SKARRELING FOR SCRAP:
Informal (landfill) recycling in Cape Town
Skarreling for scrap: Informal (Landfill) Recycling in Cape Town.

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PREFACE

The Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation seeks to contribute towards the improvement of livelihoods in poor communities. We support the emergence and growth of micro-enterprises. Enterprise development, however, remains hindered by a range of constraints such as crime, skills shortages, and absence of affordable finance. An important obstacle on many small businesses is the policy environment, which presents constraints through barriers such as regulation (and also the absence of regulation), land use rights and trading restrictions. In order to understand these challenges and provide much needed insights on the informal sector, the Foundation initiated a research and policy engagement project, known as the Formalising Informal Micro-Enterprises (FIME) project. The project rationale was not to promote business formalisation in a narrow legalistic approach, but rather through advocating a developmental approach the project has sought to identify ways in which micro-enterprises can be better accommodated within a more inclusive economy.

Under the FIME project, SLF has undertaken extensive field research in 8 township communities across South Africa. We have also supported and undertaken research into newly emerging sites of informal businesses, including various residential locations and sites within the township street environment. The current document seeks to advance our knowledge of these ‘emergent’ spaces in the informal (landfill) recycling context focussing on the informal waste pickers referred to as “skarrelaars”. The research site, the Cape Town Coastal Park Landfill, is situated in the southern suburbs of Cape Town surrounded by households and nature reserves thus posing a threat to human health, environmental pollution and degradation. Nevertheless, employment rates and poverty is rampant and searching for recyclables provides at least some households with a regular income, despite the dangers. In 2008, the City of Cape Town introduced a ban (before 16h daily) on the skarrelaars from landfill salvaging and has put effort to make sure the skarrelaars adhere to it.

With these developments, the purpose of this study is to understand the landscape of the skarrelaars dependent on the Coastal Park Landfill site and thus the influence of this ban on the skarrelaars and their communities’ livelihoods.
1. INTRODUCTION

In many developing countries, poor people earn a living by picking waste, either from bins, in the streets or from landfills and form the bottom segment of the local waste hierarchy (See figure 1). They reclaim materials for their personal use, and/or to sell them to recyclers and thus earn an income. Although they reduce the amount of waste that is buried on landfill sites and are crucial in assisting an ineffective municipal waste management system, they are often stigmatised and marginalised. Their work is perceived to be ‘dirty’ and the people concerned are often believed to be poor, criminals, drug addicts’ or the like. In some countries and cities they are harassed by the police and authorities; in others they are tolerated or even supported by the authorities (as in Brazil and to some extent India). In South Africa, waste pickers are perceived as a nuisance rather than an asset in municipal solid waste management (SWM), and in recycling in particular. Policies are essentially designed with the aim of excluding them from (formal) recycling, rather than trying to incorporate them.

Subsistence waste picking is also a common practice at the city-owned Coastal Park Landfill (CPL) in Cape Town. Poor unemployed people from the townships of Capricorn, Vrygrond and Hillview, situated at the foot of the tip “skarrel for scrap” every day. The word skarreling is an Afrikaans term meaning to rummage or scuffle, scuttle or scurry. Thus, if one talks of “skarreling for scrap”, it generally refers to poor people trying to make a living by looking for recyclables in the waste that can be put to personal use or turned into money.

If waste pickers were supported in their recycling efforts in both policy and practice, as demanded in various policy documents on the macro and micro level, this would be a win-win situation for the state/city (economic benefits and less crime), the skarrelaars (regular employment and incomes) and the environment (less waste buried on landfills). However, this potentially beneficial alignment of sustainable development (SD), SWM, livelihoods and environmental issues is not realised in practice in Cape Town.

