to get together and discuss the way forward because they realised that they were not organised, there was no leadership and no clear direction. Things in the community were happening independently of the political parties and civic organisations in the area. It was felt that there was a power vacuum. It was also felt that political parties, while legitimate, were too preoccupied with ensuring political survival and being re-elected into office to actually care for the community. So the need for the community to be organised on a non-partisan basis became necessary (Sipho, male, interview, 2015). This is when AbFP was born as a voice of the community. Abahlali means “residents/community”, thus suggesting that
the organisation “was for wonke umuntu” (everybody). Abahlali means the community coming together regardless of political, religious or ethnic affiliation. “At the end of the day”, I was told, “Everybody in the community is affected regardless of their status” (Sipho, male, interview, 2015).

Within the broader AbFP organisation there are street and block committees who are in charge of each section in Freedom Park. These committees are responsible for collecting grievances and relaying them to the main organisation. Street committees may also be active in informal policing and dispute settlement. However, this has declined since the year 1994 but not entirely. In the 1980s a lot of street committees operated as township courts by ensuring discipline and fighting crime and land invasion (Seekings, 1992:189).

One of the first major actions of AbFP was to hand over a memorandum of demands to the Minister of Human Settlements in 2015, to urgently address the following demands:

- “We want freedom and the power to determine the future of our community”.
- “The hiring process of community liaison officers (CLO) should be open and transparent”.
- “We are also demanding transparency and accountability from both councilors of ward 119 and 24 and the MMC and MEC of Gauteng human settlement”.
- “We demand decent housing fit for the shelter of human beings”.
- “We demand free health care for all members of our community”.
- “We want an end to the privatisation of our housing development and construction process”.
- “We demand full employment for our community”.
- “Development in the area should include the building of community centres such as community halls, playgrounds, public crèches, parks and libraries”.
- “We want education for our community that exposes the true nature of the rotten state of our community”.

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“We demand that development in the area be suspended until the municipality meets all these demands”.

One Anonymous and frustrated resident (male 1, interview, 2015) explained what it means for them as residents to protest by arguing that:

To protest means what I say must be heard but that doesn’t mean that things should be destroyed in the process but sometimes it has to be done. What I believe is that if we go to the streets and barricade the roads like the N3 and explain what our problems are, we would be heard because people who don’t know why we violate don’t understand when we tell them that we don’t want to violate. When we sit and talk with them (officials) they don’t understand us. It was through protesting that freedom was obtained in the country so that is why we believe in protests because that’s how freedom was obtained. That is why we feel obliged to protest if we want things to be right, we must protest the way the ruling party did in order to obtain freedom. But what shocks me is that the government kills people when they protest, why does it do that?

Further protest action was to follow if the demands were ignored (Anonymous, male 2 interview; and Nhlanhla, female, interview, 2015). The housing development that took place in Freedom Park in 2015, according to the residents, did not benefit those who registered for them. Instead those who were supposed to benefit were totally sidelined by the process. The allocations started in 2015 and took place again the week before local elections took place. According to AbFP there was widespread corruption during the allocation process. They thus fought to stop the allocations from taking place. “We will only enjoy once corruption has stopped”, said one activist (female 8, interview, 2016). On 26th February 2016, AbFP opened a court case with the COJ which is in charge of the house allocations and the Department of Human Settlement which builds the houses.

AbFP managed to get a court interdict, which put the allocation of the houses on hold before an investigation was done. They wanted a forensic audit to show that everyone who got a house is able to produce proof and to indicate whether or not they were deserving and had applied for a house. People who got houses also had to indicate where they were residing before moving to Freedom Park. The community leaders went against the court interdict because they did not approve of it and continued to allocate people to the houses. One of the comrades from AbFP who was also part of the court interdiction was offered an RDP house with hopes that he would cancel the
audit because he had now got what he had been wanting (Anonymous, male 3, interview, 2016). Another possible reason for being offered the house, according to the comrades, is that the community leaders were hoping that the community of Freedom Park would turn against the AbFP comrade and say that he has betrayed them by taking the house instead of fighting with them. Another resident (male 4, interview, 2015) who is a member of AbFP explains why the community at large hasn’t come together and agreed on ways to moving forward:

We have tried to inform the community about a lot of things but the community has not fully come together because we as AbFP and the political organisations don’t agree. Some are trying to dismiss our voices from the community and we are trying to make our voices to be heard, others are stuck in between but they try and listen even though they haven’t seen our success. It is not as easy as it sounds. What makes people not to understand if we are doing the right or not, is because people are told that democracy in South Africa exists because we fought for it. They (ANC) ask people if they see our purpose as AbFP and if we are doing the right thing. That’s what is making the community to fail to come together but most of them understand our story.

5.4 Illegal Land Occupation and the Role of Women

On 29th of July 2016 AbFP organised to occupy an empty municipal piece of land near Freedom Park to show their anger and dissatisfaction with lack of housing. Once again, women were at the centre of the land occupation. I was told: “We are leading the whole land occupation as women because it’s us who have to think that we and our children don’t have a place to stay. Men can sleep wherever they want, they don’t have a problem” (Nhlanhla, female, interview, 2016). Also, “our houses are sold to people who don’t live here and we now have to rent from them because we cannot afford to pay bribe” (Anonymous, female 4, interview, 2015). Women are at the centre of the land occupations because the effects of homelessness hit them the hardest. This is not to say that men are not affected by not having a house. Rather the women – because they have to cook, wash, take care of utensils and furniture and the grooming of the children in shacks – tend to feel the need for better shelter more acutely. Men may spend the day away from home, thus escaping having to witness, minute-by-minute, the discomforts of cardboard boxes, corrugated iron sheets and sometimes even a plastic environment.
The form of land occupation of July 2016 is not something new. As already noted, when the community of Freedom Park was established in 1994 people occupied the land that technically did not belong to them. However, they had no choice but to occupy vacant land as they could not afford other options such as renting and buying a house. A broader claim made by some of the activists in Freedom Park was that this land was African land, anyway, stolen by colonialists. Land occupation was thus a legitimate form of reclamation. The community of Freedom Park is still applying the same kind of political strategy.

They do openly acknowledge, however, that they cannot act in 2016 as if it were 1994. Many things have changed in the broader political discourse, and their tactics might also need to be modified. Also, there are lessons that they have learnt from when they started in 1994. For instance in the leadership and community meetings, they reflect on the things that they did correctly when they started and how they need to be strategic by involving and working together with people from other organisations as well as legal experts. The ultimate goal, however, is that every black man, woman and child has land and a roof of their own over their head. One key male respondent indicated, “AbFP needs to get back their land from the capitalists and the only way to succeed is by fighting the system” (Sipho, male, interview, 2016). Such success, it has been argued, will not come from the Freedom Charter because the charter itself is a flawed document which ensures that African people are forever the exploited and while white settlers are assured of wealth, land, power and privilege (Mazibuko, 2016: 3).

The return of the land is seen as the return of Africans to wholeness. The notion of land not only includes economic activities, it also includes the religious and cultural lives of the people (Mazibuko, 2016: 3). AbFP are frustrated with the local councillors, they feel as though they don’t support the needs of the community, hence they have come up with strategies to fight back. One activist from Freedom Park highlighted that:

It’s a lot of challenges that we are faced with at Freedom Park and we were supposed to have a development of the community but instead of having a development in Freedom Park, we had something that maximises profit for the corporates or the private companies. Instead of having a community that reflects a post-apartheid South Africa we have a community that still resembles the same characteristics of an old apartheid township, so that on its own is a challenge. The issues of human development sometimes through community participation, instead of having a
community participation you have a situation whereby the community will be called to support the decisions that have been already made somewhere by politicians. So it's not really an active and meaningful community participation that we have. I think basically that is the main challenge that we have. I believe that if we had a really meaningful community participation, it would be a participation that would actually empower the community in a way that at the end the community will be at the centre of the forward movement of the community but that is not happening; other people that are much more superior than the members of our community they decide for the community with the view of maximising the profit (male 2, Interview, 2015).

The decision to build houses with cardboard boxes, corrugated iron sheets and plastics on contested land is always deliberate: just so that when the state officials such as the police or the red ants and eviction bulldozers demolish their homes, they would at least be able to get other plastics and boxes from the wreckage. Investing in permanent structures on such land would be suicidal. Only when there is recognition from the state do residents believe that they can start to build permanent structures or agitate for RDP houses.

While AbFP were in the process of occupying land, they came across the PIE Act (Prevention of Illegal Eviction) which states that there are steps that should be followed by the government should people occupy the land illegally (Nhlanhla, female, interview, 2016). The Act is found in sections 4(6) and 4(7) of the Prevention of Illegal Eviction from and Unlawful Occupation of Land Act 19 of 1998 (PIE Act) (Southern African Legal Information Institute, 2013). The government has to go to the court of law to get eviction orders. AbFP are aware of this information and are occupying the land on the grounds that the Act also states that the government has to make sure that everyone has basic housing and sanitation. The PIE ACT is applicable to all land throughout South Africa, which includes any buildings or structures on municipal, private and state-owned land (le Roux Attorneys, 2016). This Act was effective from 1998 and the main aim is to protect both the owners of the land and those occupying the land (le Roux Attorneys, 2016). The AbFP feels that if basic developments existed in Freedom Park and people were not victimised by the system they would not have to occupy the land illegally:

Freedom Park is a community with a tradition that has militancy or resistance because even the formation of the community came about in the form of resistance movement. It was in 1993/4 when people came to occupy the land in the form of resistance, so that tradition has been going on till the houses were
built, the streets, the electricity, and all those things you see (Sipho, male, interview, 2015).

There is thus a strong, organic tradition of resistance and strategising against the state and private interests. AbFP as an invented space works with other invented spaces in the community such as the street and block committees and the women’s organisation. According to Nhlanhla (female, conversation, 2016), as women they need to organise and fight against being landless. Nhlanhla and other leadership members have formed block committees whom they communicate with regarding the land occupation. This is necessary so that they all agree on the same strategies. Part of the AbFP tradition is to closely observe the state’s or corporations’ actions in order to react accordingly. For instance, when the demolition teams come, accompanied by the police, they check to see who the police are. They have observed that on occasion some of the police who come to evict them do not wear badges. They also noted that the demolition crews are often also accompanied by members of the ruling party which for them means that it is merely the ruling party that is against the land occupation.

AbFP argues that in order for a protest action to be successful it is necessary for it to be strategic. For instance, the movement follows the principle, it says, of always trying to be one step ahead of the “enemy”. In some cases this means working together with struggle veterans, lawyers, students and other movements with which they can share tactics. Basically, AbFP see the need to apply both a legal and a political strategy. The legal strategy, in this latest case, included the court interdict and the political strategy is the land occupation (Anonymous, male 4, interview, 2016). The need for a political strategy is justified by the claim that current community leaders do not care about upholding the constitution. Not only does AbFP routinely occupy the land to test the authorities’ resolve, but they also strategically support people who fight for land, jobs and economic development within the organisation to contest elections. The purpose of this strategy is to keep the local establishment on its toes, make a show of power, and to confuse their opponents. So, for instance, Comrade Sipho and Comrade Nhlanhla contested the 2016 elections under the banner of SOPA. They do not imagine that they will beat the ruling ANC party. However, they know that the ANC is always worried about voter coalitions. The members of AbFP acknowledge the fact that the ruling party is powerful and that they cannot tackle it head on or even dare to
underestimate its power or test its full might. They do what they do because they have no other choice. They cannot just sit back and watch. At the end of the day, they argue, they need to do whatever it takes to fix Freedom Park. Freedom Park is an inheritance that they cannot afford to give up. The community seems to perceive the ANC and its ward committees, Imbizo’s and other more informal meeting spaces as invited spaces of participation that have failed them.

The main aim of AbFP is to enhance the existing life, survival and community skills of the Freedom Park community that should lead to the attainment of participatory community control and ownership of the community development process:

We are fighting to be at the centre, we should be part of the decision making. Decisions are being made by other people and imposed on us. For example, the school that is being built the budget we are told by the YDP that the budget is R67m but there are only 24 classes that are being built and for the community it is something that is very difficult to comprehend. With R67m you build only 24 classes in a community that is having 45 thousand people in estimation you see. The community feels that maybe if we were allowed to participate in the designs and in the whole process maybe things could have been done in a different way since maybe we are being undermined by those that have more power than us things are being decided by them and then imposed on us, if we try to raise those issues through protest and demonstration the state supresses you and makes sure that your head goes down (Anonymous, male 5, interview, 2015).

While these strategies are being implemented, women are responsible for organising and making sure that the execution process is a success by organising together with men in the community and also on their own. Moreover, contrary to the perception propagated in the media that service delivery protestors are involved in spontaneous protests based on a little strategy other than arson, tyre burning, toyi-toying and singing, the women of AbFP attend community classes and readings on “revolutionary strategy”. For instance, I witnessed them reading historical literature on how women organised in the 1950s. They also discuss how, going forward, they should vary their tactics and strategy for increased effectiveness. This point is expanded on below.
5.5 Saturday Struggle School, AbFP Leadership Meetings and Community Meetings

One of the most remarkable aspects of AbFP is their emphasis on strategy, debate, knowledge and education, and the sheer amount of time that they spend organising around this. This, as argued earlier, runs counter to the prevailing media stereotype of service delivery protests as being acts based on spontaneous and illiterate politics. For instance, AbFP have meetings they call Saturday Struggle School whereby they discuss various concepts such as Capitalism, the State and Apartheid, for the purpose of what they describe as “understanding how the South African system works”. For each week there is booklet that is handed out in advance for members to prepare for discussion. Comrade Mabaso from ILRIG introduced the first booklets to AbFP. He got the idea from an organisation called Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front (ZACF). Mabaso and AbFP met through ILRIG when they were trying to build PEMO (People’s Movement). Some of the AbFP comrades started attending the Saturday Struggle School that Mabaso was facilitating at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) and from there they then decided to run their own cycle in Freedom Park. However, the Saturday Struggle School is not an ILRIG initiative. This is one way that AbFP forms relationships and learns from other comrades. The Saturday Struggle School prepares and informs comrades about things that they may be not aware of in politics, for instance the consequences that come with occupying the land illegally. It is important to be knowledgeable because strategy alone is not enough. From the perspective of the community leaders, “capitalists” have all sorts of laws protecting them (Nhlanhla, female, conversation, 2015).

Table 5.4 shows how AbFP members understand various concepts covered in the booklet (see appendix B for booklet 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Definition (according to AbFP)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capitalism</td>
<td>• It’s a system that is controlling our lives, it has our land and all the money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• It’s a system that only cares about making profit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Class system                                                                 | • We are unequal, there’s the ruling class and us the lower class  
|                                                                            | • Us the lower class have to work for the ruling class in order to help them make more profit |
| Wage system & Exploitation                                                 | • As an employee I work hard to make sure that I get my job done but I don’t earn what I deserve.  
|                                                                            | • All we do is produce products with no benefits |
| How is capitalism wasteful and unstable                                    | • These people only care about making profit, everything with the system is about competition. Not about the ones who are struggling |
| What is the state and its role                                             | • The state only supports the capitalists system, look at how the police are treating us.  
|                                                                            | • These people only care about eating the money instead of providing us with basic services |
| Why is there unemployment                                                  | • They give each other jobs, or retrench us so that they keep making profit |
| The need for class struggle                                                | • As the poor class we need to stand together and fight against the system that is exploiting us |

In the leadership meetings they discuss the strategies that they have learnt from other organisations and from the Saturday Struggles School, and debate new ways of implementing them in Freedom Park. Members of the leadership belong to various street and block committees in the different sections of the township. These street and block committees inherently have a private dimension because they are located within people’s homes, they are necessary because they allow the residents to identify the
needs of each section. The structure and organising of AbFP fits the description of an
invented space made in the last chapter. This is because they create their own
organisational dynamic: they are organic. They also draw on two decades of social
movement praxis. As noted in chapter 4, invented spaces are “home-made” while the
invited space is the one that comes from above, constitutionally provided for but rarely
if ever something that organisations similar to AbFP have power over. Street
committee meetings are mostly dominated by women and most men are dominant in
the leadership of the umbrella organisation.

