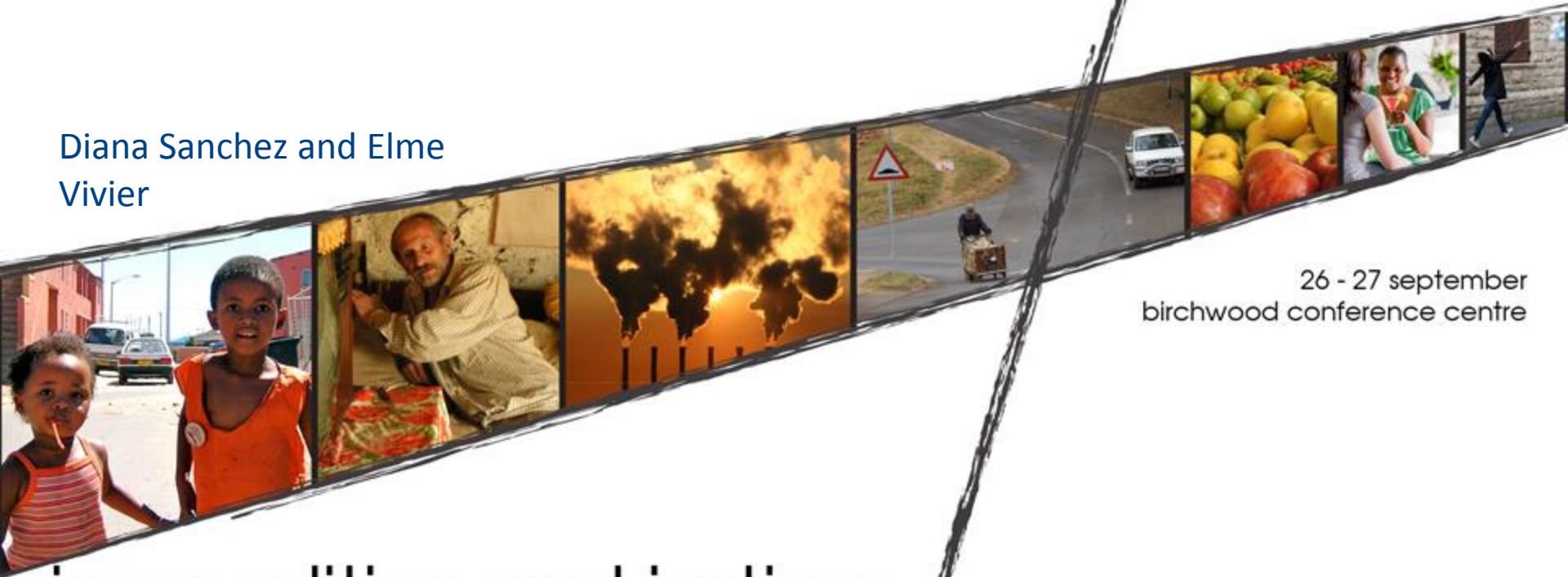


Public Spaces and Public Participation in Cape Town: From Participation to Engagement

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26 - 27 september
birchwood conference centre

inequalities and justice:

influences, effects, intersections and evidence



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Introduction

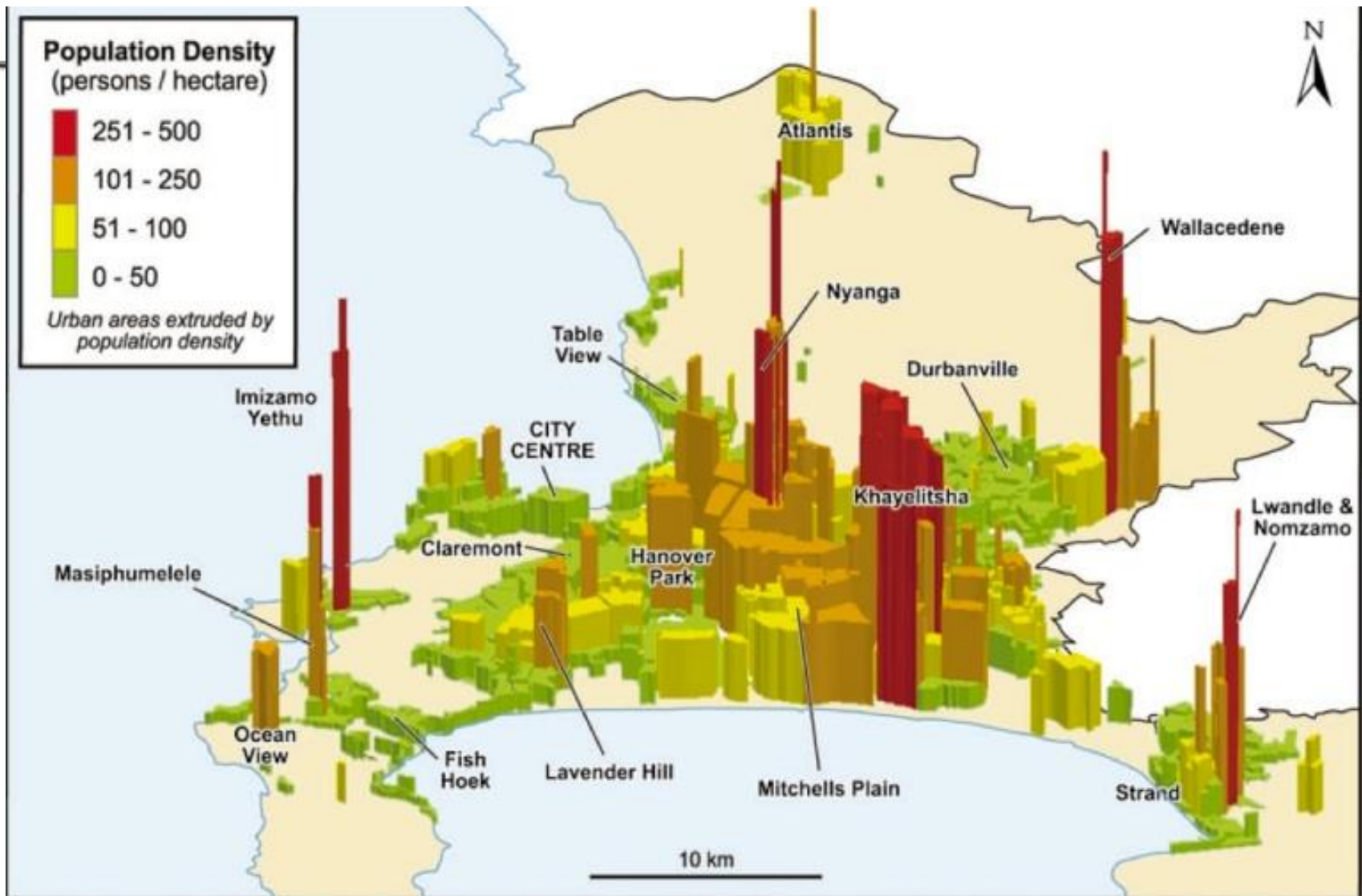
- Principles of public participation in local government.
- A concerning trend towards closing these spaces.
- Dual challenges: to implement PP and of the challenges to deliver services and manage the built environment in a participatory manner.
- Public Participation has been recognised by National Government as a key element for successful urbanisation...CSP
- Research question: How can public space serve as an instrument to enhance community engagement?

Outline

- Cape Town: Overview of the city
- Public Participation in the SA context & in Cape Town
- Public Space & Cape Town
- New forms of Community Engagement (CE) in Cape Town?
- How can urban public space serve as an instrument to enhance community engagement?
- Conclusions

Cape Town

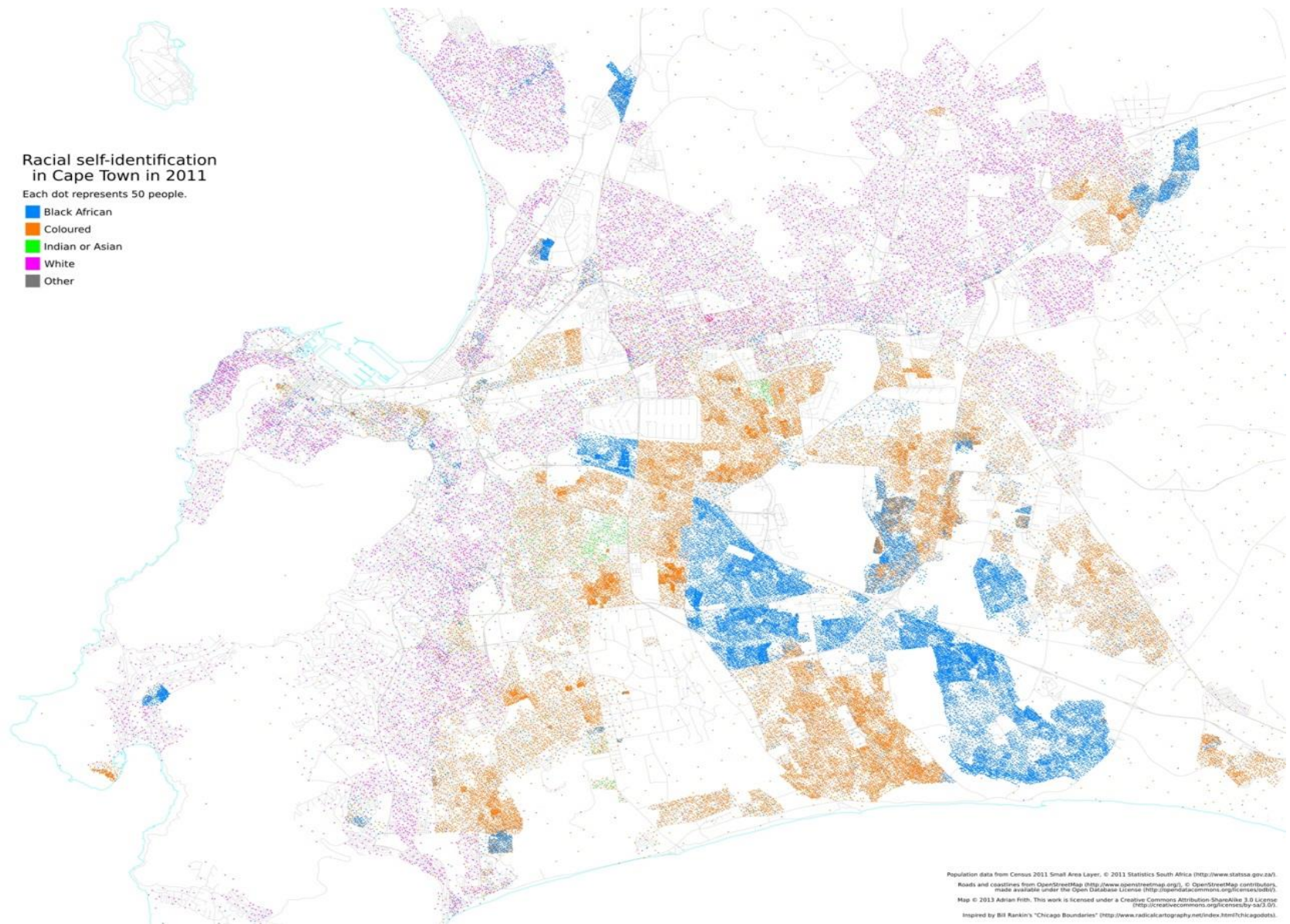
- Multiple voices and widely dispersed.
- Total population: 3.5 million
- Females: 51.6%; males 48.4%.
- Coloured: 44%; African: 35%; White: 19%; Asian: 2%.
- A young city: over 30% of its population between the ages of 18 and 34, and over 30% are 17 years and younger.