In Cape Town skarreling on the landfills, and particularly at CPL, is accompanied by conflict and a criminalisation of the skarrelaars. The City of Cape Town (CCT) decided to phase out landfill salvaging (before 16h daily) in 2008, and has subsequently put a lot of effort into keeping skarrelaars away from its landfills. The implications of this decision – job losses for poor people and a potential increase in crime – have not been thought through. There is thus a dysfunctional triangular relationship around waste recycling in the CCT, leading to tensions between (i) the City’s commitment to SD; (ii) its practical approach towards solid waste management (SWM); and (iii) the impact on the livelihoods of the poor in adjacent townships.

The aim of this study is to understand the landscape of the skarrelaars dependent on the Coastal Park Landfill site and it’s socio-economic impact on their livelihoods. This is to be used as evidence to substantiate the effect of the City of Cape Town’s ban on informal waste picking at the Coastal Park Landfill site.
Figure 1: The local waste hierarchy (Source: Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation).
2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 The Research Site

The Cape Town Coastal Park landfill is located between the suburbs of Strandfontein and Muizenberg, off Baden Powell Drive (a coastal road along False Bay) (Map 1). Its size is about 75 hectares and when full, the final landform will be between 35 and 45 metres above ground level. It is projected by the CCT Solid Waste Management Department that this site will be operational until 2016 or 2022.

North of the landfill site is the suburb of Lavender Hill (including the informal settlement Montague Village), and on the western side the tip abuts on the suburbs of Seawinds (with Hillview), Vrygrond (including the informal settlement Overcome Heights), and Capricorn (see Map 1 and Figure 2). To the northeast lie the Zeekoevlei and the Rondevlei Bird Sanctuary, both nature reserves. Together with the Cape Flats Waste Water Treatment Works in the east and a coastal strip in the south, this area constitutes the False Bay Ecology Park (FBEP). This wetland altogether covers 1200 hectares and includes the Coastal Park landfill site.

The whole area north and west of the landfill has a total population of about 55,500 and one can only estimate how many of these people live in close vicinity to the landfill, but the number is probably 15,000 to 20,000. The socioeconomic conditions in the settlements of the study site are quite similar. The life in these areas is marked by high unemployment rates as well as high levels of crime (gangs), substance abuse and violence/abuse. In general, there is a high level of poverty and destitution, creating an atmosphere of desolation in which people feel marginalised and forgotten.

The location of the landfill has various implications: the close proximity to human settlements and the nature reserves means it poses a constant threat to human health and is a potential source of environmental pollution and degradation. However, given the low employment rates and the hundreds of households without any income, searching for recyclables on the nearby landfill site provides at least some households with a regular income, despite the dangers.
Map 1: The Coast Park Landfill site location in Cape Town.

Figure 2: The Coastal Park landfill viewed from Capricorn.
2.2 Observations and surveys of informal recycling

This research project was designed as a qualitative ethnographic field study that aimed to generate an in-depth understanding of a larger social dynamic through a case-study approach in one site. In addition to the qualitative analysis of the social dynamics involved, one of the main objectives of this study was to obtain numbers to enable an understanding of the extent of waste picking on the particular landfill. Therefore, a substantial amount of quantitative data was collected, primarily through observation and short interviews based on a questionnaire around a few key questions. The qualitative data was collected by conducting formal and informal in-depth interviews with some of the skarrelaars, scrap dealers and local residents in the communities surrounding the landfill site, as well as with representatives of the city and provincial governments.

In total 200 skarrelaars were formally surveyed, of whom 14 participated in the in-depth interviews, and 186 in the short interviews; an additional 14 skarrelaars added to the qualitative part of the study through informal interviews and conversations. The research also included interviews with nine scrap dealers and some of their employees in Hillview and Vrygrond/Capricorn, some of whom had been skarrelaars in the past.
3. FINDINGS: The extent and nature of skarreling at Coastal Park

3.1 Reasons for skarreling

One of the motivations for skarreling (esp. by males between 20 and 40) is to “stay out of crime” and/or to earn an earnest living, that is, not to steal. But there is another layer to this “good behaviour”: the fact that some of these men have already served prison sentences and want to avoid going back at all costs.

