Chapter 11

Goeie Grond: A Visual Journal on the Elandskloof Garden Project

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Introduction

This is a visual journal on the development of the Elandskloof garden project. The garden project emerged through collaborative efforts between the Elandskloof community and the CRITICAL Project Team. The success of the garden proves that intervention through collective effort can redeem and restore the autonomy of indigenous communities that have been marginalised and all but forgotten by national leadership. The aim of this journal is to illustrate the journey of the Elandskloof garden project. Elandskloof's indigenous knowledge systems as well as food heritage inspired the garden's cultivation and thus, features throughout this chapter. Through it all, climate change remains a critical issue not only impacting the physical environment in Elandskloof, but also altering the way that residents interact with their own heritage. The chapter features central figures in Elandskloof that have shown immense resilience, leadership and creativity in their approach to community challenges in the valley.

History of the valley

Despite its proximity to popular citrus farms in the *Koue Bokkeveldt* (cold buck shrubland) Mountains and its status as the first successful land restitution case in South Africa, it is a place completely hidden from the rest of the world. To reach the Elandskloof, one must travel seventeen kilometres south-east of Citrusdal in the Western Cape province of South Africa, on a gravel road that crawls through the Cederberg Wilderness. Citrus trees and *fynbos* (natural shrubland) will brush past you. When reaching a fork in the road, head down to the bridge laid with stone from the mountains and a sign that reads *Elandskloof*.

Before the arrival of white farmers—in fact, before the arrival of anyone else—Khoi tribes moved

across the Cederberg. Where food and water were plenty, they gathered. Where shelter was found, their stories were painted on cave walls (Cederberg Conservancy 2024) and through their presence in the landscape, systems of knowledge emerged.

> The early inhabitants of the Cedarberg, the San, relied on hunting and gathering for their subsistence. The *veldkos* and game which supported them were natural and seasonal resources and as such, enforced a constant mobility on the population. The predominant economic activity of the Khoi who later moved into this region, was subsistence based on pastoralism, rather than cultivation. The Khoi, like their San neighbours, were nomadic people, moving seasonally in search of new grazing grounds and more mild weather. (Anderson 1993: 4)

Passed down from generation to generation, the heritage of indigenous tribes was preserved by actively practising what was known and taught of the landscape. When activity at the foot of Table Mountain forced an influx of white settlers into the Cape interior in the eighteenth century, the children of nomadic and freed peoples abided by Cape Colony law and purchased farmland in one of the Cederberg Mountain valleys. Elandskloof, as it became known, was a self-sustaining agrarian community for more than a century before the betrayal of the Dutch Reformed Church.

In 1962 the Dutch Reformed Church, which had established a mission station in the valley in 1861, cast 76 families from their homes and re-allocated the farms in Elandskloof to white farmers (CRITICAL Project Team 2022; O'Connell 2018b). The strategic removal of these families fell in conjunction with the South African Group Areas Act of 1950. Under the Act, the government assigned geographic territories to citizens according to race; favouring the placement of white people in areas with opportune real estate.

In 1996 the original residents of Elandskloof were reconciled with their families' property, in what is recognised as the first successful instance of land restitution in South Africa. In a grand display with national media coverage, government officials of the newly-elected democratic government led by the African National Congress (ANC), awarded ownership of Elandskloof back to its former inhabitants (O'Connell 2018b).

> Many Elandsklowers had moved onto nearby farms as temporary tenants and seasonal

> labourers and were beholden to white landlords who dominated the lucrative regional and international fruit markets in the Citrusdal region. Some members of families who had moved to Cape Town were able to attain higher levels of education and work skills and became qualified professionals and successful business people. Their return to Elandskloof accentuated social class differences with poor seasonal labourers (Everingham and Jannecke 2006: 551).

Shortly after Elandskloof's reconciliation, the ANC launched the Cederberg Conservancy (Cederberg Conservancy 2024). While the aim of the Conservancy was to maintain the biodiversity of the mountains to limit the damage that had been done by farming in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Conservancy also restricted access to indigenous knowledge practitioners and communities practising indigenous food heritage.

Cederberg heritage site

The Cederberg Wilderness was declared a World Heritage Site in 2004 as part of the Cape Floristic Region (Cederberg Conservancy 2024). This stagnated indigenous knowledge systems in the region and halted the transition of these heritage practices from elders to local youth. The implementation of conservation laws in the Cederberg Wilderness not only harmed indigenous knowledge systems, it also stunted agrarian activity in Elandskloof. Centuries of foraging and farming practices in the Cederberg derived from the Khoi and San ancestors, had to be abandoned when the Cederberg Wilderness was sanctioned. As a result, Elandskloof's cultural heritage has been disregarded.