Images 5.4 Joining code and sms notifications for AbFP meetings

Screen shots: Image 5.4.1: mobile code to join in order to receive sms notification for AbFP meetings

Image 5.4.2: SMS notifications for the meetings

Images taken by: Author

The meetings that take place on Sundays are open to the entire community. In these
meetings various activists give the community members feedback on the strategies
that they have come up with from the Saturday Struggle School and from leadership
meetings. Here the leadership always emphasise the fact that they are meeting as *abahlali* (residents). The only ticket to attending these voluntary open meetings is that one has to live in Freedom Park. One can either come to speak or to listen. Anyone can speak or ask a question. These meetings take place every two weeks. The leadership caucus has harnessed the mobile app technology and created a cellphone code that community members can use to get notifications for any upcoming meeting. For one to register they have to dial the code and select option five whereby they will fill in their details so that they can receive notifications. In these meetings residents are also able to raise their own concerns, whether it is about their homes or the community at large.

5.6 Conclusion

The members of AbFP network with people from other organisations in order to learn more about struggle strategies, tactics, scenario planning, and what needs to be done to bring about change in Freedom Park and in the country as a whole. The SMO has also proven to be fairly unique in the way that it organises, as it is not only fighting for services but is also fighting capitalism. AbFP want to influence the decision-making that affects their lives. This is due to failure of the invited spaces, such as ward committees and institutionalised development forums, leading people to organise independently in order to have more control over their lives.

This chapter has provided an overview of the community of Freedom Park, how it was formed, the struggles that they went through and how they formed AbFP. It also provided details of how the SMO draws on Freedom Park’s own earlier traditions of *invented spaces* to mobilise and strategise. The chapter also proposed that women are at the heart of service delivery protests, a claim that shall be examined in detail in the next chapter. This chapter also sought to provide an understanding of how and why communities feel the need to organise, and why protest action may seem to be the best, if not the only, option in poor communities. Having noted that it is women who are more dominant in the street committee leadership and who organised the recent land occupation, the next chapter discusses the private and public sphere of women’s lives in Freedom Park.
CHAPTER SIX

INTERSECTIONS: THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC LIVES OF WOMEN IN FREEDOM PARK

6.1 Introduction

The aim of the chapter is to examine the possibilities, basing on the data gathered in the field for over one year, for either rupturing or persisting with the traditional binary of the public and private in the context of the lives of women who participate in service delivery protests in Freedom Park. The private space is where women’s political work takes place through informal networks such as community-based organisation (Miraftab, 2004: 2). The dichotomy of the private and public tends to exclude women’s political activities and agency, and it is through community activism that women’s work is demonstrated (Miraftab, 2004: 1). For women it is the private space that pushes them to go to the public to voice their grievances as it is where they experience poor living conditions. The public is also not an unsafe space for women as it is a space where they are encouraged to speak out, be independent and take on leadership roles.

These experiences have led to women creating the invented spaces of participation to fight for better living conditions. However, scholarly work has tended to focus on the public sphere where women are seen to be engaging in politics, neglecting to look at their everyday activities in the private spaces of their homes. When Freedom Park was first established, women were not part of the leadership and their role was not visibly recognised. Today, women either fight together or independently from men. The analysis given below of the life stories and everyday stories of selected women from Freedom Park goes someway to showing how the diversity of struggle options available to women emerged. The strength of this is that it draws on collected data and empirical evidence in order to give an overview of the daily life of women in Freedom Park, as well as show how they survive and manage the household while being able to organise outside the home and in the broader community.


6.2 Women’s Voting Decisions

On the local Election Day two groups of women were interviewed from two different voting stations. The reason for the interviews was to examine how women respond to exclusion from participatory democracy and how this has led to the formation of other invented spaces such as the women’s organisation in the community. The first group was in Freedom Park primary and consisted of women below the age of 45, who lived in backyard room shacks and RDP houses. The second group of women were interviewed at the Banner of Truth church and consisted of women above the age of 50. The aim of these focus group interviews was to find out what informs the women’s voting decisions and if they do believe that they benefit from democracy. Most importantly it provides context in which some women felt it was necessary to form an organisation that was welcoming to people from all political parties.

As mentioned earlier, women of AbFP have formed an autonomous organisation independently from the political parties because they thought that they should unite regardless of affiliation. Many felt that the political parties are corrupt and they don’t have access to basic needs. These two groups of women have different perceptions of what democracy means. Women in the first group who stay in the RDP houses say that their houses are no longer in good condition. One of them said “ndihlala endlini ebokoboko” meaning that “I live in a house that is in terrible condition”. They complain about the asbestos leaking. A health concern was that children often contract colds, fever and bouts of coughing are commonplace. The sinks provided by City Power leak, because the quality is generally substandard. The theory about substandard work is that much of the funding is siphoned away through corrupt means. Only a small amount is allocated to the project. An example that has been noted is the R67m budget that only managed to build 24 class rooms at the Freedom Park School (Nhlanhla, female, interview, 2015).

As already noted housing remains a major cause of contention in Freedom Park. One woman mentioned that she lives in a one room shack in someone’s backyard. That one room is for her “a bedroom, dining room and a kitchen, all in one”. Those who stay in the backroom shacks want to move out and also own their RDP houses. Some of the women indicated that their voting decisions strategically changed from 2014 when
they had voted for the ANC. They were voting for either the DA or the EFF, not only because they had not seen changes from the ANC since 1994 when they had been voting consistently for the ruling party, but because they thought an ANC loss would help shake the party out of its complacency. The women decided to play one political party against the other, the hope being that other political parties could bring change in their community or risk losing their votes.

Women below the age of 45 have mostly changed their voting decisions from the National Elections as compared to those over the age of 50. The possible reason for this could be that they have children who still attend school and they don’t have jobs. They therefore feel as though the current government is failing them and having a new one may bring change. Women who stay in the backyard shacks complained that they are forced to use the money that they receive from the social grant to pay rent. They cannot thus spend the grants on the children. The little that is left of the money is used to buy groceries. In this way they feel that what is given to them with one hand is taken away with the other. In the end they are back where they started.

Women generally feel that the “system” has failed them. When asked why they were unhappy with the system, the women (under 45) responded that:

- No it doesn’t benefit us at all, all they do is lie to us by making endless promises,
- What they do is eat the money amongst themselves there at the top and we get nothing, they don’t even want to fix those matchbox houses
- We vote because we feel obliged to vote. They say that if I don’t vote I won’t have a say, I vote because I have a huge gap, my children live with my mother, I can’t stay with my children because I stay in a one room shack.
- They eat the social grant money, when we go claim it we don’t get all of it, when you get the slip they tell you that you bought stuff that you didn’t buy, I’m unable to buy myself airtime with the grant money, there’s too much corruption in the government in charge.
Some women voters indicated that they are tired of being treated like outsiders in their own community. For instance, only members of the ruling party in Freedom Park were routinely allocated RDP houses. Another complaint raised by some women was that youth who had finished matric were not employed. They had not even been considered for the jobs of manning the voting station. Anonymous (female 10, interview, 2016) said that she does not feel that South Africa is a free country. When she looks around her she sees signs of this: young children are addicted to a drug called *nyaope* (a dreadful concoction of Anti-Retrovirals (ARVs), Marijuana and sometimes even rat poison); young girls get raped; children do not attend proper, adequately funded schools. For one woman respondent, all this boils down to is the fact that the government does not care about the poor, but instead serves the interests of the elites.

Some of the women who were voting also indicated that they have participated in the past in community protests and will likely do so again in the future, unless things changed for the better. Participating in an electoral democracy did not mean that they trusted elections to be the solution to their problems. Rather, they were merely using their votes to bargain for more control of their own lives. Basically, voting, withholding their vote, or voting for another party was part of a menu of options that they used at their discretion. This menu of options included voting, protests, marches, petitions, and land occupations. The reason they still continue to vote, they said, was out of fear of losing their “voices”. The government had told them that if one does not vote then she or he does not have a voice. They thus still wanted to keep their voting voice.

**Table 6.2 Women’s voting decisions on the National Election day, 3 August 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Dwelling type</th>
<th>No. of children</th>
<th>Voting decision changed from the national election?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Backyard shack</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>RDP</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>RDP</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Backyard shack</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>RDP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 6.2: showing women’s voting decisions*
Some women who were interviewed at the second voting station appeared to have been satisfied with their living conditions except that they have to pay a higher amount for the electricity and water. They complain about these high costs because they don’t have jobs and have to depend on social grants to pay for their electricity and water. The high fees are contributing to keeping them poor. Many people in Devland have managed to extend their RDP houses, and are hoping that the government could now build backrooms in their yards for their extended families. The women live with their children who are older, and some now have children of their own. The women complained about being discriminated against on the basis of age. One voter said:

Right now at the age of 51 the system doesn’t consider me and that means I can no longer become a councillor. But a child born in 1985 qualifies. What does that child know about the history of South Africa, the coming of Winnie Mandela and stuff like that? If the system can fix that we will be fine (Anonymous, female 11, interview, 2016).

For some of these women the government has practically abandoned them in favour of the next “fancy” project: youth. Job opportunities are only given to people who are between the ages of 18-35, though in the beginning the government said the youth, disabled and women should be put forward (Anonymous, females, 8 & 13, interview). Could it be that the ANC thinks that they have got the female vote locked up and expect to now garner the vote of the youth? There was a sense that the ANC was engaged in a battle for the youth vote with the DA and the EFF. The preference for the youth was spelt out in the following way by another elderly woman voter:

The government says youth only and ignores middle aged women. That time you can’t even receive social grant because you are below 60 and can’t be considered for job opportunities because we are above the age of 50. Yet we are the ones who work hard the most (Anonymous, female 12, interview, 2016).

The women did point out that they were not opposed to support being given to the youth. They were just worried by what they felt was the myopic way in which the government was going about allocating resources. It should not be a case of either/or. The women also pointed out that they still want the government to offer jobs to the youth so that they can stay away from the streets where they commit crime and take nyaope. Unemployed youth make the public spaces unsafe for everyone, but mostly for women.
An analysis of how women voted (or did not vote) in Freedom Park shows that women use voting as a weapon. They can either vote for the ruling party, vote for the opposition, or withhold their votes. Voting is clearly one of the options that they use at their discretion, along with protests and other forms of agitating. The evolution of voting strategies also mirrors the broader evolution of strategy in Freedom Park since the early 1990s. The belief in the efficacy of electoral democracy has largely eroded, and people believe more and more in taking issues into their own hands as far as possible. Lack of proper representation and failure of the invited spaces such as the NGOs, ward committees and development companies has led to the emergence of multiple invented spaces and protest actions in the community as a way to seek attention. Failure of representation and democracy has affected the private lives of the people, particularly those of women. Voting patterns also appear to indicate that women base their choices on their perception of whether or not government has contributed to changes in their daily lives. They rarely appear to vote on the basis of future promises, which they claim are empty anyway. Strategic voting is a way of playing political parties against one another hoping that this could keep politicians from getting complacent. As noted, the community is largely sceptical of such forms of representation.

6.3 Inhumane Living Conditions

Poor living conditions, elite democracy, not having water and sanitation, and engaging with the government is helpful but not enough and the fact that the government has not been able to employ everyone in decent jobs has led to a situation in which people have seen the need to create the invented participatory spaces. The invited spaces have failed the people. It is their private lives that have led them to create grassroots organisations that will give them a platform to come up with solutions for better living conditions. It is women, in particular, who are mostly affected by poor living conditions in the private sphere as they are mostly responsible for the household. There is subsequently a need to create informal networks such as street committees in which they bring out their private issues into the public sphere. In Freedom Park women have formed an invented space within and outside of the invented space of AbFP which is discussed in-depth later. The need for this was prompted by the idea that women and men have different needs which men from the core of AbFP, particularly its leadership
structures, cannot understand. Some of the unpleasant living conditions that affect women’s private lives and leads them to organise include sanitation and water.

6.3.1 Sanitation

In some sections of Freedom Park, such as Lindelani, residents routinely share mobile toilets. These residents have never owned their own private toilet or bathroom. The toilets do not flush. To make them easily accessible they are placed in front of the yards of the homes to make the sharing easier. These mobile toilets typically face the street, meaning that whenever one makes use of the toilet anyone walking the streets and any neighbours who are present can see. Because mobile toilets are all that the residents of Lindelani have, they are now habituated to them. This situation takes us back to the assertions in Chapter 3 by Bozzoli (1999) about people in Alexandra who are so used to the lack of space, to the rubbish and to the smells that, to them, such an environment has almost become normal.

Some of the Lindelani toilets do not close properly, a situation which requires another person to stand outside and close it for you so that it does not open while you are relieving yourself. As these toilets do not flush, it means that one gets to see all the faecal matter and other deposited waste that is in there. Some women do not feel safe going out to the toilet at night; they would rather use a bucket as an option, particularly when their children want to relieve themselves at night (Poppy, female, interview, 2015). The space of the toilet, instead of being a “comfort” space for relieving oneself in privacy, becomes a source of trepidation and even terror. For some South Africans, they have lived with non-flushing mobile and bucket toilets all their lives. Is it any wonder, then, that women get involved in so-called poo protests?

A study by Rossier (2013) published in Health24 showed that bad public sanitation increases the risk of having diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea, trachoma, typhoid and parasitic worms. The study also indicates that an average person visits the toilet about six to eight times a day and that suppressing urination due to unclean toilets can cause kidney and bladder diseases. Due to dirty toilets or the avoidance of using public toilets, some Lindelani residents sometimes choose to refrain from consuming foods or liquids which require them to use toilets too often, or sometimes just refrain from
using the toilets frequently. Rossier’s study indicated that poor hygiene, unsafe sanitation and unclean water drinking is responsible for at least 7% of the total worldwide burden of disease and almost 20% of children’s death globally.

Images 6.3.1 Resident’s mobile toilets in front of their yards

I was informed that if and when women take to the streets to protest about sanitation, it is really because they are tired of having to deal with such dehumanising details every single day of their lives. Protest is a refusal to normalise this dehumanisation. To make matters worse, Poppy’s shack in the Lindelani section is situated near a small dam which smells strongly of sewerage all the time. The sewage smell pervades her house, pots, clothes and blankets. She says to me that she refuses to get used to breathing the foul air; she has to smell it when she does her laundry outside and when her windows are open while she cooks. Poppy has been using the Lindelani public toilet for ten years. Lindelani means “keep waiting” in isiZulu.

6.3.2 Water

In some sections of Freedom Park clean tap water is still a pipe dream (Sibongile, female, Interview, 2016). Some families, for instance, still get water from the Jojo tanks
that they use to drink, cook and clean. Those who consume the water from the tanks constantly complain that the water is unsafe. Some women have their shacks perched up hills. This means that they have to walk up the steep incline with a bucket full of water, for washing clothes, bathing, cleaning, drinking and cooking.

Community members keep drinking water in buckets because tanks are not easily accessible. The users are concerned about the buckets as the water often changes colour at the bottom and they repeatedly find worms in the water. They keep water in the buckets because tanks are not easily accessible. This matter is concerning considering that approximately 1.9 million South African households are residing in informal dwellings, such as shacks or shanties in informal settlements or backyards. The percentage of households living in informal dwellings gradually increased from 13.0 per cent in 2002 to 13.4 per cent in 2009. The increase has been linked with increased urbanisation, especially in Gauteng and the Western Cape (UNICEF South Africa, 2012). The tanks are used without being regularly checked and cleaned (Sibongile, female, interview, 2015). Cases of diarrhoea, when they occur, are handled by the women who take children to the clinic. Women are the ones to be seen going out to fetch water from the tanks before hauling it back to their homes for a variety of uses. Some women water the plants that they grow in their yards as most of them are unemployed. They depend on the food that they grow because they cannot afford to buy enough groceries as the social grant or the stipend that they earn does not sustain them for the entire month.