The three most common answers to the question “why are you skarreling?” were: “there are no other jobs”; “I have no other job / I’m unemployed”; and “I have no other income”. They are slightly nuanced responses that are all pointing to the same facts: work is difficult to find in the area and people skarrel on the landfill because they cannot generate an income from another job. If one thus combines these three answers, it shows that almost three quarters of the respondents engage in waste picking because they are unable to find (other) employment where they live (see fig. 3). They therefore have to resort to this activity to earn some money for their daily survival (if they do not want to resort to illegitimate means). If one leaves aside the children who go on the tip after school to make a few Rand for their personal spending, for more or less all other respondents the money they make from skarreling is their primary source of income.

![Figure 3: Reasons for skarreling.](image)

Not only is the primary reason for skarreling the lack of employment (opportunities), but also the purpose of collecting and selling recyclables is primarily to buy food and other necessities such as electricity (see fig. 4). In the case of the scrap metal skarrelaars, 68.4% (i.e. more than two thirds) use the income they generate first and foremost to buy food. More than two out of five people spend the money they make from selling scrap metal to the scrap dealers to just buy food for themselves in order
to survive. Often they can just afford some bread, and maybe some coffee and sugar as a "little extra". If one combines all answers where the people would at least spend some of the money on food (or occasionally), then the number increases to almost 80% (see fig. 5). In other words, eight out of ten people skarrel and sell the recyclable materials to spend it at least partly on essentials.

![Figure 4: Spending of income.](image)

This is underpinned by the fact that only 11% of the respondents stated that they would spend the money on what they call "luxuries", which includes cigarettes and coffee, although they also will first buy food from the money if necessary. In addition, there are more than the 2.7% of the respondents who indicated in the survey to buy electricity (and food) from the money, as some also fall into other categories (e.g. family support; other); and some have probably not mentioned spending money on this. Because most of the skarrelaars have to spend all or most of their income on necessities, only 2.7% are able to save the money; these are usually people who are not running their own household (e.g. children) or are not the sole breadwinner in their household.
Merely 6% reported using the money to buy drugs. The main drug is marijuana (“dagga”), which is not a heavy drug, and which is not linked to the wider social problems and gang violence that other drugs like Tik are associated with (Fig 4). In addition, some of the skarrelaars are Rastafarians and smoking weed is part of their religion/culture. Some skarrelaars however admitted to buying Tik and/or other drugs. Only one person said that he will spend the money on beer; and so it seems that alcohol is thus not the main drug. It is not surprising that people resort to drugs to be able to deal with the often-destitute circumstances they live in, and to “relax” from the hard work on the landfill. Of course not all skarrelaars would have admitted that they need the cash to buy drugs, which means their number is probably slightly higher than 6%. These findings contradict the assumption that most skarrelaars are drug addicts and are desperate to make some money through the sale of recyclables.

The 4.3% who use the money to buy chips and sweets are almost all children, or parents who buy these for their children. It is likely that most children do not receive pocket money, so they go on the landfill to collect a few tins and cans (maybe 1 to 3 kg’s), which will earn them between R1 and R4. This is enough to buy a few small packs of chips (50 cents each) and/or some other cheap sweets. Amongst those 8.6% in the “other” category, most give some or all their earned money to their girlfriends, mothers or other family members, and/or spend it on items that are not for bare survival.
3.2 Materials collected by Skarrelaars

The main material collected by the skarrelaars is scrap metal (esp. cans and tins) (Fig. 6 and 7). More than four out of five skarrelaars (86%) had either gathered scrap metal or uttered the intention to do so (see fig. 6). Together with the 3.8% who collect plastics and scrap metal, almost 90% of all landfill skarrelaars focus their activities on reclaiming metal of all sizes and types. The most common types of metal sold at the scrap yards are light steel (e.g. cans and tins), heavy steel (e.g. reinforcing bars, steel plates), aluminium (e.g. frames) and copper (e.g. wires). Some scrap yards also buy various alloys including brass. Scrap metal is almost exclusively collected to sell it to the scrap yards, unless there is a piece that someone can use (e.g. for their home) (Fig 8).
Figure 7: Scrap material at recycler 4 (Source: Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation).