With the mountains now protected, farming on the mountains is prohibited. Cattle farmers must make do with what the valley provides in terms of grazing—which is scarce in the sandy and rocky landscape. Though fertile, cultivating soil at the foot of the mountain proves a challenge for the small farmers of Elandskloof, especially with limited access to mechanised farming equipment (O'Connell 2018b).

Food heritage is especially vulnerable, not only in this settlement, but in many other marginalised areas where indigenous communities are forsaken by the very governments that had promised to protect them. The Cederberg is home to thousands of endemic plant species including *buchu* (*Rutaceae*), rooibos (*Aspalathus linearis*), wild olive trees (*Olea europaea subsp. africana*), wild

almond trees (*Brabejum stellatifolium)* and red disas (*Disa uniflora*). The flora in the Cederberg has many uses for the Elandsklowers (residents of Elandskloof) (Cederberg Conservancy 2024). Not only is *buchu* used to cure chest ailments in the absence of a local pharmacy or hospital, it also generates a small income for the settlement.

In 2005, shortly after the Cederberg Mountains achieved World Heritage status, Elandskloof was placed under government administration, further incapacitating its independent development. What little amenities have been brought on, like electricity, quickly fell away/became meaningless with the introduction of a failing national power grid (Du Preez and Strydom 2023). Rudimentary infrastructure continues to develop—homes and outdoor amenities constructed from repurposed building materials; corrugated roads latched together with low-water bridges that flood violently during rainy seasons. Today, Elandskloof is a rural, impoverished community that has not yet shaken the collective memory or systemic social issues brought and imposed on the valley by the forced removals (O'Connell 2018b).

The preservation of Elandskloof's cultural heritage—and other indigenous communities outside of this valley—is placed under threat when natural conservation in diverse ecosystems is prioritised over cultural heritage that develops in tandem with the natural environment. In the case-study of Elandskloof, the issue of food heritage has been especially dire due to several internal and external issues. Within the valley, the abuse of natural resources drains the energy and funds of local governance (O'Connell 2023a). Despite their annexation of the settlement's autonomy, the government has done little in the way of improving the settlement. No plans for paved roads, no permanent infrastructure and no municipal services have been implemented. This has led to some residents taking the yoke of providing basic services to Elandskloof upon themselves.

CRITICAL project

Origin

In 2019, Dr Siona O'Connell and Dr Dominique Wnuczek-Lobaczewski from the Department of Interdisciplinary and Museum Studies at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, joined forces with Dr Kate Crowley and Dr Yough-Hwa Cha from the School of Geosciences at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, to establish the CRITICAL Project Team. The team launched an investigation

into Elandskloof as a case-study of vulnerable and forgotten communities in South Africa. Particular attention was paid to the community's attitude towards climate change and its preservation of food heritage using indigenous knowledge systems. According to the CRITICAL Project Team, the Elandskloof restitution process was deeply flawed, '[a] land without the capital to develop it, and a group of claimants many decades removed from a meaningful relationship with the business of rural livelihoods, carrying the scars of the struggle for survival under apartheid' (CRITICAL Project Team 2022). Elandskloof was identified as a site particularly at risk because of its history of forced removals and the inter-generational knowledge gap that has been intensified by anthropogenic climate change (Crowley, Wilson and O'Connell 2022).

O'Connell and Wnuczek-Lobaczewski have been working closely with the Elandskloof residents since 2016 on issues of land restitution, food heritage, inequality and generational trauma. With this project titled '*Critical food heritage as a tool for adaptation: Climate change resilience through hybrid indigenous knowledge systems in South Africa'*, a collaborative community garden project, known as CRITICAL Food was developed. The project was developed in response to the flawed restitution process. The aim of the project was to plant seeds that would bear good fruit—not only physical fruits from the local garden to feed the Elandskloof's community, but to also facilitate a space of "learning by doing" for growing and nurturing the settlement's heritage and processing of past trauma (CRITICAL Project Team 2022; Crowley et al.; Daniels 2023).

Development

In 2022, the CRITICAL Project Team approached Elandskloof with the aim of creating the opportunities that were lacking, in hopes of bringing tangible, lasting change. The initial plan was to get the young people of Elandskloof involved in the establishment of a vegetable garden that would provide vegetables to the residents of Elandskloof (O'Connell 2018a). The aim was to give the residents a springboard from which to learn farming and hopefully become self-sustainable. It was also hoped that through this process of working with the residents that relationships would be rebuilt and a space for dialogue surrounding heritage, history, land and climate change would be created.