6.4 Living Together

I observed that many couples in Freedom Park live together out of wedlock. This usually happens when the woman falls pregnant and opts to move in together with the boyfriend. Cohabitation is also known as “vat en sit”. Moraneng (2014), in Ridge Times article, states that most of those who cohabit do it because they believe that their relationship will become like that of a husband and wife. Poppy (female, interview, 2015) says that she and her partner have been living together for a very long time and she does hope that one day they will officially be married. However they are happy with the way things are at the moment and it already feels pretty much like marriage to her. For many women in black communities, having a man or being married is
socially and culturally valued. Marriage is viewed as sacred and brings people together, most importantly it is a transition from childhood to adulthood (Gasa, 2007). Hoag's study indicated that about 52% of families consist of a mother and a father; the father is the traditional head of the home. What I observed, however, was that not all of the couples were married and there was no difference in the way that married and unmarried women conducted themselves in their relationships. Those who live with their lovers relate to them in the same way that a wife does to her husband. Those who are single live with other family members and their children.

Coming into contact with different people and spending time with three different women with different home lives showed that, regardless of marital status, women fight not only for their families but for their community as a whole. Their daily struggles as activists do not stop when they get home because they have to cater for their children and other family members. The reason why activism does not stop at home is because the boundaries are blurred between the private space of the home and the public space where they fight for services. These spaces intersect with one another, hence street committees take place in the private spaces of the homes where people live. At home they worry about the present and the future of their children. They have to make sure that their children and partners get to school and to work in clean and ironed clothes, but also that there are school fees to enable children to stay in school. Poppy says she will not stop fighting until she gets a house with electricity and clean running water (female, interview, 2015). That is all she wants for her children, she says.

Dissatisfactory living conditions at home are the ones that motivate them to go to the streets to form movements and participate in public protests. For women, the public affects the private and vice versa because they are the ones who are the main consumers of basic services. For instance, most of them have to take children to school, clinics and make sure that they are fed. When the government does not deliver they are the ones who suffer the most because they consume these “public” services on behalf of their entire families in the “private” sphere (Moser, 1993).

The women that I had conversations with in the community meetings, together with those who I interviewed, seemed selfless in their reasons for participating in
community protests. When asked, they said that they want what belongs to them for the sake of their children’s future, and that they simply want the freedom and liberation that was supposed to have been theirs in 1994 (Poppy, Nhlanhla and others, conversation, 2015). At the inauguration of democracy, the newly installed ANC made promises for a “people-centred” and “people-driven” government (Ngwane, 2011: 46). When those promises were not fulfilled people decided to use protests as a form of communication to show their grievances (Alexander, 2010 and Ngwane, 2011). The rise to power of a black government headed by a black man gave them hope that they would finally be free. However, many feel totally betrayed by the system that was supposed to relieve them from a history and its horrific consequences of the four “Ps”: poverty, patriarchy, privatisation and a profit-extracting neoliberal agenda. The BusinessTech (2015), reveals that South Africa has the highest rate of unemployment in the world, at 25%, and one of the highest Gini coefficient (measuring the wealth gap between the rich and the poor) of 0.69. An article in the Mail & Guardian (2015) states that over half of South Africans live below the poverty line, meaning that about 27 million people are living on R25.50 a day and, of that, 10% live below the extreme poverty line at R15.85 a day. Acute poverty is salient in disadvantaged communities, many of which are identified as informal settlements (Goebel, 2011: 371).

6.5 Women’s Empowerment and Development in the Community

Women in the community meetings are of the opinion that an engaging and responding government will free them from poverty. By freedom they mean getting basic services such as housing, water and electricity. They also feel entitled to this freedom because it was supposedly given to them by the democratic government (Sibongile, female, interview, 2015). For them, freedom means getting back their land, being empowered and having control over the development of their community. Also being empowered to them means having control over the socio-economic part of their lives. Even though women may feel like they don’t have freedom in their community, they still make use of available resources and opportunities. For instance they attend Saturday Struggle School in order to understand concepts such as capitalism, socialism, democracy, and oppression; these help them to better understand the society in which they live; and they organise community meetings in order to bring
change and help their children with homework. They believe that if they stand together with the support of men, they can achieve a lot.

In one of many conversations I had with women, they mentioned that even though they may feel overwhelmed, and at times hopeless at the state that the community is in, they can’t afford to give up now because giving up means giving up their power and what they are entitled to. Giving up for women also means giving up the future of the next generation of Freedom Park. They want their children to grow up in houses and not in shacks without electricity. In order to achieve this, women believe that they need to come together and organise. This organising means that people in the community come together to fight against problems and influence each other about the decisions that need to be implemented in order to overcome the current situation that they are dealing with. This form of organising makes women realise that they are not alone but can instead rely on one another and are not responsible for all of the difficulties. Instead, they feel like it is their responsibility to fight for their community to become a better place. Poppy says:

Life here in Freedom Park is nice, we are used to it. But my struggle is the house. I am more worried about getting a house than I am about getting a job. However, I do feel like jobs can free us even though we won’t get rich, at least we won’t be hungry. I am not free because I do not have a permanent place, I don’t know where I stand. It’s so much better when you have a house of your own, you know it’s yours (female, interview, 2015).

Becoming a part of the social movement AbFP and street committees makes women feel more empowered because they now have a platform whereby they can voice their opinions: “my husband suggests to attend meetings with me and asks me not to say, ask or answer anything… when I hear something I do not fully agree with I voice my opinion” (Sibongile, female, interview, 2016). The movement has given women the opportunity to better plan for the community. Community struggle and organising has allowed them to share their experiences and difficulties, and also learn that these problems are not personal but they are social ones. Sharing experiences has allowed women to stop feeling embarrassed and helpless about their lives, and to instead do better for their community.
Before the formation of AbFP, women were not as vocal as they are now about their concerns. Joining the movement and being in solidarity allowed them not to look back: “Phela thina sizabalazile (we’ve been fighting the struggle) so a person who steps back doesn’t know anything about the journey of the struggle. Fighting the struggle has made us strong, we are a group of brave women, and we’ve stopped fearing long ago, we’re able to face the challenge” says Poppy (female, conversation, 2016). After joining the movement they made connections with other institutions such as the University of Johannesburg and organisations such as ILRIG. They have learnt a number of skills from various organisations that they are now implementing in the organisation (Anonymous, female 4, interview).

6.6 Women’s Role in the Private and Public Sphere

In July 2016 women decided to form their own organisation, which was for women only but fell under AbFP. The purpose of this organisation within the main SMO is to allow them to talk about issues that affect them directly. Issues such as unemployment, the inability to provide for the children and not having a place to stay affect women directly. An Anonymous woman and Nhlanhla (females, conversation, 2016) say that they see it as their direct responsibility, for instance, to make sure that nobody in the family goes to bed on an empty stomach. There is always a sense that men can afford to take their minds off these things by going out to take a drink with friends. Women, on the other, hand, cannot afford to do the same. It almost seems as if every single moment of their waking life is spent worrying about the next meal, bar of soap, bucket of water, the coming winter, floods, school fees, demolitions, and so on. These struggles, they argue, cannot be understood in the same way by men. My view is that this organisational structure, the women’s structure within AbFP, is the most direct proof of the shattering of the binary between private and public.

A vast literature on black South African women has demonstrated that they have suffered the triple jeopardy of being female, black and poor (Hassim, 1991; Gasa, 2007; Britton and Fish, 2009). This triple jeopardy is the source of black women’s unique view on domestic responsibilities. This is not to suggest that men cannot have such a unique view or that women do not have the support of men. On the contrary, many men are relied upon to work in tandem with the women. The purpose of
highlighting the intersectionality of the responsibilities for women is to show how protests unfold in a place such as Freedom Park. I suggest that protests tend to begin with the women, in the home. Protests unfold largely due to the sometimes very small fluctuations, disappointments and frustrations that women face daily in the home. As this study indicates, some of these protests would be highly unlikely in the absence of those frustrations and ordeals experienced in the home on a daily basis.

The women’s organisation is an alternative discursive space within the space of a SMO. It allows for women to be both dominant and visible in their role, and for their voices to be fully heard as they, to a certain extent, feel excluded in the SMO of AbFP. This women’s organisation has different rules and norms from the core of the SMO. For instance women’s needs and voices are valued more in this setting. The three invented spaces (the AbFP leadership structure and its meetings; the street committee; and the AbFP women’s organisation) are different in terms of how they are structured but still work together. The AbFP leadership structure is primarily active in the public domain, while the street committee is the heart and pulse of the organising which is largely hidden from the media: it is a space where the main local concerns emerge and are dealt with.

These street committees are dominated by women and located literally in the private homes of the people. The leadership of AbFP is comprised of and dominated by men who are the public face of the movement. Women hence formed their own space within and outside the invented space to reflect more adequately the needs and aspirations of women who head households and deal most regularly with everyday issues of development. As discussed, these largely boil down to the private homes of individuals and their families. It is in this context that invented spaces need not only be analysed as part of a public sphere, but also in the private sphere.

The need for women to organise separately from men has served to highlight their increasingly visible role. They no longer merely pull the strings in the background, as it were. This organisation within an organisation is a “safe space” for the women to discuss what they would not ordinarily say in the presence of men. This safe space allows them to share solutions for their households. This is a serious undertaking. The research done by Hoag and GOLCCOM (2014) indicates that most families rely
heavily on social grants. Furthermore, there are many homes headed by females only in Freedom Park. These women are also the men of the house, so to speak. Nhlanhla and another Anonymous women told me that they felt the need to organise women independently because they are aware of the inequalities and pain that mothers go through when they are unable to provide for their families (Nhlanhla and Anonymous, females, conversation, 2016). After multiple incidents of protests women in the leadership felt the need to organise other women independently, partly to more visibly aid the struggle but also to formally recognise and respect the important role that women play as Freedom Park’s heartbeat.

Diagram 6.6 Indicates women’s transition and roles in Freedom Park over the years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Women's role is not recognised, even though they do organise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late 2013/early 2014</td>
<td>Women and men organised together openly. During this period, women are recognised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Women organise independently</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Diagram 6.6: Indicates the transition of women’s role in Freedom Park over the years
Diagram by: Author

The reason for forming a women-only inner sanctum within the broader organisation is also strategic. At the surface, this decision raises concerns about women not being able to fully express their opinions and their “place” within the organisation. However, I was told that this women-only space allows women to be more effective organisers. One Anonymous woman (female 9, interview, 2016) argues that women do most of
the grassroots organising here in the community of Freedom Park anyway and that it was time that this was seen by all. Strategically, however, women could more directly sense and communicate the urgency of situations. Secondly, the new found visibility would help women get in front of the queue in accessing houses, water and other services. The lop-sidedness that exists had always been that men were elevated to the front of the queue. Women were only incorporated in token ways for a so-called gender balance. The women I spoke to felt that things should be the other way round. A third strategic reason for creating this space is so that other women in the community who are unable to join AbFP, or who might be left out for a variety of reasons, would get the opportunity to voice their opinions.

Pointer (2004: 276) notes that the literature on new social movements recognises the role of women, yet power relations within the movements themselves have not been challenged. Pointer also highlights that in her research with MPAEC, gender issues were not addressed and there was no representation of women within the organisation. In the case of AbFP women also failed to challenge the issue of gender inequality within the movement, hence Nhlanhla, as a female in the leadership, decided to form a women’s organisation. This is an invented space within and outside of a male-dominated invented space. In an interview when I asked her about the role of women in the community she stated that “we are not feminists, we don’t believe that men are closing doors for us” and she also says that “the challenges that we are facing, we are facing them as people not as women” (Nhlanhla, female, interview, 2015).

Nhlanhla’s understanding of feminism explains the transition of the roles that women have taken over the years. Instead of challenging the gender issues within the movement or the community they decided to work together with men and independently of them. Female activists like Nhlanhla, even though they claim not to be feminists, do appear as such to some level when they refuse to stop talking in the community meetings or form their own organisation that values their needs. Feminism “has a direct political dimension, being not only aware of women’s oppression, but prepared actively to confront patriarchal power in all its manifestations” (Hassim, 1991: 72). It could be concluded that they deny being feminists because it’s a “bad word” amongst certain groups of men in society.
AbFP is visibly a male-dominated organisation. For instance, there are only three women in the leadership. These women sense that when they stand up too strongly and too often at AbFP meetings they put themselves at risk of being perceived as disrespectful, going against the culture of the community, and losing honour and respect. By organising independently, women are finding ways to stand up for what they believe in and to speak about their own issues in a way that doesn’t water down their experiences.

The women-only space was also used to plan and to embark on the women-only land occupation protest. This shows that women occupy multiple spaces at once. Conceptually restricting women’s roles to the private domestic space is a distortion of what actually goes on in the real world. Issues such as “unemployment, inability to provide for our children and being landlessness affect us directly, whereas men are able to figure things out for themselves” (Nhlanhla, female, interview, 2016). The emphasis, again, is on “directly”. The ability of women to organise a land occupation or plan and prosecute a protest in the absence of men further refutes the false binary. Basically, women can and do intersect all spheres. A startling fact that I discovered from talking both to the men and women is that men in the community of Freedom Park have never embarked on a protest alone, nor planned one, in the absence of women. On the other hand, women have planned and carried out a women’s-only protest, whereby they marched silently to the land in order to occupy it on 03 September 2016.

The latest protest organised by the women showcases their organisational acumen. For instance, it included women from other organisations and strategically invited the premier of Gauteng David Makhura as well as one of the core leaders of the EFF. Previously, I was told, women have been brutalised by the police. Inviting “people with power” would help forestall being attacked by the police as they have in the past. Some men from the community were not pleased by this show of initiative from the women. The prospect of seeing women take over the land and act in their absence went against the “tradition” of males being the visible leaders of land occupations. This break with “tradition” made some men feel irrelevant. After this “snub”, they were unwilling to offer the women their unreserved support. In the end, the women did not receive support from men in the community.
6.7 Participating in Protests

When women protest in the streets of Freedom Park they see themselves as “activists” and not “women activists” (Sibongile, female, interview, 2016). They get the same treatment that men get. For instance they get arrested by the police and are thrown in jail cells. Tear gas and rubber bullets, I was told, do not discriminate between women and men’s bodies. Basically, women participate in protests the same way that men do. However they also contribute more materially. For instance, I noted that although there are more men than women in the Sunday afternoon meetings, when asked to make donations for the car that goes around the community to make announcements, the women tend to make a bigger contribution than the men.

Image 6.7 Sunday community meeting

There are more women attending the Sunday mass meetings than men. This trend is reversed in the Wednesday AbFP leadership and planning meetings. Very few women attend these Wednesday meetings primarily because it is the people who are in the leadership (i.e. men) who attend these meetings. However, the Wednesday meetings are open to everybody. Most women said that they do not attend the mid-week
meetings due to time constrains. For instance, the Wednesday meetings start in the evening at 6pm. Women have other responsibilities at this very time at home such as cooking and taking care of children. They have no one to do it for them. Some women also mentioned that their partners did not want them to attend meetings late at night. My understanding is that they are either worried for the women’s safety or they are just jealously protective. The Sunday meeting, on the other hand, only starts at 3pm. In the Sunday meetings women are clearly more vocal than men. This might be partly due to there being power and safety in numbers. There are times when the women would refuse to stop talking in the Sunday meetings even when the leadership would try to stop them due to time constraints. The issues that women consistently raise in these meetings are about housing, community projects, and land.

