

SDGs as a driver to development

Urban change needs bold action. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a global plan to build better world by 2030. SDGs 11 speaks particularly about 'Sustainable cities and communities, but all other 16 SDGs are also interconnected to cities and urban development.

This fact sheet is part of a series to gain knowledge on the localization of SDGs in the endeavor for making them meaningful drivers for future urban development.



Shared is more

The role of public space for community resilience

This research assesses the multi-dimensional role of public spaces in fostering resilient communities within the context of Windhoek's informal settlements taking Peter Nanyemba informal settlement as case study. By investigating public spaces' production, use, and impact, the study aims to provide comprehensive insights into how these shared spaces develop the adaptive capacities of people living in informal communities.

The study delves into the processes that shape public spaces within and it focuses on understanding how these spaces are designed, constructed, and modified over time. It seeks to know the factors driving these transformations, offering insights into how public spaces evolve to meet the community's needs and explores the relationships between people in the shared spaces. Therefore, it seeks to understand the range of activities in these areas by studying how people appropriate these spaces, informal rules, behaviors, social networks and a sense of belonging among community members govern public space use.

Background

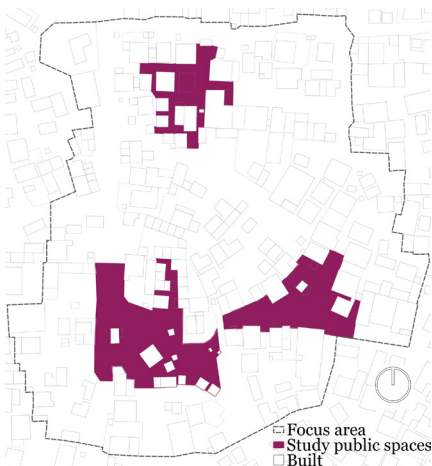
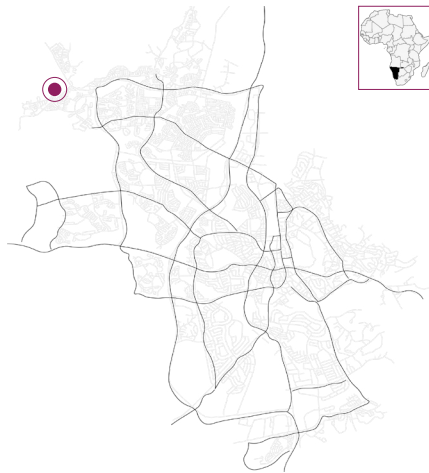
- » Windhoek's urban development is characterized by the spatial segregation during the apartheid era that forced relocation of 'black' population to the North-West of the city.
- » Since Namibia's independence (1991), informal housing began to grow around these areas in the North-West of the city. In 2017, 42 percent of Windhoek households lived in corrugated iron shacks and it is expected to reach 50 percent by 2025.
- » In 2009 started the occupation of Peter Nanyemba informal settlement.
- » By 2020 the city council approved a resolution for numbering the informal structures to create a database to develop strategies for upgrading areas such as Peter Nanyemba
- » Upgrading strategies focus on land tenure, housing and service delivery and yet overlook the importance of useability of public spaces



Informal settlement in Windhoek City (Cayetano, 2024)