Figure 8: Yard of recycler 2 (Source: Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation).
1.6% of the skarrelaars gathers and cleans bricks (and other building materials), which are partly sold, and partly kept either to use for the own home or for a building job. If things like clothes, shoes, toys or foodstuffs are found and in an acceptable condition (though the standards of the skarrelaars are rather low), they are picked up as well and in most cases retained for personal use. Sometimes a skarrelaar is fortunate and finds something of higher value, including cell phones or even money. Only 0.5% of people surveyed stated that they keep some of the materials they collected. However, it can be assumed that their number would be higher.

![Amount of collected scrap metal per skarrelaar](image)

*Figure 9: Collected scrap metal per skarrelaar per day.*

Of the 164 skarrelaars who were surveyed at the scrap dealers over four days, 151 declared the weight of their scraps. They sold a total of 1 575 kilograms of scrap metal during that time, which equals almost 400kg per day with an average of 10.43kg (Fig 9).
3.3 Income of Skarrelaars

The incomes of the skarrelaars are very volatile. Although most of them go onto the dumpsite every day to collect recyclables, the “success” varies. When the conditions are good, when they are in good health and when they are a bit lucky, they can make between R50 and R100 a day. But there are days, when some only make two or three Rand, which is not even enough to buy half a loaf of bread. When they are sick or have any commitments preventing them to skarel (e.g. going to the children’s school), there is no income at all.

Table 1: Maximum average income per skarrelaar per day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>material</th>
<th>light steel</th>
<th>heavy steel</th>
<th>copper</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>weight in kg</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>2540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>78.7%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kg per skarrelaar (based on overall average weight of 10.43kg)</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>10.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>price per kg in R</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earning per skarrelaar in R</td>
<td>9.85</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>R 19.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The calculated average earnings per day per skarrelaar (see tables 3 and 4) are indeed reflecting reality when compared to the amounts stated by the skarrelaars in the interviews. They stated to be making between R20 and R100 on a “good day”, and R3 to R5 on a “bad day”. Most of them estimated to have a weekly income of between R100 and R200. This is in accordance with the calculated daily average, which would amount to R138 and R123 respectively per week.

Table 2: Minimum average income per skarrelaar per day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>material</th>
<th>light steel</th>
<th>heavy steel</th>
<th>copper</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>weight in kg</td>
<td>1520</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>86.4%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kg per skarrelaar (based on overall average weight of 10.43kg)</td>
<td>9.01</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>price per kg in R</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earning per skarrelaar in R</td>
<td>10.81</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>R 17.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the figures presented above, it can be said that the skarrelaars are an economic asset for the city, and especially for their community. On average, the scrap metal skarrelaars alone earn at least 1.3 million Rand per year. By collecting recyclables and valuables that have (for the most part) not originated from the community, they (indirectly) bring money into the township because the scrap dealers for their part sell to the (formal) recycle industry outside the community.
There are no detailed stats for the total or average household incomes in these areas available, but given the high unemployment rate and high number of households with no or small incomes, one can assume that waste picking is an important economic factor in the impoverished communities studied.

Table 3: Total skarrelaar income per year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average income per skarrelaar per day in R</th>
<th>days</th>
<th>total income per skarrelaar per year in R</th>
<th>number of skarrelaars</th>
<th>total income in R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17.56</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>6409.40</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>961 410.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.73</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>7201.45</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1 080 217.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.65*</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>6805.43</td>
<td>195**</td>
<td>1 327 057.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Mean income based on average of minimum (R17.56) and maximum (R19.73) income  
** number of skarrelaars based on mean number plus the number of people who go on the landfill (at least) twice per day