For female residents, going to a meeting to discuss community issues is the same as taking care of their families because that is where they raise their issues. Women take lead roles in both their public and private spaces even while appearing to submit to the men. In one of the community protests women asked the men to let the women take the lead role while the men followed them behind. The women intended to use the bare bum strategy at the head of the protest. This strategy involves women taking off their clothes as a way of showing their anger in a public protest but also to shame the police from brutalising their bodies. In this case, of course, the women did not go as far as being nude. They were mostly in tight short pants and vests. The protest succeeded because the police did not dare to touch them. Bare bums only go to show the repertoire of tactics that the women of Freedom Park utilise to protect their community or to get what they want. These go against the false perception that a “proper” place for women is at home and not in politics (Tripp et al, 2008: 164).

Protests such as the bare bums protests make women insert their private bodies into public spaces. Methods such as these become necessary when every other method, from petitions to marches, has failed. During the poo protest men stood at the back while women took on the lead role by asking the men to step back so that the women could fight. This type of protest suggests that both the public and private spheres are intertwined as opposed to being distinct from one another, as the protesting women never have privacy while using toilets in the home anyway. Baring their naked bodies extends the exposure they experience on a daily basis into a public space. Sadiqi and
Ennaji (2007) have suggested that women only enter the public space when they walk on the streets without necessarily finding the space to express themselves. As noted, bare bums protests are also a way of protecting their men in the public space, an extension of the maternal nurturing role that women play at home.

Protest action, it must be noted, is not something new. It is a method that was used with different levels of success during the apartheid struggle. The use of this method has been revived in communities for different political reasons (Ngwane, 2011). In Freedom Park, as noted, there was scarcely a break between apartheid and post-apartheid protest because the occupation that created Freedom Park spanned the period from apartheid and beyond it. The issues that are top of the protest list concern housing, followed by anger at corrupt local government, water and sanitation issues. Housing, we can note, was an issue from the very beginning. It was an issue in 1994, and is still an issue in 2016. Even though there were fundamental changes, these continuities make it seem as though the break from apartheid to post-apartheid are only in principle.

In reality, people do not think that much has fundamentally changed. This lack of change is reflected in the daily complaints raised by women. Women who live in shacks complain that their shacks get flooded during the rainy seasons. Electricity is also an issue because women have to wake up early to make fire so that the children and those who have to go to work early can bath with warm water and have breakfast. In the evening again they have to make fire so that they can be able to cook. Women in Freedom Park are the ones who suffer the most from lack of housing, water and sanitation. Not having electricity in the shacks makes matters worse. In South Africa about 15% of households stay in shack settlements, while others live in backyards (News24, 2016).

In Freedom Park many squat and rent in backroom shacks while they wait to get their houses. For some, the wait for their own houses seems to take forever, a feeling of frustration exacerbated by the fact that houses are often corruptly allocated to people who jump the queue in the waiting list. Nhlanhla lives in an RDP house and rents out two shacks in her backyard. Both shacks are occupied by mothers with children and other family members. The dissatisfaction with the living conditions and the lack of
accountability from local government creates anger and frustration to people like these who have families but have to squat in a two room shack without electricity. Poppy (female, interview, 2015) confesses that she is “more worried about getting a house than I am about getting a job. However, I do feel like jobs can free us even though we won’t get rich, at least we won’t be hungry”.

The reason she needs a house first is because she realises that there is no way she can get a job that will ensure that she buys or pays to build a house. For people like her, jobs are primarily for keeping daily hunger away. Bentley (2004: 247) argued that women and men experience poverty in different ways and it tends to be more severe on women. It is more severe on women like Poppy because they have to take care of the entire household. The entire household includes a number of children and a boyfriend who she has to feed on grant money. Poppy is one of those on the housing waiting list which seems to be a wait for eternity. She started living in Freedom Park in 1996 but she still has no house, no electricity and uses a public toilet. Women like Poppy have to make means to survive in the community as they don’t have jobs.

6.8 Means of Survival

6.8.1 Collection for Funerals

Funerals in black communities and cultures are an important ceremony and usually take place for the entire day. This event is attended not only by close family and friends, but by many people in the community and family members from far. Even those who did not know the deceased very well feel obliged to attend the funeral because it is a norm to support each other during a time like this. I am focusing on the funeral because of an economic practice that highlights the role of women in the community. This is a practice of collecting money in the community when someone dies. Typically, a funeral is the one time that women seem to be free to move from house to house without any hindrance. The women are tasked with collecting contributions and writing down the names of the contributors.

Only women can do this job. The collections book, together with the money, are taken to the home of the deceased. The family of the deceased counts the money and checks to see if it corresponds with the amounts recorded in the book. The family gets
to spend money on the basic necessities such as food, candles, cookies and tea. This practice, in which the role of women is at the centre in ensuring that funerals go ahead smoothly and with dignity, is an illustration of the way women can be seen as the glue that holds Freedom Park and other similar communities together. From the day that the community members hear about the death, women literally take over. Firstly, they immediately congregate at the home of the deceased for the purpose of *ukuyolila* (Xhosa word for cry). This practice involves “crying together” with the bereaved, sitting with them and comforting them. It also means that women from the community can help with different tasks at the funeral, such as cooking, sweeping and running errands. Later in the evening the women from the community attend *umlindelo* (night vigil). I was told that these practices help knit the community together.

Over centuries African funerals have brought families, friends and neighbours together, even in instances whereby people have not communicated for a long time. Women say that it is important for them to support each other in the community. This for them means being there for one another especially in difficult times such as in the event of a death. When a person dies it is not only the family that loses but the community. What I also noticed, however, was that funerals were an opportunity not only to mourn the dead but also to discuss community issues and update each other on matters of interest to the community. I noticed that the very same non-partisan unity shown at a funeral is the same unity replicated in fighting community issues. Death, it was said, touches everyone. In the same way, the issues of the community touch everyone in Freedom Park. I am tempted to infer that the centrality of women to the community is cemented by such events as funerals, and not just with regards to protests. This inference, if it is correct, would add to the critique against the split between private and public. They are merely very human at their core. What is clear is that the funeral is where the community feels to be mourning its own and preparing itself for life without the departed.

6.8.2 Informal Work

Women in Freedom Park take part in different types of work in order to generate and supplement income. Even those who do not have stable jobs do informal work in order for them to be able to take care of their families. The smallest space in their yards is
always rented out to shack-dwellers. Electricity is also connected illegally without the consent of the authorities. Shack building in yards and illegal connections of electricity point to the invented spaces of the township. People do whatever they can to survive, without waiting for permission from local government. As I was told, survival comes first.

Other women like Sibongile do voluntary work at the community clinic and earn a stipend at the end of the month. She says the stipend is not enough for her to feed the entire family for the whole month. Her job, from Monday to Friday, is to go around the community, house-to-house, identifying households with problems. The job is not only low paying, it also does not have any benefits. Should she be unable to continue with work for one reason or another she will not have money to sustain herself. From the stipend she is also not able to save for the future of her children’s education should they one day wish to further their studies at a university. Still, the little that they receive from the clinic “is better than nothing”.

Being entrusted with such a job also offers proof that women from the community can do competent professional work. Essentially, they have the skills to be successful but are being held back by a variety of circumstances largely linked to the collective failures of the post-apartheid state to decisively break with the apartheid political economy. Jobs such as Sibongile’s, which pay out a pittance, do not help women escape the poverty trap. They merely help them survive from day to day and from hand to mouth. This situation leads to a feeling that one is trapped in a gigantic conspiracy to keep her poor. This has the positive effect of spurring the women to throw all their resources into fighting poverty as they have nothing to lose.

Poppy worked for an NGO and earned a stipend of R530 each month. She felt grossly exploited and decided to quit. She did not reason that R530 was better than nothing. Various community projects in Freedom Park that women could benefit from such as road works, construction and public works are mostly monopolised by men (Anonymous and Nhlanhla, conversation, 2015). Women mainly “work” for the NGOs and for the Community Literacy and Numeracy Group (CLING) which was established in 2009 in Freedom Park. The project focuses on improving literacy and numeracy for children and the youth as it is a major concern in communities.
6.9 Conclusion

If we look at Freedom Park, the separation of “private” and “public” spaces is shown to be a false binary that does not hold up in reality. Basically, one cannot be understood without the other. The private and public spaces are seen as both gendered and political; the private space is defined in terms of the home, family, the domestic; and the public space in terms of work, power and politics (Disney, 2008; Hassim, 1991; Pateman, 1989; Ruiters, 2008; Sadiqi and Enaji, 3007). Hence:

The separation of spheres also led to important differences between men and women, and to two different community organizing styles. Community organizing typically begins in the expanded private sphere of the neighbourhood. But because the neighbourhood is not as isolated as the family, and its networks include secondary as well as primary relationships, it can also be a public sphere space. This may particularly be the case for the men in those neighbourhoods, who are pressured by the separation of spheres to think of themselves as public sphere actors. Consequently, there is a public sphere approach and a private sphere approach to community organizing that parallels differences between the community experiences of men and women (Stall and Stoecker, 1998: 732).

I would argue that before something becomes public, it first has to be private, and after it has been public, it goes back to being private. Furthermore, the two are intermeshed.

This chapter has provided data and analysis of the living conditions, daily struggles and survival strategies of women in Freedom Park. The chapter has also attempted to demonstrate why service delivery protests are impossible without women, wives and mothers. Women’s day-to-day struggles show how the private and the public intersect with each other, rather than being binary opposites. This appears in the transition of women in Freedom Park from not being recognised to organising independently. The way that women organise and argue that their needs are different from men’s allows them to occupy various spaces. Also, because they experience poverty on a direct day to day basis and are responsible for maintaining the home, they do most of the grassroots work hence they are more involved in the street committee as opposed to the SMO of AbFP. The following chapter provides detailed and, to a certain extent uninterrupted, life histories of three women activists who represent the daily life of women in poor communities.
CHAPTER SEVEN

LIFE HISTORIES

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores in more intimate detail the daily lives of women both at home and within the organisation. The significance of this chapter is to show how women perceive their own participation in popular protests and how they negotiate, weave and balance the private and public lives from their perspective. It is important to give these women the opportunity to tell their stories, as Nite and Stuart (2012) highlighted that life history allows the participants the freedom to express and reflect on their whole lives completely. Each of the main three sections of the chapter are about women. The sections start by giving an overview of their background and how they got to where they are now, in order to get a better understanding of how and why women are active in both public and private spaces. The life history of each woman will start by going over their childhood lives, reasons for moving to Freedom Park, what life is like in Freedom Park, daily struggles and survival strategies in a disadvantaged community.

The three women whose life histories are presented here come from different backgrounds, and they are all activists who are deeply involved in community work that challenges the state. Even though these women are all activists they each have their unique cases that set them apart from each other, and other women in Freedom Park who are also actively involved in the community struggles. These stories show that women occupy various spaces hence they have created or joined invented spaces of participation such as AbFP SMO, the women’s organisation, and block/street committees. The various invented spaces are not separate and distinct from each other, instead they overlap. Poppy, for example, emphasises that, “I usually meet and talk with the comrades and our block/street committee members, there’s about seven or eight of us. The block/street committees are part of AbFP who represent different sections of Freedom Park” (Poppy, female, interview, 2015).

These invented spaces of participation allow them to make their own decisions regarding their community as they are the ones who know what their needs are. The invited spaces provided for the community have failed to meet their needs: the
development companies in the community, for instance, don’t consult with the residents about what they want. The interview with Nhlanhla (female, 2015) highlights how the various invented spaces are interconnected:

We had service delivery challenges and corruption because what happened that day in May/June/July somewhere there we had a workshop for Co-ops and there was no electricity. So people decided that no, there have called their leaders and none of them are coming through to solve the problem. So they went to the streets and took out robots, the police came to shoot and that’s how it all started. When we got out of the meeting, we were told that it is difficult outside. Then we decided to call a meeting and form block committees to challenge the municipality and we sent delegates to the municipality. It was a long process and even now our case is at the legislature and they still haven’t responded. We decided to form AbFP because we wanted a neutral platform whereby people cannot say that the people here belong to the ANC, SOPA etc., we say it is our problem as abahlali regardless of the political party.

The failure of the invited spaces in Freedom Park have created a situation whereby women have felt the need to bring their private struggles into the public space. It has also created a situation whereby women formed their own organisation as an invented space within and outside of the male dominated organisation of AbFP. Women’s work in politics takes place in the informal networks of the homes (Miraftab, 2006). In post-apartheid South Africa the poor survive through the work of middle-aged African women and this arrangement has become normal and exists in communities where people struggle for basic services and development (Benson, 2015: 386). For Pointer (2004), the role of these women may be recognised but the issues of hierarchy are not challenged. It is therefore necessary that the concepts of the invited and the invented spaces also focus on the private lives of women, instead of the public lives only. These life histories represent how single mothers, married women and women cohabiting survive each day and still combine that with organising on behalf of the community. The women’s life histories are mainly unfettered and are told in their own voices. The need to write these life histories in their own voices results from the under-representation of women’s voices in South African literature on protests and participation.

7.2 Having to be strong for other women, but I have the same struggle:

*Nhlanhla Beda is one of the few woman in the leadership of Abahlali baseFreedom Park. In her story she talks about her role as a woman in the male dominated*
organisation and in the community at large. People in the community are depending on her as she has made it a priority to fight for the landless people. Nhlanhla’s main concern is that black people in South Africa are colonised and they are not aware of it. As an activist she believes it’s her job to make people aware so that they can be freed and that the only way to obtain this is if people fight in solidarity. She has created a platform in the community whereby people can come to her with their grievances. In the community people bring their private issues to her home. Her private home then becomes partly an invented space of participation whereby people bring in their private problems. It is instances like these that make it necessary to understand the invented spaces in relation to the private lives of women at home. Women discuss their private issues in their homes and in block/street committees before taking them to the public space of the SMO. Her story, when considered in relation to the broader political movements in Freedom Park, suggest therefore that the concept of the invented space should be explored in the private sphere as well. Nhlanhla’s story is important because it provides a deeper understanding of the relationship between the invented space and the private sphere and the subtle ways in which women organisers challenge hierarchy, including patriarchy, in SMOs.

The need to form a women’s organisation as an invented space within and outside of another invented space came about after Nhlanhla and others saw how women in the community struggle. As women, she believes that they are the primary caretakers of the household. She says that our great grandparents fought the struggle yet women are not free. She continues to desire and fight for a platform whereby women can openly talk about their daily struggles. Women are the primary caretakers of the household and men have the freedom to figure things out for themselves. Not having a house is a major struggle for many women in the community, hence the need to organise women independently. Her life as an activist continues whether she’s in the meeting in a public space or at home. Her daughter has raised concerns about her activisms invading their privacy. Nhlanhla has also been threatened by men in the community because of her activism, and this has put her in a situation whereby she is seen as disrespectful by some of the men in the community. When Nhlanhla was growing up, she did not take a lot of things that were happening seriously because she was told that Jesus was going to come and save the world. That influenced the later part of her life, hence in the community she is creating invented spaces of participation
and taking the lead role in the community struggles because she believes that no one will save them unless they take matters into their own hands. The following sections offer the voice of Nhlanhla who explains the various stages of life she has been through, thus providing unique insight into her activism in both the public and private sphere.

Upbringing

My name is Nhlanhla Beda and I was born in the Eastern Cape in 1977, there's two of us at home. It's me and my brother whom I am very close with. My father worked in Germiston and my mother was a housewife. But my dad passed away and my mother is still alive and lives back home in the Eastern Cape. I grew up in church as Jehovah's Witnesses and we were always told that God was going to bring his glory to us one day, and that made me to not take things seriously because I believed that God was going to come through for me. I miss my childhood so much because as a child I was very happy. I was the only girl at home and got all the attention that I needed. We had livestock at home, so I used to herd and I was really attached to the animals.