Case study

Peter Nanyemba, Windhoek, Namibia



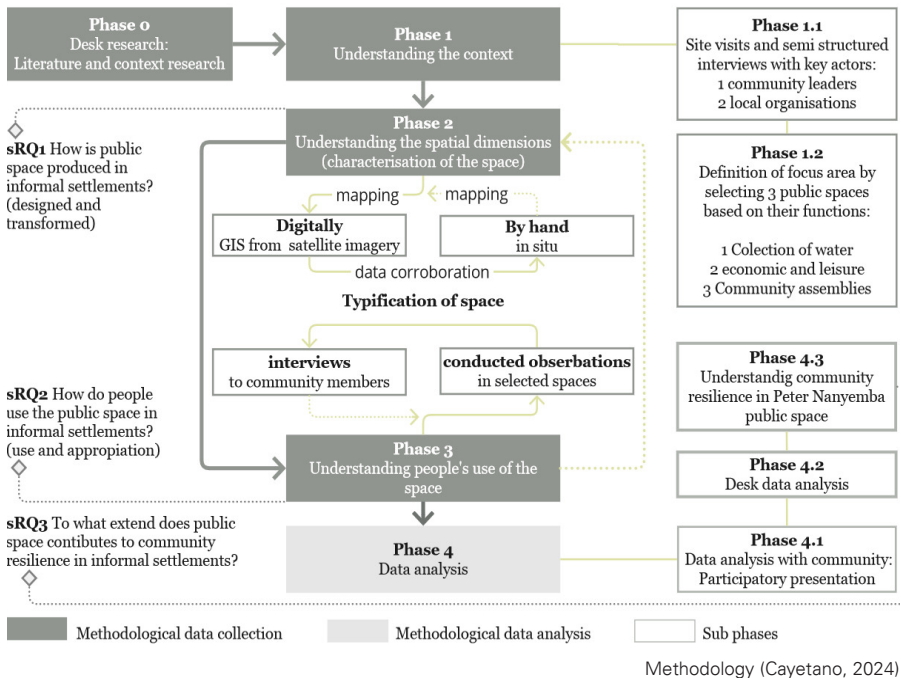
Analyzed public spaces (Cayetano, 2024)

- » Peter Nanyemba is an informal settlements located in the northwest of the city of Windhoek. The settlement is subdivided by a total of 16 blocks named from A to P.
- » The city of Windhoek together with Shack Dwellers Federation of Namibia (SDFN) and the Namibian Housing Action Group (NHAG) have an ongoing upgrading process in Peter Nanyemba with focus on households formalization and access to land tenure within blocks E, F, G and H. The focus area was selected within blocks E and F.
- » 3 public spaces were selected based on their functions to be studied within the focus area: (1) a “provider” public space for shared essential services such as water and showers. The name of the spaces is the “community water point”; (2) a “productive” public space for food and trading activities. The space is known as the “big boys area”; (3) a governance public space for the management and organization of the community. The space is known as the “community meeting point”.

The research

The research has been conducted as part of a master thesis at the University of Stuttgart and the SDGs GoGlobal! project in 2023/4.

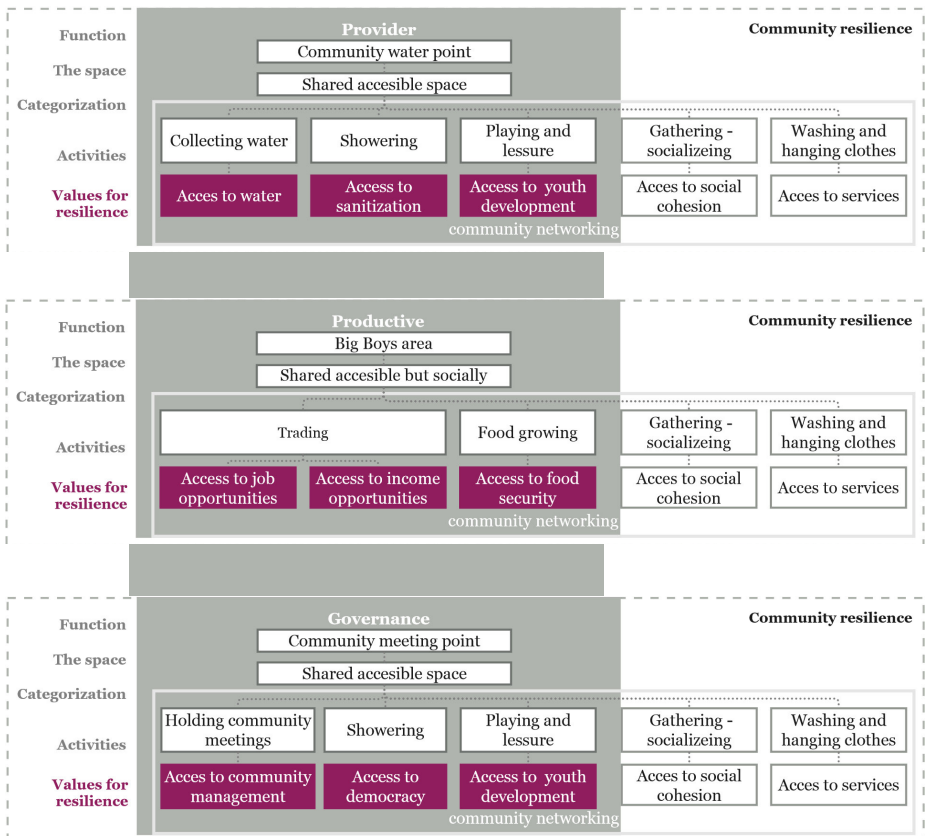
- » The main research question guiding the research was: **What is the role of public space in fostering more resilient communities in the context of Wiendhoek’s informal settlements?**
- » The data collection has been conducted in April and May 2024 and included 3 phases: (1) understanding the context and selection of public spaces to be analyzed, (2) understanding the spatial dimensions and typification of spaces, (3) understanding people’s use of the space.
- » The data analysis has been conducted only in 1 phase and 3 subphases: data analysis with the community, desk data analysis, data analysis for identification of community resilience.