Racial self-identification in Cape Town in 2011

Each dot represents 50 people.

- Black African
- Coloured
- Indian or Asian
- White
- Other



Population data from Census 2011 Small Area Layer, © 2011 Statistics South Africa (<http://www.statssa.gov.za/>).
Roads and coastline from OpenStreetMap (<http://www.openstreetmap.org/>). © OpenStreetMap contributors.
Map © 2013 Adrian Frith. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>).
Inspired by Bill Rankin's "Chicago Boundaries" (<http://www.radicalcartography.net/index.html#chicago08>).

Participation in the SA context & in Cape Town

- Public participation mechanisms are key elements of democratic systems.
 - Greater accountability
 - More effective service delivery
 - People-centred urban governance and development planning
 - Practice of citizenship; active citizenship
- Participatory mechanisms have different objectives and modalities.
- Formal mechanisms and processes are embedded in policy and legislation.
- Informal mechanisms (e.g. protests, social movements) have also become increasingly pertinent.

Limitations of formal mechanisms

- Often 'ineffective and dysfunctional' (Benit-Gbaffou 2008)
- 'Spectator politics...people have mostly become endorsees of pre-designed planning programmes' (Williams 2006).
- Citizens often uninformed about structures, functions and capacities of local govt and participatory forums
- Gap between neighbourhood level settlements planning or other project specific processes and city-wide processes e.g. IDP

Informal modes of participation

- Contestation: a way of negotiating reality (Paxson 2007)
- ‘Community groups can act as a countervailing force’ (Williams 2006: 205) to institutions and regulations of government systems, processes and decisions.
- ‘Counter-spaces’ and ‘counter-publics’ come into being when marginal groups claim, restructure and transform lived spaces as places of specific interests and representation (Williams 2006).
- Ex: Social movements; service delivery protests

New forms of Community Engagement?

The Social Justice Coalition (SJC)

- Founded in June 2008, the SJC is a community-based activist movement campaigning for safe, healthy and dignified communities.
- It promotes active citizenship, accountable governance and the advancement of the social justice obligations and rights enshrined in the Constitution.
- The SJC's main focus area is Khayelitsha, and it has 11 active branches and over 40 partner organisations.
- Using public spaces to create awareness: The 2010 Human Rights Day, 2011 Freedom Day 'Toilet Queues' in Sea Point and City Hall plaza.

Social Justice Coalition (II)

- In April 2013, the SJC conducted a social audit of 5000 chemical toilets and related services in Khayelitsha.
- A social audit is ‘a structured way of measuring, understanding and reporting on funds destined to benefit a community.’
- 60 participants were drawn from the community and received training wrt access to information and PAIA, and the city’s contract with the service provider.
- The audit comprised physical verification and questionnaires with residents, and concluded with a public hearing where the SJC presented the findings to relevant city officials.

Public Space & Social Urbanism

- **Social urbanism:** a development approach that emerged in the city of Medellín, Colombia between 2003 and 2007.
 - public urban investments
 - address poverty and crime in a three-way approach: the construction of structures for educational and cultural purposes, the recuperation of already existing public spaces and the implementation of public transport.
- **Socio-cultural infrastructure:** social development investments that help to forge a sense of community and new spaces for economic opportunities.

Conclusions

- Recognise a more empowering form of participation that exceeds formal processes and spaces; reflected in terminological shift from PP to CE.
- Public space as the scenario for power struggles, social dynamics and contestations.
- Examples show how public spaces are places for possibilities of participation that exceed formal mechanisms and limitations.