At home my parents expected me to be perfect because they are religious. I went to school in the Eastern Cape until I completed my matric and we used to get beaten up by the teachers a lot, but you know they used to do it because they cared about us not because they were spiteful. From there I went to Durban for my tertiary education, I did computer sciences but when I went back in March I was told that Salton College had closed down because it was not registered. I decided to stay with my mom’s sister in Wildcoast. Fortunately, I got a temporary job as a receptionist. I then fell pregnant and decided to come to Johannesburg in 1998 because I thought life would be so much better. For years I struggled to get a job. In 2002 my brother, whom I used to live with got to know Sipho who is an activist and we then got involved in politics. Remember I grew up in church, we left it. Sipho is a member of SOPA and we joined him; that's how we got involved in the struggle. This struggle thing I got it from them.

I got a job in March 2013 at Monene Civils as a Community Liason Officer, they are the developers of this area who are hired by the City of Johannesburg. So I got a job there and got a stipend of R7000; you know I talk too much. There are things that they
do “under the carpet” so I spoke out and they decided to terminate my contract. I took them to the CCMA and they said that they will take me back. The owner of the company said I should stop working, however I will continue receiving my stipend until the contract ends. I don’t know when that will be. I am also part of a community programme called CLING, we assist children from grade R with their homework and school work. We are three here in the house: it is me, my daughter and my brother’s son. I am not married but I am in a relationship. I used to live by myself and my daughter came back this year from the EC and the monthly stipend is not enough. I spend it on groceries, toiletries, clothes and on top of that I am supporting four other people, I think getting R20 000 would be helpful as I would like to renovate my RDP and build a house back at home.

I go to a church called Revelation Church of God. I had spiritual challenges and I thought the best way of dealing with them was to go to a church. I was reading this other book and it says us black people we are so spiritually gifted and external appearance is merely a reflection of your inner soul and therefore, if you are not spiritually pure, you cannot be a good person outside. If you don’t deal with spiritual issues then you can’t move forward. When I think about it now, that is why the colonisers used religion as a weapon and won because they were aware of the spiritual nature of African-Black and if they destroy that spirit that defines who you are then you become alienated from yourself and become a non-being. Then after discovering that I thought let me deal with myself so that I can move forward, then I discovered the church of Revelation. I have gone to the Sangomas (traditional healers). What I discovered about this church is that the priest is not like other priests from other churches. He will talk to you first as an African, being colonised emotionally, spiritually and physically. And facing the situation we are facing now and thinking about how we are going to get out of the situation we are in.

So for me attending the church is not an answer as such but at least there’s green light, I know what is happening spiritually and if I want guidance I go to him because he is more spiritually mature than me. He knows some of the spiritual things, so for guidance I go there. There is counselling at church as well. I go on a Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. The days that I am counting are for people like us abanomoya (spiritually gifted). I don’t believe in the miracles that they do, yes they do their thing
and I am not bothered by them. I know why I go there. The book says if you are unable to channel your spirit into the right direction, it will end up destroying you. That is why people are able to do bad things to people and then say “I don’t know how I did it” and you find that really there was no reason for the person to commit the act (killing, raping etc). So our spirits are not free, we have anger and all these things. So if we can have more platforms like those it would be helpful because our people need counselling. If only he could have more space and more time maybe he could make a difference in many people’s lives.

Life in Freedom Park

Life is very difficult here in Freedom Park in a sense that there is high unemployment rate. Crime is not that much but they once broke into my house and took my tablet and cellphone. Even though this happened I don’t think that I will ever leave Freedom Park, it’s like my second home. Poverty and corruption are the biggest problem here and the police are arrogant, they ask us why we complain because we don’t even pay a cent. Another thing is that I feel like people don’t get along like they used to in the community, especially because others are extending their homes. So even within the poor working class there are different classes. They have that thing that so-and-so is better than so-and-so, there is jealousy within the poor class. I wish our society was classless and I think it will happen if we have faith and believe it will happen, especially through mobilising and organising. We as South Africans can achieve a lot if we can abolish political parties and come together.

Daily life

Every day I do various things to help my community, I do not know what else I can do except my life as an activist. I am a threat to the ruling party here in the community. Sometimes I would get calls from people threatening me and asking me to leave Freedom Park and go live somewhere else where they will not be bothered by me. They sometimes offer to give me a certain amount of money so that I can go back home and forget about everything. There are houses that are being built here and we wanted the community members to get involved in the construction. So we stopped the project. One boy said to me “Stop misleading the people, you are misleading the
people and don’t you dare say anything because this company is paying for your fees and gave you R5million”. The development here is not right, it should be done by the people of the community. The initial agreement was that the company pays for my fees but it did not. I was working for them and they promised to pay for me. When they were supposed to pay I don’t know what happened. Even now I don’t know what is happening, when I found out about that information I asked the boss. He said that he won’t talk to me when I am this angry, when I have calmed down we will talk. Even now, they still haven’t paid for my fees. I am registered with UNISA (University of South Africa) in the faculty of Human Sciences. I registered to study Psychology because I am always questioning my life.

Women’s struggles in Freedom Park

Challenges that are faced by women here in the community are poverty and unemployment. It seems as though women abuse is not that much. The one thing that we all usually complain about is not having jobs and right now most people who have jobs are men. Even the development companies that are here are dominated by men, the houses that are built, and all those projects are handled by men. There are not many women in the leadership of AbFP, it’s only myself and two other female comrades. Our role as women within the organisation is to encourage other women to take a stand and not allow men to make decisions for them. We are not feminists, we don’t believe that the men are closing doors for us. What we are saying is that the challenges that we are facing, we are facing them as people not only as women. Yes there are things that are exclusive to women. But our role is to encourage other women to stand up and fight.

Forming Abahlali baseFreedom Park

In 2014, I was part of the people who formed the movement of AbFP. I was involved from the very beginning. We had service delivery challenges and corruption because of what happened that day in May/June/July somewhere there, we had a workshop for co-ops and there was no electricity. So people decided that they have had enough. They have called their leaders and none of them are coming through to solve their problem. They decided to go to the streets and take out robots, the police came to
shoot and that’s how it all started. When we got out of the meeting, we were told that
it is difficult outside. Then we decided to call a meeting and form block committees to
challenge the municipality and we sent delegates to the municipality. It was a long
process and even now our case is at the legislature and they still haven’t responded.
There is so much brutality in protest life, people are not well informed and the very
same police who are brutal to us benefit from our protest because they live with us
here in the township. For us protesting means showing our frustrations, it has become
our last resolution. I do not enjoy the violent part of protests. I also feel like the media
does not want to hear why we protest, they just cover the violent part they don’t even
bother to do follow ups with us. This media is the one that plays the biggest role in
brainwashing the people. People are unable to think beyond what they see. I don’t like
the fact the government has no say on foreign policies. We wouldn’t be facing the
problems that we are facing if the institutions were not privatised.

The reason we decided to form AbFP was that we wanted to create a neutral platform
whereby people cannot say that the people here belong to the ANC, SOPA or any
other political party. We say these are our problems as abahlali (residents) regardless
of the political parties. There isn’t any political party that is dominant within the
organisation. We are mixed and that is not a problem because we sit and discuss
issues as members of the community. You have to come to our meetings in order to
become a member, there are regulations. We do not have a specific number of
members, people who come are taken as members because we don’t have
membership cards. As an organisation we are very influential here in our community.
We formed the organisation not so long and we already have a stand in the community
and we go to our public meetings. At least when we do something people do
participate.

If the leaders were not greedy and corrupt it would be fine because they do build
houses but they do not put people who are deserving in those houses. Instead they
put strangers and those are the kind of problems and challenges that we are facing. I
started living in the RDP in April this year (2015). I had one before but because of
corruption I don’t know what happened, I did not want to even entertain it. I thought to
myself let me just leave them alone they will build it again. This one actually belongs
to my brother. Mine was built and they gave it to someone else. The people who live
in the backyard shack are renting, the ones who live in the front shack are the ones who are still in need of a place.

People come and wake me up to say Nhanhla we don’t have this and that. The biggest challenge that we are facing is the issue of housing. The woman who stays in the front shack of the yard is from Siyaya, they took her out of the house. So it’s those kind of challenges. They ask me to assist here and there and go talk to so-and-so and then I go talk to the councillors and people at the Department of housing and see how we solve those issues. Sometimes I have to wake up at 12am and think oh my goodness there is a woman I need to assist in getting a house. I have a list of people looking for a place to stay, they bring their C-forms to me. Some say Nhlanhla if you hear anything regarding jobs, you know, please let us know. I feel like my responsibilities are not just here at home but to the entire community because a lot of people know me. They come when they have problems and inform me so I have to be selfless. They wake me up at 12am to attend a case somewhere and wake me up again in the morning while I am resting. I feel obliged to wake up and go assist there. It is not easy for my daughter but she understands even though sometimes it gets to her. She would say “the people here are irritating, they all tell you about their problems”. Sometimes strangers come here and we talk about their problems.

Leading the illegal land occupation

We started the land occupation because people were not getting their houses and the court case was not a success. They kept delaying us and not letting us know what was going on. People started to lose their patience because we kept sending them the letters but they ignored us. We then decided to take the land on our own. People identified the empty spaces that we could occupy. There’s a place called eNkomponi and another one in Naturana. When we had a meeting to discuss the places that we were going to occupy, someone who was in the meeting with us went to inform people in Naturana that people in Freedom park are coming for the land, and told them to organise and stop us from taking it. People in Naturana made sure that we didn’t take their land because shacks would reduce the value of their houses. So we heard about it, they even came to tell us before occupying the space. Then people decided to go to eNkomponi, that’s what the place is called. In our Sunday community meeting we
spoke with the people and agreed that we were going to occupy that land. We went there on the Friday evening of the 29th July. There were about 3,500 to 4,000 people there but it was unfortunate for me and comrade Sipho because we were elected as candidates in the local elections, we therefore were unable to participate in the land occupation.

There are rules that one has to follow when she or he is elected as candidate in the elections. Even though the law did not allow us to participate in such activities we were there for the community members, we were there in the meetings and even went to see the place with them, and they slept there that evening. The following morning we got a report that people came back because mama Thokozile who is a former councillor and an ANCWL member and mama Nthati got there and asked people why were they occupying the space and told them to leave. They called barrets on them, when the barrets got there they gave people ten minutes to pack up and leave. People got scared and left because they were threatened. They told the people that they were going to shoot them. People are not happy with their living conditions, when they got back from the land they said that they didn’t care even if they were to die because they are tired of living in other people’s yards. So in the leadership committee we decided to talk to the people about what was happening because we don’t want to ever regret what we are getting ourselves into.

We are trying to get people to help us, we want to get lawyers who know about land occupation and black struggles, I feel like we have to be organised as a community. I don’t want people to just go there, I want them to know about the consequences that they will come across. We are forming block committees and we in the leadership will communicate through those block committees. Again, I’m trying to organise about 500 women whom will go to the land and discuss the challenges that we are facing as poor working class women. We have to talk about why is it that after 1956 on the 19th of August are we still landless, we are not working and nothing is working out well for us. Yes I do acknowledge that they fought the anti-pass march struggles and embarked on numerous protests but we did not benefit anything, I think we have to start where they left-off. So we have another women’s organisation now and we meet on Thursdays at the containers. We want a women’s march, it will be in connection with the land and the abuse we get from the police because the police who come to
threaten us are male policemen. They always point guns at us, push and do all these things. I feel like they are abusing us the same way that they were abusing our great grandmothers. I want us to march from here in Freedom Park to the land, we even invited David Makhura who’s the premier of Gauteng and the leader of the berets, I don’t know him though. So that they can come and get the memorandum on 3rd of September 2016.

We are leading the whole land occupation as women because it’s us who have to think that we and our children don’t have a place to stay. Men can sleep wherever they want, they don’t have a problem. We came up with the concept as women because we thought in order to get the officials to listen to us. Our houses have been sold to people who are not deserving of them and we don’t have a place to stay, they’ve been postponing our meetings. They don’t want to meet with us, they don’t want to take on the investigation that we requested from them, both the MEC of Housing and city of JHB. The step that we thought would make them hear our grievances was occupying the empty land. There are other allegations, during the elections we are told that there were two sealed boxes that came, they said that they consisted of special votes but those are for only disabled people. Here in Freedom Park we did not have that list. So in the IEC training they were told that that’s where the ANC stole the votes in all the voting districts. At least now the community is organising and as soon as they know what they want, it will get much better. We want people to stand up for themselves, what we do in the leadership is to give them support.

7.3 I am not trying to get rich, I am trying to survive:

Poppy Dube is a street committee member in Lindelani section and is also a member of AbFP. In her story she reflects on the time when she used to struggle both as a child and as a mother. She once got arrested because she was fighting against the allocation of RDP houses that were handed over to people who she understood were not legible to receive them. People who are not legible according to Poppy are those who bribe the councillors or with some form of connection because they are members of the ruling party in the community. Corruption issues led Poppy and other women to volunteer to be in the leadership of the street committees. These street committees take place in the private homes of the people, the private space which, as Miraftab
(2006) has highlighted consists informal politics. Women like Poppy have developed networks at home in block and street committees. After discussing and coming up with solutions they take these issues to the SMO.

Street committees and SMOs are both forms of invented spaces that are interconnected in Freedom Park. However, the street committees tend to be more private because they take place in the private spaces of people’s homes. In the case of Freedom park, it is women who are dominant in the leadership of the street committees, which why it is necessary for the invited and the invented spaces of participation to be understood through the lens of the private lives of women. Poppy’s life history shows how the invited and the invented spaces of participation are interconnected, and how these two spaces can be able to work together to benefit the lives of the people. For example, as a member of the street committee she was against the way that the development was managed in the community. These development companies are an invited space that make decisions on behalf of the people and do not allow members of the community to be a part of the development process. After challenging them and getting arrested, they came directly to her and asked if she could represent the community of Lindelani by making decisions together with the community members in the development process. The following provides a detailed life story, through the perspective of Poppy Dube.

**Upbringing**

I grew up in the farms of Mzimkhulu in KZN. The lifestyle there is nice, there is not much to stress about. I, Poppy Dube was raised by my Aunt, who is my brother’s sister. I came to Johannesburg in 1997. I did not decide to come live here in Freedom Park, my Aunt brought me here, and I remember it was in 1997 when it happened. For me to even get raised by aunt, my mom and my dad were fighting over me. Both my maternal and paternal families were fighting over me. My father’s side of the family won because when my parents were fighting my mom then decided to leave me with my father’s family. She was married to another man back home anyway, so she then left me. My dad’s family is in Soweto but they decided to take me to KZN to live with my aunt so that I could be away from my mother. My aunt only brought me back because she didn’t want to live with me anymore. I didn’t even know my mother at the
It was really nice when we met again, she was so happy. She has been wanting me back in her life for a very long time but my father’s side of the family did not want me to meet with her. They did not want her to know where I was, obviously she couldn’t have possibly known where I was because she was not told that I was in KZN. She only knew my dad’s house in Soweto but not where my aunt lived in KZN.

I was four years old when I got separated from my mother and I was 21 years old when we reconciled. My mom lives not very far from here and she owns a RDP house and it’s because she fought. They fought with the Boers, this place used to be owned by the Boers. She and I were happy when we met, plus my aunt was no longer treating me right and only brought me back because I fell pregnant. She had five sons and I was the only girl, so her treatment was not good. Maybe that is why she thought she should bring me back to my mother. I did not know that I had a mother, she told me that my mother had died. I got surprised when she told me again that she was bringing me back to my mother. I did not know that I had a mother like any other child, all along I thought she was my mother. As I was growing up people noticed that the kind of lifestyle that I was living was not normal. People would say to me “this person is not your mother” and I also believed that yah it’s possible. When I finally got to Johannesburg I lived such a happy life with my mother, I had such a wonderful life until now.