The vegetable garden was to be a way of claiming back and taking ownership of the land that was stripped away from them in the past. The CRITICAL Project Team made it clear that they, the

residents of Elandskloof, would have to take ownership and responsibility for the project as a community (Daniels 2023). It was up to the residents as to how they would manage the garden and what they would plant there and nobody from outside the community was to dictate how they were to do it. As such, the garden project created a light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and the UK Government Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport, the CRITICAL Project answered Elandskloof's call for help to create opportunities and grow their small-scale farming with the garden project. The garden project was developed for the residents of Elandskloof to promote climate change resilience using food heritage with the aim of empowering the residents as a community (Daniels 2023).

Six young adults—four young men and two young women—were temporarily employed by the CRITICAL Project Team to clear the area where the tunnel was to be erected in 2023. They, like most of the young people in Elandskloof, are employed on the surrounding citrus farms as seasonal workers. They work as pickers and sorters of citrus during the season of March to October. In the off-season, they are either unemployed or work on stone fruit farms located in an area known as the *Koue Bokkeveldt*. Ironically, there are planted orange trees on Elandskloof, however, they have been neglected and left to be disused. According to reports, after the young adults were paid for their work on the tunnel construction site, they abandoned the project, leaving it to the older residents of Elandskloof to maintain. This has left older residents, like Nicholas Andreas Dirks (*Oom* [Uncle] Klaas), to doubt if the youth are interested in Elandskloof, since they have left the garden to the devices of the older residents, who distribute the vegetables amongst themselves—free of charge.

However, over the last four years, with hard work from the Elandskloof Residents Committee headed by the chair Johannes Phillip (JP) George, the residents have made progress in rebuilding relationships and identifying leaders among the youth (Daniels 2023).

In 2023, with the help from CRITICAL Project Team, under the charge of *Oom* Klaas, the residents started to successfully plant vegetables (O'Connell 2023a). Vegetable gardens are not unfamiliar to the Elandskloof residents, many of whom have their own gardens in which they traditionally planted potatoes, sweet potatoes, watermelons and beans. According to George, '*They plant, and things grow.*' (as quoted by Cole and Maharaj 2023). In the past four years, the residents have added a wider variety of vegetables; since the start of the garden, they have successfully planted spinach, corn, peppadews, sweet peppers, cauliflowers, parsley, tomatoes, onions, beetroot, carrots,

lettuce and very popular, green peas in the greenhouse tunnel (Daniels 2023). The hope is that the greenhouse tunnel is the first step in making progress and building relationships in the community, despite the historical division.

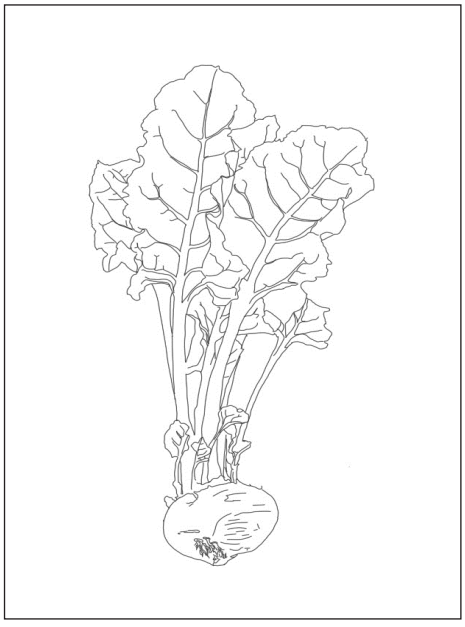
Chairman George and the community attest to the fact that the soil is *goeie grond* (good soil). Some fertilisers had to be worked in to the soil to help start the planting process, however, soil is not the issue in Elandskloof; vegetables mainly do not grow well in Elandskloof because of the cold weather. Residents say that there is not much of a summer season; that the soil remains damp and plants get damaged by frost. The tunnel is an innovation that helps to protect the plants from the cold, unpredictable weather, wind and even destructive livestock, creating a year-round growing season. Many of the plants that grow in the tunnel were bought from the stores, but if successful, the plants will provide year-round vegetables and the residents would no longer have to buy at the stores (Cole 2023).

It is economically more feasible for the older residents of the community to get their vegetables from the garden than to travel seventeen kilometres to the nearest shopping centre in Citrusdal. Fresh produce is expensive and can at times be inaccessible for those on the poverty line, unless they grow it themselves or buy it by informal means. The extra income and the money residents save, is a starting point to revitalising Elandskloof's almost non-existent economy.