In an earlier estimation in 2010/2011 of the skarrelaars, they claimed to make between 60 and 70 Rand per day, which equated to about R2000 per month each. It was estimated that there are about 250 skarrelaars, so there would be around 6 million Rand going into the community each year. Furthermore, 2,200 tons less waste ended up on the landfill per year. However, since they now only are allowed to access to the site after 16h, not only the number of skarrelaars, but also their incomes have dropped. The calculated average income of about 17 to 20 Rand is significantly lower (table 1 and 2). Some skarrelaars stated to be able to make up to R100 on a good day, but this is counterbalanced by merely making R3 to R5 on a bad day. The lower average is reflected in the statements about weekly earnings, which for almost all skarrelaars questioned in the in-depth interviews ranges between R100 and R200.
Table 4: Total sum paid out to reclaimers per year (based on scrap yard numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>light steel</th>
<th>heavy steel</th>
<th>copper</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>percentage of total weight*</td>
<td>82.55%</td>
<td>16.10%</td>
<td>1.35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total weight per year in kg</td>
<td>1 069 642</td>
<td>208 616</td>
<td>17 493</td>
<td>1 295 750 kg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>price per kg**</td>
<td>R 1.30</td>
<td>R 1.50</td>
<td>R 40.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total sum paid out</td>
<td>R 1 390 534</td>
<td>R 312 924</td>
<td>R 699 705</td>
<td>R 2 403 163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* percentage calculated as average of minimum and maximum numbers given by recycler 3
** prices calculated on average of prices as stated by 5 scrap dealers

If one assumes that each (landfill) skarrelaar is supporting three people with the income generated and takes the median number of 150 skarrelaars, then it means that at least 450 people in the community are dependent on the income made from selling scrap metal. If one further calculates the mean income of the skarrelaars per year as a mean between the amount calculated for the skarrelaars and the amount calculated for the scrap dealers (see table 4), The average income for the skarrelaars per year amounts to R 1,865,110. Thus, on average each of these people has about R4,145 to spend per year, equalling about R345 per month or R11 a day (ca. US$ 1 a day). If one includes the other recyclables collected, then the number of dependent people is well over 500. In addition, there are the recyclers and scrap dealers with their families as well as their employees with their families. In total, the number of people dependant on income from the trade with recyclables from the landfill is probably above 600, which is three to four per cent of the population in the area. The community has experienced job losses before when landfill salvaging was eliminated in Cape Town. Some skarrelaars have previously worked for salvaging company and lost their jobs overnight. The same could happen if the city and the landfill management decided to completely prohibit skarrelaars from entering the site.
4. DISCUSSION

From the data obtained in the field it is clear that some of the assumptions and stereotypes surrounding the skarrelaars have to be corrected. The data proves that the extent and nature of skarreling on the selected landfill site has a dimension that goes beyond just that of some people collecting a few recyclables to make quick cash for the next drug fix. On the contrary, skarreling is the livelihood for the majority of the people who are engaged in this activity. On the study site on average about 150 skarrelaars collect recyclables on the landfill every day, and spend 80% of the income they generate from selling these on necessities such as food. Most of them go on the landfill everyday, whether it rains or not, summer and winter. Without the tip, life would look even more desperate than it already is in these impoverished areas.

This research indicates that skarreling is an important economic factor in the communities of Capricorn, Vrygrond and Hillview. Hundreds of tons of recyclables are recovered from the landfill each year, especially scrap metal. This forms the basis of the livelihoods of more than 600 people in the townships surrounding the CPL site, and brings (a calculated average) between 1.3 and 2.4 million Rand into the community every year. If skarreling is done for a living, it is tough work that poses various dangers to health and safety. These people have been ignored by the state, and have chosen to skarrel to make an honest living. The persistence of the skarrelaars is admirable, given the high prevalence of gangs and crime in the areas where they live.

In addition to the economic value for the skarrelaars, there are the environmental benefits of reclaiming recyclables. For instance, between 570 and 1300 tons of scrap metal is recycled back into the formal economy and saves the landfill airspace (even if very little). Although this means that only up to 0.2% of the waste at Coastal Park (based on the estimate that 2387 tons are dumped on the landfill per day ) (based on weighbridge printout of CPL)) is reclaimed, the numbers are still impressive given the difficult circumstances. Moreover, there is potential for a much higher recycling rate. The recovery rate for waste would be significantly higher if the skarrelaars were officially permitted access on the landfill, which means that they could work for more hours than at the moment. The reclaimed materials save the city money and energy, as fewer raw materials need to be transported to the city, and less energy is needed to process recyclables than using virgin resources. Reduced consumption of resources and energy naturally has the positive effect of reducing land, water and air pollution.