My mom to this day does not want to let go, even when I leave she worries a lot. I have a younger sister. I spent so many years without my mother and the treatment was not good at my aunt’s, so she does not want me to leave even though my aunt is late now. She still does not want me to be far from her. Even when I go to visit the family kaBaba (the father of the house) she still doesn’t like it because it’s far and she doesn’t know where it is. It would have been much better if she knew where I was. I quit school in grade eleven because of adolescence and did not want to go back. I would like to continue with school. I had dreams of becoming a nurse. Falling pregnant ruined my future. I couldn’t go back to school. Things would have been different had I completed my matric.

I have four children then it’s me, the father of the house and my nephew. I wish him and I could get married officially because he is so good with the children. Here at home
I enjoy reading a lot, I don’t like domestic work but I do it because it’s a part of my life. When I wake up in the morning I prepare my children for school, clean my shack and do the house laundry. Sometimes I leave my house to go see the comrades until the sun sets, then I come back to prepare supper.

Poverty struggle

We are very poor in this house, I can say that we are mostly dependent on social grant. There is a lot I need in this house, especially for the children, even now I am using coal stove. UBaba is unemployed but he tries to get piece jobs. He’s a gardener, he therefore does not always get jobs because the job is heavily dependent on the seasons. In winter everything burns and in summer plants grow, then that way he gets people to work for. But for now I am depending on the social grant money because I don’t have a stable job. The grant money is so helpful, I don’t know how we would survive without it. I used to work for a community programme and my stipend was R530 a month, so I decided to quit because there were no benefits. The monthly income is R1500 to R2000 roughly and it’s not enough, maybe R6000 would be enough, this grant money supports six people. I dream of a house with electricity, especially for my children you know if I had money the first thing that I would buy is a house. Food gets wasted a lot because we do not have a refrigerator especially in the summer.

My protest life is paying off

Life here in Freedom Park is nice, we are used to it. But my struggle for the longest time is getting a house. I am more worried about getting a house than I am about getting a job. However, I do feel like jobs can free us even though we won’t get rich, at least we won’t be hungry. I was not free because I did not have a permanent place, I didn’t know where I stood. It’s so much better when you have a house of your own, you know that it’s yours. So that is what is going on here in the community and it does not make one feel alright. But I am used to Freedom Park, it is alright. I should, however say that the housing officials are treating us so much better, I remember they used to have bad attitude towards us. But now they are doing things in the right manner. They said that we should bring any documents or forms that we have whether
it’s a C-form or yellow slip, or if you are staying in someone else’s yard and you have the documents, you should go to the office to register for a house.

The officials were based here in section 35 but if they transferred one to the civic centre then we would take that person there. At least now there’s communication between us and the officials, they’ve stopped treating people badly. If a person goes there they would ask him or her to bring his or her leadership member for confirmation in order to avoid making mistakes. As a leadership member of Lindelani street committee, it’s my job to make sure that people get assistance even though it’s stressful but you can’t pay attention to stress. Phela thina sizabalazile (we’ve been fighting the struggle) so a person who steps back doesn’t know anything about the journey of the struggle. Fighting the struggle has made us strong, we are a group of brave women, and we’ve stopped fearing long ago, we’re able to face the challenge. Things haven’t changed much in Freedom Park the officials are still making promises that they don’t keep, but here in Lindelani section they are developing.

In the other sections people are not pleased, they even went to occupy land illegally but I couldn’t join them as I have managed to secure myself a part time job as a security guard. Sometimes I go to events to work as a guard. I don’t have a permanent job as yet. I was working at the stadium that day when they went to camp on the first day eNkomponi. I feel like even though democracy has been failing us but now they are trying, they promised us houses and at least now there’s proof because they brought the sand and they’ve put the foundations. We have gone to see the templates of the houses and they look like bond houses. We know now how our houses are going to look like, they said here Lindelani section our RDP will have wooden doors, bath tubs, floor tiles and a ceiling. Now that we are going to finally have houses I don’t think we will protest for housing, maybe for other reasons. It’s a good thing that we have been embarking on protest because they are now giving us what we want otherwise they were going to relax and not give us what we want. Our government in South Africa wants us to protest so that it can have the pressure and be forced to be responsive, otherwise it would just keep on making empty promises.

Things are really starting to look up even the development companies are taking us seriously now, soon I will be director of a company that builds houses here in Lindelani.
I have a CK form, it has its rules and regulations. Having this form means that I can hire people to work in the development. But for me it was different because it’s the developers from Urban Dynamics who approached me and asked me to bring a group of women together and build a company. We did that, he came back again and asked me to build a second one because his aim is to empower women. We submitted our forms but we decided to add two men. They chose me because I’m well known and I was arrested in the past for my activism in the community, but they came back to apologise so I had to put it behind me and I had to forgive them as it is all in the past now. They even came to give us advice on the development process, especially us who are in the leadership of the street committee.

The company that builds foundations asked us to form groups and they will give us money that we will share amongst ourselves. If for instance there’s four of you in the group you have pick one person whom you trust the most and the money will be put into her or his bank account, then you share the money amongst yourselves. There are people whom will be assisted and shown how to do the work and will get paid from that money. A person gets paid per foundation that she or he works on but doesn’t earn the same amount as us. For each foundation they pay R2000. They asked us who are in leadership to work on the foundations and we refused because we still have to be in charge of the building of the houses including the roofing. We are going to get a lot of money so we decided to let other people in the community work on building the foundations instead. We are helping our members of the community, we don’t want to benefit alone. So that’s what we did, we collected people and formed groups.

The company has delivered all the necessary material to build the foundations. After the foundation company is done, the one that will build our houses is going to come. I can say that they’re able to work well with us because they listen to what we tell them, they don’t make decisions on our behalves and they even told us to let them know if at any point we are uncomfortable. For now we are happy with way that things are going but you can never know what the future holds, they might change but they don’t seem like they would. Mr Sibanda spoke to me in person, he said that he wants us here in Lindelani section to be in charge of our own development and that means that nobody can come from other blocks or wards and tell us how to handle our development.
The development so far has been impressive and I hope it remains the same even when they begin to build houses. There was a time when the development programme from another section tried to stop our development, one person from Urban Dynamics came to make us aware of the matter and we dealt with it very quickly, we did not waste any time. These people built houses and shared them amongst themselves, now they must just leave us alone. I think people from Urban Dynamics are doing this because they are really sorry for what they did to us, they want us to forget because they know that we still have anger so they don’t want us to be angry for a long time. They made me reduce the size of my shack and I am not too happy about it. But I’m glad that the money that will be used for housing is already there, it’s not like we still have to claim it. I’m at a point now where I’m really tired of marching and protesting, I went through so much to get to where I am. I won’t stop being in the leadership of the street committee even after I get my own house because you can never know what might happen here in the community. However, I think I will stay in my new house for two weeks and take a break from everything, and just enjoy it. Living in a shack is painful, it is very painful. My shack gets rained on so much you could swear that someone has poured water inside.

*Issues of service delivery*

I decided to become a part of AbFP because of the struggle, housing and electricity problems. The houses that were built in section 25 belonged to us but councillors were selling them to other people and we fought. We met with comrade Sipho and he supported us. We protested with them and they continued to show us support. Different areas of Freedom Park have their struggles such as houses, electricity and many more. Electricity is the dominant issue. I usually meet and talk with the comrades and our street and block committee members, there’s about seven or eight of us here in Lindelani. The street and block committee are part of AbFP who represent different sections of Freedom Park.

*Life as a women activist*

I once got arrested by the police late at night with uBaba. What had happened was that we protested in the area where the houses were being allocated to people. They
continued with the allocation. The reason why we fight against the development here is because Mamabolo promised to build houses for us. There are red-ants here that are guarding and were put by the MEC. That day when we were protesting there were comrades from the South African Communist Party (SACP) who were supporting us so they called the MEC to tell her that things are not looking good. The situation is bad here in Lindelani, so she came to soften and comfort us, she sent us transport to take us to her office. We hadn’t slept. We started the protest at about 3pm until the next morning. So Mamabolo sent the red-ants to make sure that the allocation does not continue.

Those who bought the houses illegally were supposed to wait for the officials. The red-ants allocated people by force not so long ago. Their job is to write reports stating who got allocated to the house and things like that. They tried to shut my mouth and I was not prepared to pretend like I was happy when I wasn’t. I continued to fight, so they bought someone who also didn’t get a house to lie and say that we beat him up. But the person did not attend the court case and there was no evidence and that’s how we got away. We were fighting for the development for us to be arrested in the first place, because the MEC had said that they should not continue with the development before she responds, you see. But because these people were in a rush to make money they put tarred roads, they did not care about our feelings. They said that I am too forward and they came to fetch us with private cars. I was only arrested for one day. They came at night to fetch us, I got arrested with uBaba. The other comrade with her husband as well, there was four of us. I took the children to my mother’s house in the same car. uBaba is not active in the struggle, being a comrade is not his thing.

*Women taking the lead role in protests*

Before we can embark on a protest we meet and discuss. Others agree and others don’t but for a protest to be successful we have to have one voice. If you and I are fighting for something, we have to be in agreement. What makes us fail here is that we do not always agree on one thing. That is why we ended up being arrested because they always say go arrest so-and-so. They know that me and the other women whom I got arrested with, we never keep our mouths shut we speak our minds. So I do not know why they included our husbands in the arrest. We also got arrested with the
members of the SACP because they were fighting for us. They slept at the police station the entire night fighting for us. The SACP is in alliance with the ANC. We as women are the ones who are pulling the men, you know us women, and we are always in the forefront most the time. The men would go and come back but us the women asijiki (we don’t turn back).

My life as an activist does not affect my family in any way because uBaba knows what it is exactly that I am fighting for. I am not just involving myself in things. The support for women here in our community is very poor, we only get it from the comrades who are part of AbFP and the SACP. But generally here in Lindela, no. All I want is for the community of Freedom Park to be on the right track. Even for the councillors to be sensitive towards people and not do as they please. Our people are fighting for their rights even though those rights only exist in black and white, Mandela promised them to us. You know South Africa is failing us, especially when it comes to freedom. You have to be part of a particular class or association in order for your life to be better. Our government is truly failing us. The community leaders buy the nyaope boys to beat up the community members. The government does not take any action in Freedom Park, even the police don’t take our problems seriously. Only those of the leaders and councillors because they pay bribe. Rich people don’t care about poor people. I don’t see how we can ever be equal because the government is failing us. I have been using the public toilet for ten years. I hope the government can take us seriously, that is why I take part in protests. Protests are good because we embark on them for the right reasons. I protest because I want to show support and I also receive support.

7.4 There’s no turning back in the struggle, siyaphambili:

Sibongile Mkhatshwa’s struggle of finding a place of her own that she can call home led her to become an activist. She had to move three times because of developments before obtaining a permanent stand and her own RDP house. She is a street committee leader and a caregiver at the local clinic who prides herself in adding value to the lives of people. Sibongile says that she has the responsibility to protect those in her community. She was a patroller with other women in the community for five years. Her husband didn’t approve of this as he believed that it was not safe for her as a
women to be out at night protecting the community. She also worked for the NGO iKusasalethu for eight years. She didn’t make enough money at the NGO to take care of her family, and she couldn’t give her son enough pocket money or afford groceries. Her story shows that the invited structures such as the NGO and community development companies that are created by the government don’t fully combat poverty or bring long lasting change to the community which lead them to create structures in the private spaces of the homes such as street committees that will help them fight against poverty.

Sibongile’s story also demonstrates that women do most of the grassroots organising in the movement and in the community when she argues that the women give men power. Women give men power by doing most of the grassroots work in the private spaces of the block/street committees. Private issues are explored within this space and its women who dominate and provide solutions. For instance, they organise block/street committees and report back to men in the leadership of Abhalali baseFreedom Park who then report back to the community during the meetings. She also argues that even though they are the ones who empower men, their role as women is not fully embraced and men are the ones who occupy leadership positions in the main organisation. Even the community leaders are male. Her husband has also raised concerns about her being in the leadership of the block committee and participating in protests. But she says that nothing will work out in the community if women don’t give men support. Sibongile’s story is provided in her own words below.

Upbringing

My name is Sibongile Mkhatshwa, I am married to the Dlanga’s in Makhomeni and I have three children. I gave birth to my first child on the 28th of February 1995, his name is Siyabulela. My second child was born in 2002, his name is Siviwe and the 3rd child was born in 2009, his name is Bonani. The first child is at home, I live with the other two and their father.

I grew up in Yonda, in the Eastern Cape in a place called Witleysea. It’s a small town about a size of Baragwanath. I attended school at Yonda primary and went on to Zwelithini high school. I didn’t pass my matric, there was a lot that was happening with
my mother who lived in Gauteng at the time. She caused distraction for us and burnt our book when she got to Yonda. She used to beat us up during exam time. We couldn’t finish our matric exams because of our mother’s behaviour towards us. When we tried to bath she would beat us up and we didn’t even know what was going on. That is how I was unable to complete my standard ten.

When I was in matric my mom was a domestic worker in Reigepark, in Gauteng. She was very fluent in both English and Afrikaans one could swear that she was educated but she wasn’t. She used to send me and my siblings money and clothes through her sister. At the time we didn’t know that it was my mother who used to send the parcels to us because my aunt never mentioned it. My aunt gave her children our clothes. Our aunt also told us that our mother wanted nothing to do with us and would never allow us to talk to our mother through the phone. My mother finally came home and I hated her at the time because of the stories that my aunt told me, she noticed that. My mother was so angry that she burnt our books and at the time we were writing our matric finals, she used to beat us up terribly. Even my aunt became abusive. We ended up not writing all the exams, we used to cry every day. I failed matric and I didn’t even bother to go back the following year because my mother was there. I would have been a soldier now had I completed. Growing up my grandmother taught me how to behave, hence today I am with my husband and children. It seemed as though she was abusing us because she used to make us wake up very early in the morning. We prepared samp before going to sleep. After school we went to fetch the wood from the mountains. As a women I did not struggle to build my home because of the lessons from my grandmother.

I first worked emakhishini (in the homes of the white people) as a domestic worker here in Gauteng in Mayfair. I worked there for about six years, umlungu wam (my boss) used to overwork me, and she was a slave driver. She loved me because I did my job well but she was inconsiderate, she did not feel for me. She wouldn’t think that it’s cold and I should perhaps use a washing a machine when doing the laundry.
I was born to protect

Had I completed my matric, I would have wanted to become a soldier. *Yhoo bendifuna uba le sotja strong* (I really wanted to be a soldier). It has always been my dream, since childhood. If the opportunity would come now. You know usually when people patrol or volunteer in other fields they end up being hired, like the police for instance. If the same opportunities existed in the field of soldiers I would go right now. I can see that it is dangerous job but I love it. I care for people, even now I work as a volunteer at Freedom Park clinic, and I am care-worker. We go around the neighbourhood and help people. When we discover that someone has a problem we would refer him or her to the right place where she or he can get help. In those situations I always do follow ups to find out if the person got the help that she or he needed. I have been at the clinic for four years now but before that I worked for an NGO *Ikusasalethu* for eight years.