Even though Elandskloof is a dry area, the residents have access to an abundance of natural water sources: a river; a natural fountain and two dams (Bleeker 2023b). These water sources supply the garden with irrigation that is stored in a JoJo (water storage) tank. Vandalism, however, is an occurring problem for the settlement. In May 2023, George reported that a group of juveniles blocked the irrigation system of the greenhouse when they threw rocks into one of the dams, blocking the pipeline (Cole and Maharaj 2023). The abundant water sources can just as easily turn hostile of their own accord, as was the case in June 2023 when heavy rains in the valley caused the river to breach its banks. Roads, bridges and several farms in the valley were submerged by the water torrent. Day labourers and school children from Elandskloof were stranded in Citrusdal for several days (Western Cape Government 2023).

Current status

The challenge of Elandskloof and the CRITICAL Project Team was not necessarily the establishment of a vegetable garden, but the multi-layered complexities of the history and trauma endured by the community and how the effects of the forced removal remain tangibly present in their daily lives. Added to this struggle is the unexpected effect of climate change that has hit Southern Africa—particularly the Western Cape region—with droughts and unpredictable weather (Crowley et al. 2022). According to O'Connell (2023a), the residents 'had to adjust their expectations and take joy in really small accomplishments'. Meetings hosted by the Elandskloof residents committee have revealed a very low turnout of youth, which has worried the committee who were trying to get the youth interested in Elandskloof development projects such as the garden. George attributes this lack of interest to the long history of conflict within the community, stating, *'[p]eople don't want us to talk about it but it is a fact*' (Cole and Maharaj 2023). He maintains that the youth fear getting involved because meetings tend to turn into arguments, going nowhere. George, as quoted by O'Connell (2023a), believes the garden tunnel is a '*wake-up call'*; something that can rekindle their self-confidence.



Elandskloof residents made progress over the last four years rebuilding relationships by coming into some form of agreement with each other (Daniels 2023). According to George, the community is no longer managed like a democracy as such. It is their responsibility as the committee to develop Elandskloof, to make partnerships like the CRITICAL Project. The residents do not feel the need for approval to go ahead with plans and projects that might benefit the "community". George states: '*They were too scared to take risks. Too scared to take responsibility for what they were given, to live it out. If they do not do anything, nothing will happen*' (as quoted by Cole and Maharaj 2023). However, under the leadership of George, the residents try to make decisions to go forward with projects, because if it works, then they know they

can do it; and if it does not work, then they are not worse off than before. Under administration, the community grew tired of waiting for the Department of Rural Development to do something, however, now with the garden project continuing to move forward, they can start healing because people like the CRITICAL Project Team are supporting them.

With possible future funding, the community plan to build more tunnels for vegetables which they can later, in addition to distributing to the residents, sell for a profit (Daniels 2023). George goes further to say they can transform the entire piece of open land adjacent to the tunnel into more tunnels (George as quoted by O'Connell 2023a). For the short-term, *Oom* Klaas suggests that even one more tunnel will be useful, one as a nursery and the other for growing the vegetables. Future long-term projects with CRITICAL Food, considering the national power grid crisis, might also include the installation of solar panels in Elandskloof (Daniels 2023). However, what is needed most at present for the project, is the recruitment of youth with the agricultural skills they have already acquired and empowering them with the resources they need to work.

The young people are not making much money picking and sorting oranges, however, if developments start expanding in Elandskloof, they can start working in Elandskloof on a full-time basis having a more stable future (O'Connell 2018a). The youth already do the work for the surrounding farms; therefore, it will be more beneficial if they can do the work for themselves. To start recruiting the youth, the committee is trying to identify promising individuals, young leaders that can affect change. For George, the idea behind the tunnel is to inspire the community of Elandskloof. He believes that this will be the first of more tunnels (Cole and Maharaj 2023). The real value of this project, however, is the time spent with the community, having those long-term conversations and showing that hope can grow in Elandskloof. If change can be achieved in Elandskloof, then it can be achieved in the rest of South Africa, maybe even the world.

> It is simple. The fact that something is happening is a success. It is physical proof that something is possible. It is not something we have to wonder about. We can see it is a great success. And that changes things. We can enter the future with courage and certainty saying, 'this was a pilot and did not cost us a cent. So, if it works here, we can work here'. JP George, Chair of the Elandskloof Residents Association (O'Connell 2023a).