However, the harsh conditions on and around the site lead to a high potential for conflict around skarreling at CPL. Especially the exclusion of the skarrelaars through a ban of on-site salvaging by the City in 2008 has increased tensions, as access to the site is restricted (as a complete ban was and is difficult to enforce). Violence is not uncommon, either between the skarrelaars or between them and the authorities (the landfill security and law enforcement). This can be attributed to the confrontational approach of the state on the one hand and the competition between the skarrelaars, who try to make out a living, on the other hand.

There is thus a dysfunctional triangular relationship around waste recycling in the CCT, leading to tensions between (i) the City’s commitment to SD; (ii) its approach towards recycling (as part of solid waste management) in policy and practice; and (iii) the livelihoods of the poor in adjacent townships. If the CCT goals of SD are
undermined by the City’s recycling strategies, then there will be adverse effects for the livelihoods of the people who live off skarreling.

The policy makers seem to have little understanding of the extent and nature of skarreling. It appears they assume that this activity is performed only by a few people who need quick cash for drugs, which was disproved by this study.

In their current form, most policies around recycling are not designed in a way that would include the poor (and the waste pickers in particular). The CCT is wasting resources and creating obstacles for the poor to earn a living; it is not promoting the proper implementation of the sustainability strategies outlined in the various policy documents at a national and local level (e.g. NFSD, NSSD, NEMWA, and the CCT’s IWM Policy IMEP, and waste sector plans). In addition, the idea of creating or formalising a few jobs in recycling in order for the phenomenon of informal waste picking to disappear is unrealistic in a country with such high levels of poverty. There is a mass of people who can (potentially) fill the “job vacancies” in informal waste picking sector.

In general, the policies around SWM ignore South African realities, and the policies around sustainable development and their implementation lack coherence. Moreover, the conflict between the skarrelaars and the CCT at the CPL is rooted in inadequate national and local legislation, which does not acknowledge the role of informal waste pickers in SWM and aims at excluding rather than including them. If waste pickers were supported in their recycling efforts in both policy and practice, this would be a win-win situation for the state/city (economic benefits and less crime), the skarrelaars (regular employment and incomes) and the environment (less waste buried on landfills).

Although waste separation at source is to be preferred in the long term, waste recycling on landfills should be allowed on all landfills – instead of burying all recyclables – until a separation of source system is implemented. Therefore, waste picking should be supported, and in addition skills training provided to prepare the pickers for a time when landfill salvaging becomes redundant.

Overall, it is important that the waste pickers (not only at CPL) become organised and form cooperatives. This will not only help to advance their rights, but also benefit them in terms of securing a regular income. For a start, a pilot project could be started in Cape Town to integrate the skarrelaars into the CCT’s SWM; this would benefit both the city and the skarrelaars. Such a project would support the work of the skarrelaars, and also encourage the collection of other materials than metal. Whether they continue to work for themselves, and sell the recovered materials to the scrap yards in the area, or whether they should be employed by the City or a recycling company still needs to be assessed.

The importance of the landfill to skarrelaars livelihoods can be summarised by one of the ‘standard’ reactions when confronted with the prospect that the landfill might close within the next five to ten years was: “Then I will have to go steal (again).” Skarrelaar 144, who is an ex-prisoner, says that because of the stigma (he also has prison tattoos) nobody will employ him: “I used to steal from rich people, from the white people. If I can’t skarrel anymore, I will go steal again from white people, I will come to your house and steal from you.”
All photos have been taken by the researcher, unless otherwise stated.
SKARRELING

FOR SCRAP:

Informal (land fill) recycling in Cape Town

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