The work environment at the clinic is alright but it’s not the same as Ikusasalethu, here at the clinic it’s not nice in that we do not have a boss, instead we are our own bosses. I do my work because I know what I want, besides the fact that I need the money. I do my work because I want to see change in the sections that I am allocated in. Let’s say for instance they allocate me to work in Lindelani, I would want for people to see change. I want them to say: *since mama’ka-Bonani started working in this area she’s been concerned about us and she does follow ups, people are well, those who haven’t been receiving social grant are now receiving it, and children have their birth certificates*. There are a lot of people doing this job and I notice that others do not take their work seriously because we don’t have a boss. I don’t let it get to me, I don’t complain about the fact that I get overloaded with work because they are not doing theirs. I would hear other colleagues complain about those who don’t do their work and I tell them: “*do your work, you have your own work. When the boss comes, you will produce the report that will indicate the work that you have done*”. You must do your work so that tomorrow people can say that mama’ka-*Bonani* helped us, she’s the one who’s always been helpful. But at iKusasalethu we used to work well because we had a boss who wanted feedback every single day, she wanted so see what we had done so far each day and how true is it that we have entered so many houses and what problems we have identified, or whether we did not identify any problem.
Moving to Freedom Park

I moved to Freedom Park mainly because of church, I liked the church here. Back at home in the Yonda we church at the Old Apostolic Church (OAC). I used to live in Pimville and I managed to find the OAC there and there was this particular day when the choirs got together, we call the gathering “Social”. That day I discovered the Freedom Park choir, there were many more but the Freedom Park choir stood out for me. I thought no matter what I am going to join the OAC in Freedom Park because it reminded me so much of where I come from. When they got off the stage I asked them to help me look for place in Freedom Park. We exchanged contacts and one of the woman called me to say that I should come and put my shack in her yard and I did that, it was 2003 when this happened. In 2005 I was moved from that section to Lindelani. All this time I have been moving with my husband even though he did not see what I was seeing in the choir, it was me who was coming from the OAC. He did not have a problem with moving because we were renting in Pimville, Soweto anyway. We still rented when we got here but the rent money here in Freedom Park was so much better. When we got our own stand we no longer had to pay rent.

Like I said I moved here in 2003 and I stayed close to the BP garage. They moved us when they were developing because they wanted to put pipes where we were dwelling. The red-ants moved us with the Wozani trucks, together with the councillors. They put me near the river here in Lindelani in 2005 on the 30th of March. In 2013 again they moved us and they put our shack in the hill on top of the pipes. I didn't even know if the developments were going to place or not. When I asked them what was going on they said that those were our permanent stands but that was before the tarred roads were built. They gave us our pins to show us that those are our permanent stands. In order to make sure that the stand was really mine I went to the civic centre in the housing office to see bab’Godfrey to ask for my proof of residence. I told him that they needed it at the bank so that I could be able to open a bank account. That’s how I got proof that that was my permanent stand.
Life in Freedom Park

The community of Lindelani understands me a lot because they are aware of the things that I do or what I am trying to do even though I don’t have much. Even at work when I raise a point they listen, they don’t object like they do to others. When I suggest that something has to be done they listen and they would be willing to try it out. Life in Freedom Park is good because I was already used to living inside a shack for a very long time. I can also say that it’s not nice nowadays because of corruption issues. It used to be really nice here in Freedom Park but a lot has changed. I don’t know if the change happened when other political parties lost in Parliament or in the government or it was the time when they discovered that Malema was involved in some corruption or Zuma did something wrong, they ate the citizen’s money. Now members of the community think that corruption is good. Things are not nice anymore here in Freedom Park, even now I am waiting for the day when they will come burn my house, beat me up in my house or have them wait for me outside and shoot me when I come out or kill me. These are the things that I am anticipating here in Freedom Park because they managed to get me arrested. I have been to the jail cells.

For us to even get arrested we were trying to stop the development from taking place. While they were busy with the development we didn’t expect anyone to get a house, it had to be clear. They did their things and beat people up, after that they came to get us from our homes and accused us of beating people up when we actually didn’t. Then they came to arrest me around 10pm with my husband, we left the children in the house and went to sleep in the cells. On 27th of March 2015, we went to court and the magistrate asked if we wanted a lawyer, I personally said “no, we don’t want a lawyer because we did nothing wrong and we will account for ourselves”. The case was then postponed until 9th of April 2015 and when we returned he asked again if we didn’t want a lawyer and we told him that we will speak for ourselves, he gave us another date of 6th of June 2015. On the day he dropped the case and told us that the person who pressed charges against us had disappeared.

Here in Freedom Park they sell RDP houses, they sell people’s stands and when you ask those people who bought them they will tell you that the councillor asked me to pay bribe in order to get the stand. Another thing is that there are people without ID
books from Zimbabwe, they have RDP houses but they are not in possession of ID books. It would’ve been better if they had legal foreign documents, that person doesn’t have documents from Zimbabwe or South Africa but he has a RDP house. Here we have two very old people who do not have passport books, these people can die anytime. We have been speaking on their behalf so that they could get houses. We asked the councillors why they make it easy for those without legal documents to get houses yet difficult for these old people to get them.

*My life as a mother who is an activist*

My challenge was that my husband wanted us to get a RDP house but at the same time he didn’t want me to get involved in the community politics, especially after we got arrested together. He doesn’t want me to get involved at all. I defy him and go to the meetings anyway because he doesn’t want me to go there anymore. I go there because I want to hear about the houses and if things are going in order. I was only prepared to keep my mouth shut after getting my RDP house. My other challenge is that I do voluntary work and I put in so much effort and I am very dedicated in helping people but our government pays no attention to as caregivers. We have been doing this work for a very long time and our government started by giving us R1200 and raised it to R2000 and now it’s R2500. But the entire day we get burnt by the sun and it’s a challenge to me because I have children and my husband works as a security guard. He used to work for a security company called “fly by night”, he would work on Sundays and on public holidays and not get paid for it. When we combined our salaries at the end of the month they would not be enough, that money is not enough for us to build a home.

Our daughter is now in high school, she attends school Pimville and she has to walk there. She’s the one who begged me to allow her to walk to school. I had found transport for her that costs R410. She was on that transport for only three days. She said she would rather walk with her peers. She only catches a taxi when it’s raining. The one thing that I was trying to avoid by getting her on transport was that they might start misbehaving because they walk quite a long distance to school. I might think that the child is at school, not knowing that she’s with a boyfriend in some random shack. But then again I realise that she can actually see the situation at home. She sees that
mom is struggling, she does not have a proper job instead she’s a volunteer worker, therefore she might struggle to pay for transport. She’s only fourteen years old.

I cannot let her attend school here in Freedom Park because there are bad things happening. Every day at the clinic there’s a child who is stabbed with a screwdriver tool, everyday there’s an injured child from that school. So I was trying to run away from those situations because I noticed that his older brother did well there in TJ High School there in Pimville and never had any problems. His brother took R2 pocket money, he bought biscuits. It was not so long ago, his brother was born in 1995 and he did his grade 10 and 11 there. You think a person doing grade 10 and 11 would agree to get R2 pocket money? But my child agreed to take it, he would say “mom it’s alright, even if it’s R1 whatever you have its fine”. He would eat before he goes to school, buy biscuits at school then eat when he gets back. At the time his father was not working so he cooked lunch for them while I was working at the clinic.

There are days when I would cry

There were times when I would sit down and cry in the house with hopes that I would feel better, but then I realised that crying wasn’t going to help. I will cry then stop and the challenges will still be in my face. I sometimes say to myself that it would be so much better if I could go back to being a baby. I look at the situations that I find myself in sometimes and wonder if I will ever be able to escape and just be alright. In December 2015 it was very bad, there was no money. I pushed for my child to go to her grade 7 farewell, on the other hand I was in too much debt. I survived the festive season, I didn’t die of stress because I was worried about what I was going to eat with my family. We used all the money to pay up our debts. On the other hand my husband needed money to go to his “fly by night”. So we prayed really hard here in the house, after praying the next day we received a call requesting him for another job. It’s also a security job at Pick n Pay, he’s in Rosebank now. They are going to put him on a three months’ probation and pay him on grade D level and then after that he will get paid on grade C. I am happy even though they put him on grade D because it’s not the same amount of money that he was receiving from “fly by night”. Yhoo, that’s when I remembered that even though we say that God responds in his own time but when you shout his name he answers.
It was bad, I didn’t even know what we were going to eat on Christmas day, and my children did not even wear new clothes like other children. My heart was so broken, it was broken by the thought of them not being able to dress in new clothes like the other children. My daughter even said “mom I wish that it could rain because if it rains no one will notice that we are not dressed up for Christmas. Everyone will be in their shacks”. You know my heart was so broken. There was no food, no maize meal, we had nothing, and we even ran out of gas. But one lady offered me some vegetables from Ikusasalethu. I managed to make fire behind my house and cooked. It had been a while since the last time I made fire. I used fire to boil water and cook until recently. Otherwise all was well, what I appreciate is that they are not troublesome, but when the young one saw others with biscuits and crickets on New Year’s Eve he also demanded them, I was so stressed. He wouldn’t give up, he kept on demanding. He’s still a child he doesn’t understand some things.

*Joining Abahlali baseFreedom Park*

It so happened in 2014 that we were experiencing electricity problems. Especially during the winter season, from May to June the electricity would go “on and off, on and off, on and off”. It selected houses, you find that there’s electricity in this street and there isn’t in the following street. We didn’t know what was going on and the community decided that something needs to be done, well that was before the organisation was formed. The community decided to meet and call a guy by the name of Gary to find out about the electricity issue. They called the people from City Power to ask what is wrong because it’s been a while since the electricity has been gone, food was getting wasted in the fridges. Gary did not pay attention to us and that’s when we decided to barricade the roads by the fire station so that nobody or no car can pass by, we did that with hopes that someone might come and help us. There were more women than men that day. There were members of the community who called the police and spoke to them. When the police arrived they did not come close to us to ask what was going on, those who do corruption went to the police and spoke to them. The police shot rubber bullets at us.
They shot *bhut’* Sizwe in the hand and people started running away. Stones were removed from the streets by Mduduzi this other guy who bought three cars but has never worked a day in his life, not even as a cleaner, he has never even picked up papers. He was put by the community to check corruption in the office and he became the first person to buy a bus, then he bought a taxi and then a Corolla. This Mduduzi, we did not know what was going on with him. Corruption got spread, he’s the one who ran to the police and removed the stones that we put to block the streets, the police shot a person and it was the end of the story. That is when the community decided to form an organisation and call it AbFP because right now we are the ones who are facing problems regardless of whether we are ANC, EFF, SACP, SOPA, and the people who are doing this thing are the ANC members. So we decided to put our differences aside and come together and not look at whether one is ANC or SANCO, we decided to meet as residents and do the work of the community. The community continued to organise but the members of the ANC kept standing in our way because they insisted that there would be no other organisation standing for the community because SANCO is there. We explained to them that SANCO does the same job as these criminals so that is why we decided that as AbFP we don’t have SANCO or ANC etc. we work as a community that wants to fix Freedom Park, so that it can go back to what it used to be.

Usually women here in the community give men the power. Even when you go to church for instance you find mostly women there. We give men so much support so that their voices can emerge, it is because of the support that we give as women. Otherwise if they were alone, nothing would progress here but they look down on us because even right now the community councillors are men, they only put men forward you see. They forget that for them to even own those positions it is because they are put by women. When there are meetings, fights or protests it’s the women who stand strong because I remember this one time women asked the men to please stand at the back when the police come. We decided that when they come we will take off our clothes and remain in our tights and go straight to them. That way they can’t touch us because its sexual abuse and men can’t stand in the front because they will get arrested. It is the women who open the eyes of the men. The concept succeeded and not even a single women got arrested.
My husband and children don’t approve of my activist life

My husband is not involved in the local politics and he wants nothing to do with it, he would say something here and there but he doesn’t have the energy for it. He doesn’t have the energy at all. This affects me a lot but I can’t let go. Letting go means that I will lose. You see when I got arrested that night, my son was sitting next door. When we got outside and saw the police carrying guns, he didn’t even want to look he closed his eyes. The older one was in tears wondering why mom and dad were being arrested, they didn’t know what was happening. The older one tells me all the time that she does not want me to attend the meetings and I ask her why she does not want me to attend. She says you know that even dad doesn’t like it, you once got arrested with dad. I tell her that “once I stop going to the meetings nothing is going work out for us, even you know that at the meetings it’s me and that woman Poppy who are vocal. We are the ones standing up for this community. If we decide to sit, there won’t be any change”.

Being a mother and a wife who is an activist affects my family. My husband even suggests to go to the meetings with me and ask me not say, ask and answer anything at the meeting. Then I agree and tell him that I will not say anything, then we leave together. But when I get there and hear something that I do not fully agree with I voice my opinion, he would stare and stare until he gives up, and I answer anyway. When I have a question I ask. He gets angry with me there at the meeting but when we get home things go back to being normal. He doesn’t hold grudges, it’s just that he doesn’t like it. He would say “mama ka-Bonani I don’t like it when you go to the meetings, I once got arrested even though I did nothing wrong just because you are in the committee, you talk a lot in the meetings and that’s why it was you and Poppy who got arrested”.

Poppy and I get a lot of support from the community because I remember the night when we got arrested, the community came out first it was women in particular who came out and blew whistles to wake other women up because it was late at 10pm. They shouted and shouted and eventually people came out to the streets. Even the men came out. They asked the police “what is wrong, why are you arresting them? These people did nothing wrong, the people who got them arrested are bought by the
councillor and so-so because they are ones who are helping us here in Lindelani”. They are the ones who see things that we can’t even see.

You see during the times of the Boers we were not aware that we were oppressed because people who were older at the time were our parents and great grandparents. They are the ones who could see that we were oppressed. Right now I can see that we are oppressed because a black man is in charge, a black man does not do good by his fellow blacks. He only looks out for himself, when something comes up it’s only for him. Look at the concept of freedom right now, Mandela said that he freed us but everyday there’s someone dying. I would hear a story of a white man killing a black man once in a while but most of the time I hear stories of black men killing each other because of money. You see it’s like that. Here in Freedom Park if I was the one who was in charge or a councillor, actually a President I would get rid of all the political parties that exist, no ANC, no SOPA nothing at all. We would all be one organisation leading. I would not allow any other organisation on the side, if there’s a problem just like here because it all starts from the top for it to end up here in local communities, it doesn’t just appear. It’s a top-down type of behaviour.

In order for our protests to become successful we must fight and burn tires, barricade the roads and that way they will succeed. When we don’t fight they don’t hear anything, when we burn the tires people stand on their feet and they see that people are fighting. When we tried to toi-toi in the beginning the ANC and SANCO would come together and beat us up, so we decided to barricade the road and see who is going to beat us up now. We closed the streets and said there’s no car that is going to take people and no one will get allocated in the houses. The MEC Mamabolo came to fetch us and we went with him to his office. We told him that if he doesn’t fix things for us we will buy petrol bombs and take down all these RDP houses so that no one can get a house because it was said that the houses belong to us, so it’s better if no one gets them. He stopped us and said it would be a waste. It’s a waste even now because people who are occupying these houses are people who don’t want them anyway. We applied for them. We must fight really hard so that we can be heard by the authorities.

We used to make use of public toilets and got water from the Jojo tanks before moving into our RDP. Those tanks don’t get cleaned, sometimes when you get water from
there you find that there are worms. You should see our buckets inside, they are all the same. They have been affected with rust. Even when you try to remove it with steelwool that thing remains. What does that mean? We’ve complained before and they said the tanks will be cleaned every month. They did that once or twice. But now they’ve been like that for a while. That is why we decided to give up, we will just drink even if it’s rubbish as long as they look clean from the buckets.

We moved into this RDP house on 15th of March 2016. We even went to the court of law for these houses. We were fighting because we were not being placed in the houses, we had to get lawyers. We wanted research to be conducted in these houses, we wanted to investigate. We were going to court as AbFP on the day when I got allocated, they wanted to distract us from going to court. So they allocated us the night before, I remember it was raining heavily that evening when they came to give us the letters. I asked them why they were allocating us late at night when it was raining and asking us to pack our furniture. I asked them what if it continues to rain the next day because even now I don’t know where to pack my furniture and clothes. They said I should use my buckets and I told them that they can actually see that I put these buckets on top of the couches because they were getting rained on and the whole shack was being flooded. They then told me to be happy because the next day they were moving me into a new house and gave me my Happy Letter which shows that I’m being allocated in Roma but they put me by the river. Which means that they were just moving me from my shack so that it seems as though something better was happening. We fought to get into these RDP houses, us who lived at the hill. These houses were so messy when we moved into them. I used my own paint, the houses were so messy, there were people living in them.