Figure 11. 1 Community members of Elandskloof at the construction of the tunnel

Elandskloof community

Before they were cast out in 1962, Elandskloof as a landscape, was all the community knew. As Margie Januarie, daughter-in-law of Jan Januarie, the much-respected former leader and chairman of the community, put it, '*We loved this place. It was our everything*.' (O'Connell 2018b). The residents used to farm everything from livestock (donkeys, cows, chickens) to fruit orchids that they planted themselves. If they ever needed anything, they traded amongst themselves. They did not need much nor suffered hunger, in-fact they had everything they needed. If they did not have money to tithe to the church, they would harvest *buchu* for "sixpence a pound" and contribute to the church's finances in that way (O'Connell 2018b).

Elandskloof was a farming community until the residents' forceful removal in 1962, when the church sold the land without their knowledge. Prior to that, Elandskloof residents had the right to raise cattle in the surrounding *veldt* (open country) and the small plot of land that each family lived on sustained them through gardens and subsistence farming (O'Connell 2023a). On their return in 1996, with no capital, resources and training to develop Elandskloof as a commercial farm, its residents reverted to subsistence farming and became small-scale farmers or seasonal labourers on the surrounding farms (Everingham and Jannecke 2006).

Figure 11. 2 Typical houses in Elandskloof

Despite the residents return to the valley nearly 30 years ago, developing public and private infrastructure remains a challenge due to the administrative and financial holds on the settlement.

Administration was meant to redistribute resources and allow the residents to make decisions regarding Elandskloof as a community. Instead, resulting from poor planning and representation, it became a point of conflict, where opinions were voiced, yet no decisions were made (O'Connell

2018a). Consultants, one being a white farmer, were brought in to help the residents, however, insufficient time was spent with the residents to understand their needs, and their proposed business plans were unapplicable to the residents' needs. Therefore, with little useful help from the outside, two opposing sides developed in Elandskloof, namely the older generation, who remembered most of the trauma of 1962, and the younger generation, who mostly know what was told to them.

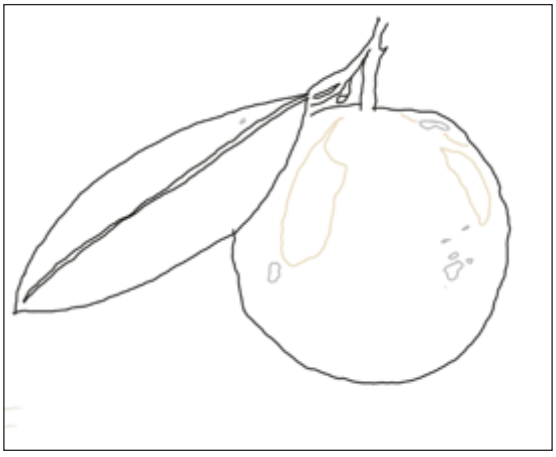
The older generation has made it difficult for the few young professional people to bring their knowledge to Elandskloof, making working the land nearly impossible. Despite this distrust, young adults continue to seek out academic and career paths that enable them to aid the Elandskloof's development through their respective fields (such as agriculture and construction) in the hopes of restoring the 3138 hectares of farmland on Elandskloof (Williams and Kepe 2008). Resources and opportunities, however, are scarce, as is the faith of the older generation in the younger generation. These issues have made Elandskloof a "community" divided by its past and unable to develop its future.

Intergenerational knowledge gap

As with any garden in its infancy, the labour is great and the weeds are many. In Elandskloof, the weeds presented strife between community members about what the town was and what it must become, and a growing uncertainty about the valley's future in the face of climate change.

In the time that the CRITICAL Project Team has been engaging with the community, a variety of narratives regarding who is responsible for Elandskloof's development emerged. Many of the elders believe that they can restore the town to its former glory with the help of external resources. Several of the elders

expressed a cynicism towards both outsiders (like the CRITICAL Project Team) and the younger generation's skill and capacity to contribute to these developments (Cole and Maharaj 2023). The youth have sensed this distrust to the point where they choose to distance themselves from the elders, the community projects and the community development meetings.



It has resulted in an intergenerational knowledge gap, which continues to expand as time passes. This not only makes it more difficult to execute physical improvement projects (like the greenhouse), but because there is an emotional disconnect, there is a risk of losing intangible heritage to intergenerational conflict (Du Preez 2023).

Climate change

Another challenge in the valley is the world-wide phenomenon of climate change. While residents acknowledged changes in the weather and the unpredictable intensity of dry and rainy seasons, their knowledge on the reason for these changes are limited. They understand, however, whatever the reason for it is, it is rapidly changing the valley and the mountains that had served them for generations. Fondly recalling snow on the mountains as a child, *Oom* Klaas says that he seldom sees snow in the area.