Key findings

Public space as social infrastructure for resilience

- » Public space is not only a physical infrastructure but a social infrastructure for community networks. Public space reflects the community's ability to self-organize and adapt with transformations that affect both the physical space and the nature of social interactions.
- » Public space is a platform for community resilience where flexibility and multi uses of space makes informal settlements more resilient. Public spaces compensate the deficiencies from resident's private spaces and allows vulnerable community members to find support among the community.



Values for community resilience in analysed public spaces (Cayetano, 2024)

Recommendations

- » Public spaces should be prioritized alongside housing from the very beginning the upgrading processes and not merely be viewed as a final product of urban formalization. This would contribute to the general well being of the community and their capacity to face stresses by the support among the community.
- » Early investment in public spaces should be implemented to foster social cohesion and strengthen collective organization. By promoting social ties and providing essential tools for community interaction, the long term success of the neighborhood formalization is greatly increased.
- » Public policies should include strategies that enable residents to shape their neighborhood with support from local authorities. It is essential to adopt bottom-up policies, where authorities provide facilitation and guidance rather than impose limitations. Include residents in planning processes allowing for local knowledge and practices to shape the formalization and improvement of these areas.
- » Promote community-based training programs over public spaces (accessible for everyone) to build local knowledge and skills as well as create opportunities for small business in the informal settlements to ensure a local income.



Participatory workshop in Peter Nanyemba informal settlement (Cayetano, 2024)

SDGs relevance



- » SDG 6, clean water and sanitation. Public space in Peter Nanyemba is used as a shared infrastructure that provides access to drinking water reducing the number of people suffering from water scarcity. Moreover, residents in Peter Nanyemba built structures over the public spaces to have access to sanitation (showers).
- » SDG 10, reduced inequalities. Public space provides a platform to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all within a community, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.
- » SDG 11, sustainable cities and communities. Public space in Peter Nanyemba is used to access basic services and a tool for people to organize and upgrade their settlement. Furthermore, it enhances inclusive capacity for participatory and neighborhood management.





The SDGs GoGlocal! project aims to strengthen translocal and transdisciplinary research and teaching in how to localise and ground the SDGs meaningfully in urban planning and development practice. It is a partnership between the University of Stuttgart in Germany, the Namibia University of Science and Technology in Windhoek and the Ain Shams University in Cairo, Egypt.

Based on Master thesis of

Alan Tonatiuh Cayetano Borja

Supervisors:

Prof. Dr. Astrid Ley, University of Stuttgart

Prof. Dr. Mohamed Salheen, Ain Shams University

Advisor:

Sophia van Greunen, Namibia University of Science and Technology