I don’t know what was happening with those people, I suspect that they were allocated illegally. We don’t know who removed them. The grass was long, there were too many bugs, and they haven’t fixed the bathrooms. They promised to come back and fix the toilets because we are still unable to flush, the tap outside doesn’t work, the pipes outside don’t have lids so I use plastics to close them. They took out the tap in the kitchen and told us that they will come and put it back but they still haven’t. The windows don’t have handles and aren’t properly installed, two of them fell off and broke. I reported and ended up throwing in the towel and bought my own glasses and
handles. I haven’t bought other material like the lockers because they are quite expensive, we’re waiting for them because they told us that it’s in the budget. It used to be the door in the sitting room that could open, the one in the kitchen we had to unscrew it because it didn’t have the key, so we switched the bedroom handle with the the kitchen handle.

People often ask me will the RDP houses be fixed and I tell them that I will only help them if they are willing to go to the office. At least I know I’m not the only one with the problem. I fought a lot when I was still at the shack, if they want us to go to the housing offices they will say so. The officials came to register our names so that we could get dustbins but they haven’t delivered, they gave us the date for when we should go get them but we stood there for hours with no assistance and we eventually decided to go back home. It was so much better with the electricity because they didn’t take time, they put it in June 2016.

I won’t stop being a street committee leadership member but I don’t know because my husband wants me to stop. He says now that I have a house I must sit down and relax. Even when they came with their trucks to drop-off our clothes I was fighting because the houses were locked. How was I supposed to sign for a house that I haven’t seen inside because what the houses looked like on the outside automatically gave me an idea of what it looked like on the inside? I told them that they’re making me sign and I don’t even know what’s missing inside the house. I even told them that the Happy Letter indicates that I’m supposed to be allocated somewhere else, everybody knows that these houses have failed and the councillor knew this before he dies. These houses are near the river and the developers were told not to build houses here. This matter was reported to the Provincial department and they said that people shouldn’t be allocated if it’s a wet land. They should just take out the roof and leave the rest because there’s nothing they can do if they’re already built. They told us that they will put a wall between the houses and the river within three months of us moving in but they haven’t done so. This place is not safe because there are children here. The house next door is cracking in the front because the land is wet, it’s not a good place for people to live.
7.5 Conclusion

Women participate in protests for various reasons, including poor living conditions and not having land. Nhlanhla is an example of a strong women who, despite her gender is able to stand up for women in the community. People, more especially women, look up to her to help bring change in the community. Poppy has experienced the brutality that every protester faces. Her story shows that even though women occupy various spaces they remain marginalised. Sibongile is an example of a women who collects people’s grievances through her voluntary work at the clinic and as the leadership of the street committee. She takes these stories to the SMO of AbFP for possible solutions. Her story is an example of how women do most of the grassroots work in the community, yet they are not visible in the leadership positions.

Their protests will in all likelihood help benefit the future of the community. The stories told by the women provide one with the day-to-day lived experience of women who have to survive under unpleasant conditions because giving in is not an option. These women have to organise in the streets and still be at home to provide. The narratives also reflect on how women see and understand their roles as women in the township. They are aware of the patriarchal issues, but in many cases they strategically overlook them as their main concern is service delivery. Also, the narratives show how the public and the private intersect with each other and why it is important to talk about the invented spaces of participation in relation to the private lives of women: this is where they face their daily struggles and show their agency. Often, women are excluded in social movements, particularly in leadership positions. This is also seen in the research that was conducted by Miraftab (2006) and Pointer (2004), who highlights that women are dominant in mobilisation activities and yet are still marginalised. The reason that the women formed an invented space within and outside of the invented space of AbFP was so that they could deal with issues that affect them directly.
CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined the lives of women who participate in popular protests and are a part of the SMO, Abahlali baseFreedom Park (AbFP). The main aim was to analyse the ways in which protests intersect with their everyday experiences, in both their private and public lives. The private and the public spheres have been defined in mainstream literature as two opposite binaries. The private is defined as a safe space where women belong. The public, on the other hand, is viewed as a space where women don’t belong because it’s not considered to be safe, but also because they are supposedly not to be involved in political or public matters. This has proved to be a false binary because women’s politics take place in the private space of their homes and they are active in the public space of the community as well. For instance, they are responsible for most of the household work and if they don’t have the capacity to do it themselves, they have to find alternative means. Women create spaces such as street committees in order to improve their living conditions. These street committees exist in the private spaces of their homes. The public sphere is defined in terms of politics, a place that is unsafe for women and where they do not belong. Yet, women in the public spaces are encouraged to be powerful and to take ownership; this contradiction also indicates the weakness of the distinction between the separation of the private and public.

The public is also a place utilised by women for protest in order to get the officials to hear their grievances. Both spaces can’t simply be defined separately or as binary opposites, as this causes contradictions. Miraftab (2006: 205) highlights that women’s political work does take place in the private sphere through informal networks such as meetings. She also argues that binary constructs, such as public and private, have been challenged by South African feminist scholarship which shows that politics don’t only take place only in the spheres that are male-dominated. Miraftab’s work is important because it acknowledges the work that women do in politics.

This research extends Miraftab’s approach by looking carefully at the intimate details of the daily lived experiences of women. It did so by observing them in and outside of
their homes to see how they survive daily and to understand their contribution to both the organisation and their community. Freedom Park was used as a case study for this research, as women within AbFP have proven throughout my fieldwork that they do most of the ground work. They feel obliged to do so as they are the ones who are relying mostly on the basic services, hence the need to organise and be active in both the private and public spheres. In order to understand the role of women in Freedom Park and within the organisation, a detailed background of the community was provided. It included how the community was established, the politics that were there at the time, and the role of women which was relatively non-existent. The research also looked at the formation of the social movement organisation, AbFP and the role that women play within the organisation. This was necessary as it provided the researcher with an understanding of women’s experiences within the township and also explained their daily struggles.

The literature review referred to a number of cases from various locations in South Africa, writing about the daily struggles of women in and out of the home. The literature highlights real complexities that women are faced with because of their gender. Isike and Uzike (2011) and Gasa (2007) write about women in pre-colonial South Africa. Hetherington (1993) and Moser (1993) focus on the roles and responsibilities of women in low-income societies. Others, such as Miraftab (2006) and Pointer (2004) discuss the complexities of gender within new social movements in South Africa. Through my case studies I was able to extend Miraftab’s and Pointer’s work by not only focusing primarily on the organisation, but equally on women’s individual lives at home.

This research has also focused on telling the stories of women in Freedom Park from their own point of view. The three life histories were told from women’s perspectives, so that their voices could come out, hence they are written in first person. These stories may not represent all women in poor backgrounds. They do however provide an understanding of the daily lived experience of a woman in a township in need of government services. These narratives also show why people may create invented spaces which are participatory spaces of citizenship, used by people to deal with their social struggles (Miraftab, 2006). The invented spaces are formed by the grassroots communities as a space that they can use to directly confront the authorities and to
challenge the status quo. The invited spaces are formal structures that are top down in nature and legitimised by donors and government interventions (Cornwall, 2002). In the case of Freedom Park the invited spaces include ward committees, development forums and NGOs.

As highlighted earlier, in low income societies women take on different roles from men (Moser, 1993). This is also the case in Freedom Park where female activists are the core part of street committees and, by extension, also SMOs as these spaces allow them to share their grievances. These three accounts also show how and why women do most of the grassroots organising. These invented spaces come about when the formal structures fail to deliver. The poor make use of seemingly extreme and innovative strategies which create alternative channels and spaces to assert their rights to the city and to negotiate their citizenship (Miraftab and Wills, 2005: 207). Also, the three accounts indicate why the concepts of invented and invited spaces of participation should not only focus on the public sphere, but on the private sphere as well. Social movement scholars did not intend to look at the private spaces because most of the visible activities take place in the public sphere. Neglecting to look at the private spaces, however, puts women in a position where they are marginalised in scholarly discourse.

Women who were part of the research highlighted that even though some of them participate in these formal structures created by the government such as NGOs and voluntary work at the clinic, they are not something that they can solely rely on as they don’t sustain them for long. These structures don’t combat poverty, and are only helpful to a limited extent. For instance, they feed the children after school. Some of the community projects like CLING don’t give everyone a stipend and Ikusasalethu pays very little. Even the invented male-dominated space of AbFP which involved women could not be relied upon as some women were excluded. Women therefore relate to street and block committees: They are the heart and pulse of organising, they seem to be primarily occupied by women, and they also reflect the intersection of their public and private lives. Critically, women created their own invented space within and outside of the organisation in order to have women’s concerns, and the concerns of the community at large, better addressed.
Invited spaces of participation in Freedom Park may be helpful in many ways, but the way in which they are created does not secure a hopeful future for the communities. The development companies, which apparently hope to enable communities to have active participation in the decision-making that effects their lives, do not hire the residents for more than a few months. It is only now, as this dissertation is being written, that one of the development companies, Urban Dynamics, has recognised the role of women in the community. After fighting and discriminating against them, they apologised and requested their involvement in the development process. This is only happening in Lindelani section, and it would be helpful if development organisations would implement the same strategy elsewhere. Women in Freedom Park suffer a number of injustices and being denied the opportunity to be a part of the development process is one of them. Another one is the unpaid labour involved in taking care of the household (Miraftab, 2006; Moser, 1993). These injustices suffered by women take place both in the private spaces of the home as well as the public spaces of social movements.

The community of Freedom Park has eight sections in total and only two of them are developed while the others are still in process. It is important to note that, according to the women of Lindelani, these opportunities were not handed over to them. They fought and were victimised by the police, together with people from Urban Dynamics, but recently became recognised as legal occupants. Chapter five highlights the fact that women were not in leadership positions when Freedom Park was established. It was only particular men who were in charge of the community’s public affairs. Yet women were experiencing injustices that came with being dominated in both the public and private spheres. Over time they decided to put a stop to these long-time injustices, such as getting unclean water, sharing public toilets, living in shacks without electricity, living in RDP houses that are not in a good state, and being unemployed.

In late 2013 and early 2014, women started to be more proactive in the local politics by showing support to men even though their role was not highly visible. The decision to organise alongside men was created by the frustrations of their living conditions, including poverty and the fear for the future of their children who are going to grow up in Freedom Park. Taking this action helped women in the community to realise that they were sharing similar experiences, and this assisted in strengthening local protests...
as women brought new strategies and tactics. Even though they were strategic in their organising, they still knew their “place” as women. Throughout 2014 women showed strength by leading local protests and ensuring that they succeeded.

It was after multiple incidents that both men and women decided to officially organise together. Women continued to experience patriarchy even though they were doing most of the work, especially as street and block committee members, but they were not in the official leadership of the AbFP. Also, the fact that they were not bothered by being in the leadership positions suggests that women have accepted patriarchy and to them it is the norm. One of the women who participated in the research highlighted that they are not feminists, they just want to support men. Women’s perceptions of themselves in politics is important. Hence, in 2016, they began to organise independently of men, since they believed that they experienced injustices that men do not understand. It is these experiences that caused women in the leadership of AbFP to see it fit to organise each other so that they could come up with ways to bring change to their socio-economic circumstances. This research found that the multiple incidents of protests have led women to question more deeply their role as “abafazi” (women). These protests made women become more conscious of gender issues and social exclusion.

The research focused solely on the community of Freedom Park and the SMO AbFP. This was the limitation of this research. More case studies on the role of women elsewhere need to be undertaken. This research further recommends that future studies look at the trend of women branching out of the umbrella organisations to form their own organisations where they discuss issues that only relate to women. Nonetheless, the research has contributed to the body of scholarly knowledge by providing the day-to-day lived experiences of women who are activists and how they occupy various spaces and deal with issues including patriarchy. It also highlights the fact that protests are not only about service delivery but about gender discrimination as well. Even though women fight for the broader community together with men, they still see the need to organise independently as they have different responsibilities from those of the men. This trend is common amongst many mixed gendered organisations because issues of gender and space are political. Massey (1994) was correct to argue that space and place are gendered, and this determines one’s daily lived experience.
The women who participated in the study, through their actions and through dominating the street committee leadership where most of the grassroots organising takes place, have proven that the concepts of the private and public space is a false binary. Women who have been in the community for a number of years and have suffered multiple injustices have created spaces which demonstrate Miraftab’s point that politics is potent in the private space of the home (2006). It is these injustices that led women to occupy public spaces. They have proven to be powerful in public and private arenas by challenging patriarchy through creating their own space within and outside of AbFP. This dissertation has demonstrated the ways in which women have overcome certain power dynamics that have oppressed them in their community and restructured relationships with different people in different spaces in order to empower themselves and their community.
INTERVIEW LIST

Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of the four main respondents, as well as other people who are mentioned in the dissertation. Other interviewees were referred to as “Anonymous” in order to protect their identities as well.

I. Semi-structured and focus group interviewees

Nhlanhla, female, interview, 2015, 2016
Poppy, female, interview, 2015, 2016
Sibongile, female, interview, 2015, 2016
Sipho, male, 36, 2015, 2016
Anonymous female 1, interview, 2015, 2016
Anonymous female 2, interview, 2015, 2016
Anonymous female 3, focus group, 3 August 2016
Anonymous female 4, focus group, 3 August 2016
Anonymous female 5, focus group, 3 August 2016
Anonymous female 6, focus group, 3 August 2016
Anonymous female 7, focus group, 3 August 2016
Anonymous female 8, focus group, 3 August 2016
Anonymous female 9, focus group, 3 August 2016
Anonymous female 10, focus group, 3 August 2016
Anonymous female 11, focus group, 3 August 2016
Anonymous female 12, focus group, 3 August 2016
Anonymous female 13, focus group, 3 August 2016
Anonymous male 1, interview, 2015,
Anonymous male 2, interview, 2015,
Anonymous male 3, interview, 2016
Anonymous male 4, interview, 2015 and 2016
II. Participant observations

The three women who were observed for over 10 months were initially selected from the leadership, Saturday Struggle School and community meetings between May 2015 to October 2015. Frequent visits to their private homes and formal interviews were conducted from November 2015, and the final formal interviews and visits were undertaken in August 2016.

These observations meant that I had to participate in the meetings and share meals with them while having conversations.

Nhlanhla, female, interview, 2015, 2016
Poppy, female, interview, 2015, 2016
Sibongile, female, interview, 2015, 2016

III. Informal interviews, conversations and meetings

Nhlanhla (in the meetings and at home, 2015 and 2016)
Poppy (in the meetings and at home, 2015 and 2016)
Sibongile (in the meetings and at home, 2015 and 2016)
Comrade Sipho (in the meetings, 2015 and 2016)

Anonymous community members (community meetings in 2015 and 2016)
Anonymous street committee leaders (in the leadership of AbFP and community meetings)
AbFP leadership meetings (Wednesdays, 2015 and 2016)
Community meetings (Sundays, 2015 and 2016)
The Saturday Struggle School (2015, 2016)
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APPENDICES

Appendix A:
The Constitution of Abahlali baseFreedom Park. [no date]. Consists of the aim, objectives of the organisation and information on membership.

Appendix B:
The “Saturday Struggle School” trainee workbook. [no date]. Module 1, only the cover page, page 1 and 3 are attached.

Appendix C:
Memorandum of Demands compiled Abahlali baseFreedom Park to the MEC of Human Settlement. [10 October 2014]

Appendix D:
Agenda for the community meeting. [17 April 2016]. The agenda includes the response from the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan to the court order, MEC and Gauteng Department of Human Settlement; Community safety and crime; land occupation and the South African Constitution.

Appendix E
Freedom Park CLING history. The document includes some 2009 research based on social justice struggles in Freedom Park linking advocacy, research and community organising which was conducted by Corinne Nadine Hoag in collaboration with GOLCCOM. There is information about CLING activities as well. [Complete document available from the leadership of Abahlali baseFreedom Park]

Appendix F:
Court case application between Abahlali baseFreedom Park and the MEC, Department of Human Settlement.