Elandskloof residents know the value of their hands and the landscape. In the years since the town was placed under administration, residents have grasped a small piece of paradise by simply

working *with* nature. Gardens are in bloom—even in the throes of winter—and whatever abundance is brought forth by familial gardens, is processed and traded amongst neighbours.

Recipes from "*Die Magie*" (the small stomach)

The residents of Elandskloof know Elandskloof by another name, "*Die Magie*" (the small stomach). They gave Elandskloof this name because of its remote and contained nature, however, it also aptly describes Elandskloof as a place rich in food heritage and biodiversity (O'Connell 2023a). Elandskloof has an abundance of naturally occurring resources such as *fynbos*, *buchu*, oak trees and wildflowers (Bleeker 2023b). The older residents are extremely resourceful and they have an intimate knowledge of the soil and the plants that flourish here (Bleeker 2023b; Daniels 2023). Many residents have their own personal vegetable gardens, rose gardens, herb gardens, succulent gardens and fruit trees, such as apricot, citrus and guava (Bleeker 2023b).

The rich food heritage of Elandskloof is known by its community members, however, it was not written down to be preserved. It is part of this visual journal's aim to write down this heritage, since it was part of the CRITICAL Project Team's objective to collect and store Elandskloof's food heritage (CRITICAL Project Team 2022). This has become vital to the community's survival as Elandskloof's past and conflict have created an intergenerational knowledge gap, disrupting the process of cultural food heritage being preserved and passed down to younger generations (Du Preez 2023).

Harvesting *buchu*

Every second year, the residents of Elandskloof climb the mountain with their knapsacks, scythes and canvas sheets. It is a day that the elders especially look forward to because the *buchu* harvest creates a special opportunity for them to share their know-how with the community. *'All you need to pick buchu is yourself, a bag or two and a sickle'*, says Maureen Visagie, one of the elders in Elandskloof (as quoted by Du Preez and Strydom 2023).

The bi-annual buchu harvest is done with great care and intention, Maureen explains. *Buchu* only produces seed in a very short time frame between September and November. Harvesting *buchu* too frequently denies the plant an opportunity to restore itself and to germinate seeds. Combined with poor harvesting practices, the chances are good the plant will go extinct (Williams and Kepe 2008).

In 2004, the Western Cape Nature Conservation launched a *buchu* alleviation project in Elandskloof, enlisting the help of locals to combat the threat of extinction (Williams and Kepe 2008). The pilot project aimed to collect *buchu* seed and cultivate the plant on the lower slopes of the mountain, where it was easier for the older people to reach. The residents, however, fought over where the cultivation was to take place and feared that some parties would benefit more than the others (Williams and Kepe 2008). This prevented Elandskloof from planting the seedlings the residents cultivated. The project was a failure; however, it illustrated the multi-layered complexities of the community dynamic.

Still, the residents are united in the way they use *buchu*. *Buchu* harvesting takes place in the summer months between December and February. The *buchu* is cut from the shrub and heaped onto the canvas sheets, then rolled into tight bundles and strapped to the harvesters' backs. The hike down from the mountain can be treacherous, but Maureen recalls, with a glint in her eyes, how children slid down the mountain slope to see who reached the bottom first. The *buchu* is carried down the mountain and distributed to local and national buyers whom they rely on for additional income.

Impoverishment in Elandskloof has forced older residents to rely increasingly on Elandskloof's rich biodiversity. For an extra income, they would collect acorns, *buchu*, wildflowers and proteas, something they never had to do before they were forcefully removed (O'Connell 2018b). The wildflowers (*Myrsine Africana*) they collect are usually dried and then sold as arrangements (O'Connell 2018b; Williams and Kepe 2008). This provides a meagre income, however, wild indigenous *buchu* (*Agathosma betulina*), a naturally growing plant in the Cederberg mountains of the Western Cape, South Africa, used for a variety of medicinal, food and cosmetic purposes, is the more lucrative resource (Williams and Kepe 2008).

In recent years, the plant has fallen under the protection of Cape Nature Conservation, restricting movement of the old residents from the places where their parents, grandparents and them as children, used to walk in the mountains to collect *buchu*. The residents require a permit, for which they must pay up to R250 to harvest *buchu* and instead of selling it themselves, they must get a seller to sell it for them (Williams and Kepe 2008). The residents do not have the specialised equipment to distil *buchu* oil themselves, therefore, their plea is for support and training in commercialising their natural resources so they can market it themselves without having to depend on a middleman. Until then, the residents are dependent on a price set by the seller.

Natural remedies

Known commercially as *buchu* water, the condensate recovered during the distillation of *buchu* oil is often used by Elandsklowers (Elandskloof residents) to treat colds and flu and, interestingly, they also used it to treat the flu-like symptoms of Covid-19 when the virus reached their settlement (Brendler and Abdel-Tawab 2022).

Another medicinal plant that is often used is *snotbossie*, literally meaning "booger plant", because of the mucus-like substance that the plant exudes when broken. They use the gel-like substance for sores, scratches and rashes. The endemic plant is more commonly named *Balsem-Kopiva* (*Bulpine sp. Iridaceae)* and found in the wild *veldt* (natural shrub land) and in many South African gardens due to its lovely small yellow and orange flowers. It is a non-edible plant, yet it is used in many South African dermatological treatments such as a balm for skin ailments, wounds and inflammation (Du Toit 1998; Philander 2011).

Food is also used to treat certain ailments. Lamb stew with seasonal vegetables from the garden is prepared for postpartum patients to revive their strength and promote internal healing. Beetroot is used in its various forms as a medicine to treat the bowls and intestinal problems.

Preservatives

Beetroot, along with other fruits and vegetables harvested in Elandskloof, are preserved through canning, a skill that is still frequently practised in Elandskloof. An abundance of fresh produce is harvested in the valley year-round, however, since electricity is a new and scarce luxury, many families stick to family recipes to process and preserve the abundance of fresh and leftover produce.

Oom Klaas explains how it is done: '*You cut the watermelon into slices. Take the pits out and cut the rind off. Boil the watermelon in sugar with a pinch of salt. Then you mash and can it*.'

An Elandskloof resident knows what foods should and should not be processed: an oblong variety of watermelon is perfect for jam, however, its cousin—another variety known as the "bitter melon"—is only good enough to feed to pigs. This collective food knowledge is something that is passed down from parent to child, as Maureen Visagie says: '*You watch what your mother does.*' That is how Maureen's daughters learned, they watched her bake cake and eventually learned how to do it themselves (as quoted by Bleeker and Du Preez 2023).

Tannie (Aunty) Maureen's mother used to work at the Citrusdal hospital, and she used to love making fruit salad for hospital patients and her family. She used seasonal fruit and served the salad with cream or ice-cream. Maureen also has a variety of fruit trees that grow in her garden, such as apricot, citrus and guava, that is used in her fruit salads and for apricot jam.

One of the first things Deidre George remembers about her family returning to Elandskloof in 1996, was seeing the fig tree that they used to eat from still standing near the old Dutch Reformed Church.

Sweet treats

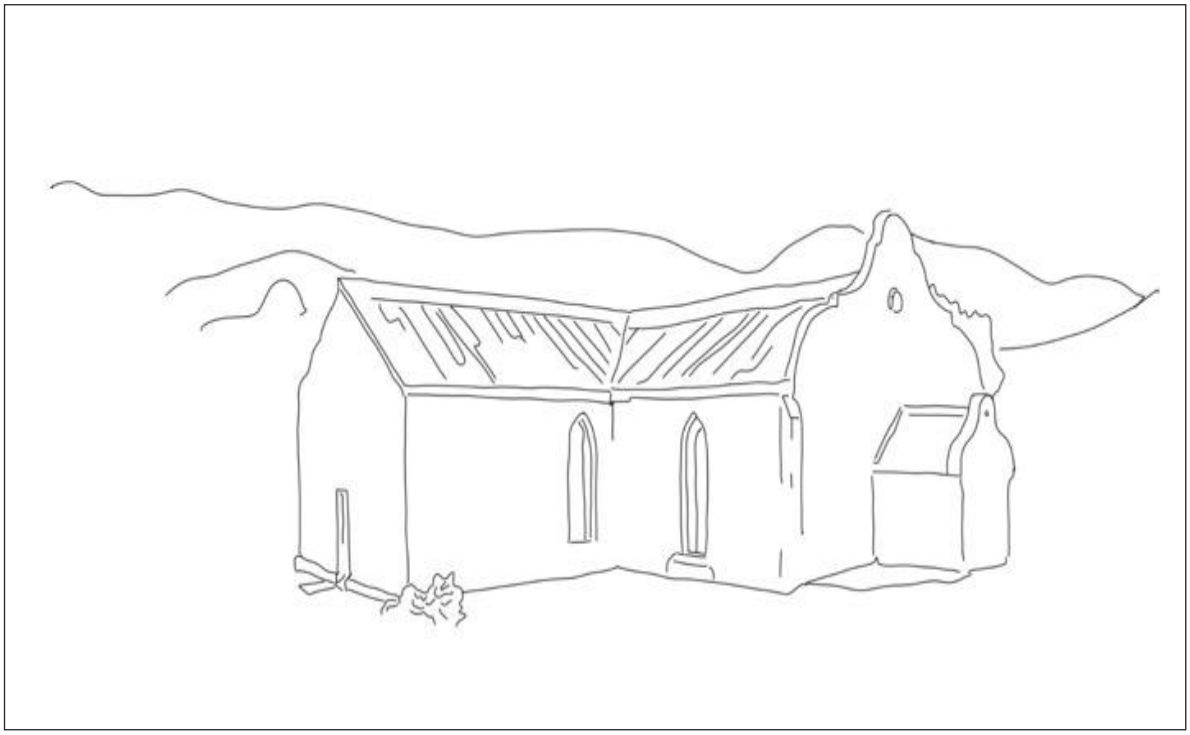
Margie Januarie is a resident that keeps bees with at least six active hives in a Eucalyptus grove in the valley. Margie and fourteen other Elandskloof residents decided to only farm with crops, *buchu* and bees. These small-scale farmers started with one or two hives which has multiplied sevenfold since. For a while, these residents also kept livestock, however, the roaming livestock caused considerable damage to the beehives by knocking over the hives, and vandalism from the youth convinced the farmers collectively to prioritise sharecropping and beekeeping. With help from the community and fencing, Margie can protect her beehives from vandals and roaming destructive livestock.

Margie's bees make honey in one of the upper shelves of the beehive called a super. Margie has enlisted the help of her son to help her extract the honey which is then put into containers. When the honey has been safely extracted, Margie takes the containers home and processes it.

The equipment Margie uses for beekeeping in the grove was supplied by local governance. Those interested in beekeeping were given two hives and two supers to get them started. Margie and her husband accepted the challenge of the craft, and together, they increased the beehives on their plot from two to sixteen. Though it is difficult to manage the intensive labour by herself, limiting the number of hives she can keep, Margie says that it is possible to practise beekeeping in Elandskloof.

While finding once-off ways to support the independence of residents, as with beekeeping, the Administration hindered social and economic growth in terms of small-scale businesses and farming, because these businesses required the Administration's approval to develop and expand real-estate in the settlement, which they did not get.

Margie still remembers the cups of yellow, green and red jelly with custard that were sold at Elandskloof church markets when she was a little girl. Funds generated by local vendors at these events were donated to the church. Looking at the building now, one cannot imagine that it used to be the well-spring of life in the community. '*It is sad to think that it was that same church that sold us out'*, Margie muses.



Food for thought

Even though its past has been rocky, Elandskloof is a place where things grow. More so, its future and that of its people is as fruitful as the soil. Time and time again, the community has proven its resilience in the face of life altering circumstances. Over time, the residents have lost their oral traditions. Elders like *Tannie* Maureen lament the disinterest of youth in the traditional practices of the community, however, as long as they, the elders, are alive and sow into the lives of their children, Elandskloof will grow. Over time, seeds planted for the love of gardening, cooking, making preservatives and baking something sweet will bloom into a vibrant community. The Elandskloof garden project is a miniature of what Elandskloof is becoming.

From the residents' gardens

An all-round favourite dish in Elandskloof is mixed greens or seasonal vegetables, such as green beans, potatoes, sweet potatoes, pumpkin and squash. These are usually grown by the residents themselves in their home gardens, since vegetables can be expensive to buy in supermarkets.

Margie Januarie's Sago pudding:

- Take half a packet of sago.
- Soak it overnight in water. It is soaked in water because milk is a bit expensive.
- The next day, before you start cooking for the day, the water is thrown out.
- Then the sago is put into milk to become softer.
- Then the mixture is put into a pan to boil (I mix my custard while the sago is boiling).
- I take 3 large eggs and then separate the yolk from the white.
- The yokes are whisked together. Then it gets mixed into the sago to boil together a bit, making a custard. I then add my cinnamon sticks to the sago.
- I then take my oven dish and grease it. I then add the cooked sago mixture to the dish.
- Then I add little bits of [Elandskloof] apricot jam all over the mixture.
- I then whisk the whites of the eggs till they become stiff. Then I mix the egg white mixture into the sago spoon by spoon.
- I then put it into the oven. An electric stove works as good as a coal stove.

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