REFLECTIVE JOURNEY 1
What we learnt and achieved?
Lorena Melgaço and Rouve Bingle

SAPER
South Africa Planning Education Research

CONTENT

- In search of a story
- South Africa
- The local vs foreign conundrum
- Participants: Truth and trust
- The enthusiast
- Technology
- Travelling to understand
- Commonalities: Geography, politics and society
- Post-fieldwork
- Strangers: The need for support
- Being female
- Early career
- Achievements
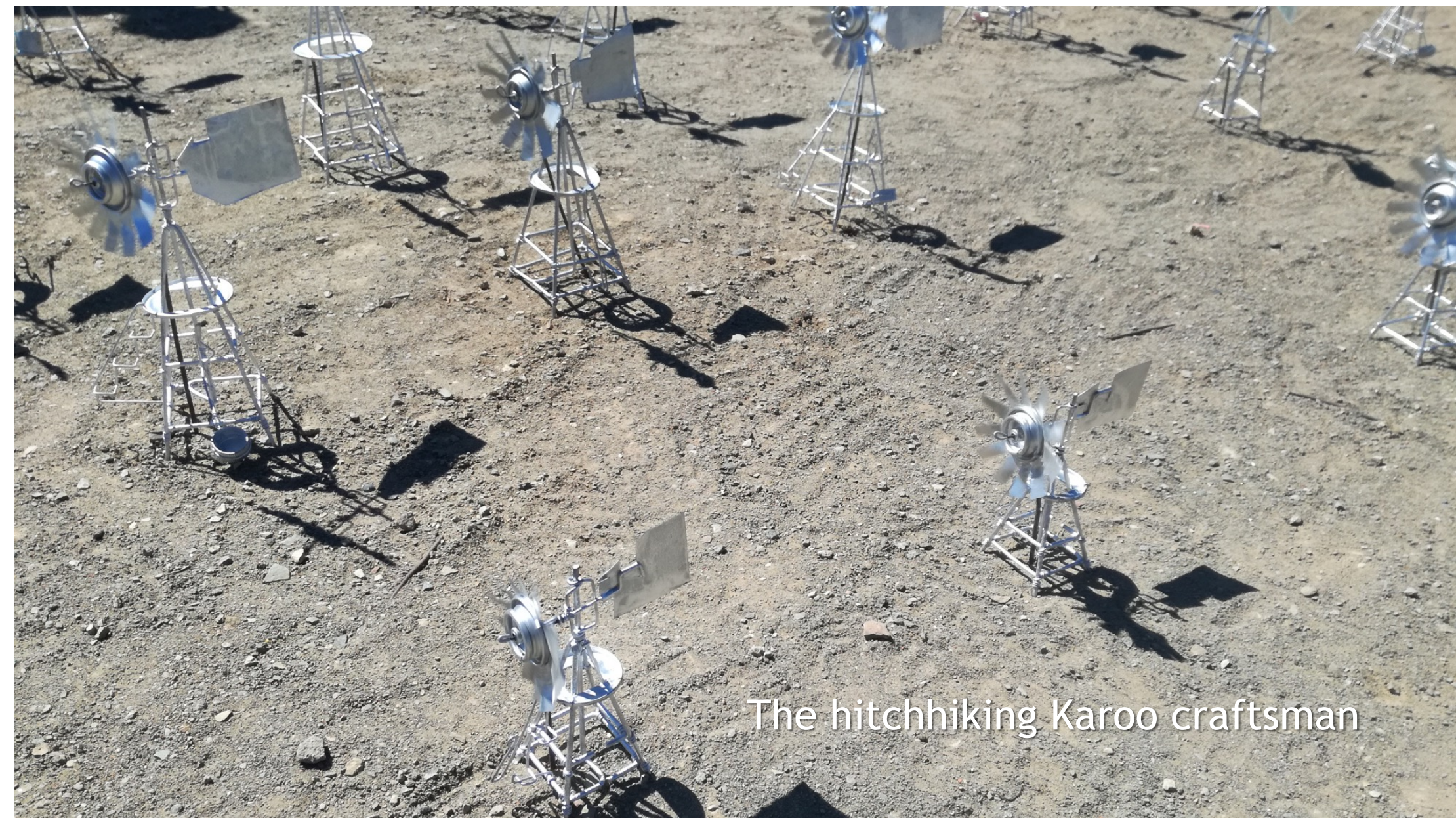- Final Thoughts

IN SEARCH OF A STORY

- Research tells a story
- Where to begin? Planning + education
- Flying blind while settling in
- First day of new school: Not knowing your team
- Different personalities and the pecking order
- Leadership and delegation
- Asking for help even when you don't know the question.
- The importance of constant communication
- Introductions, planning, logistics, admin, cold calling and Google maps!
- Uncertainty and procrastination: Wasting time (PhD)
- Setting goals

SOUTH AFRICA

- Complex society
- Multicultural and dynamic: People, landscapes, places, cultures
- Many realities and experiences
- Inequality
- You cannot talk of planning and not reflect on the history and current events
- Even as a citizen I never fully grasp all that is going on-
- Bubbles
- Foreign involvement and experience vs local
- Where do you get your information from? What shapes your opinion?

The hitchhiking Karoo craftsman

THE LOCAL VS FOREIGN CONUNDRUM

- Lorena, the international visitor **vs** Rouve, the local.
- Different reactions
- Based on perceived opportunities, risks and threats?
- Might only talk politics with a local - Rouve
- Combination of work and complimentary goals
- Language, accents and customs
- International 'duos': Can this be engineered or luck?
- Recommend for future research

- Are people being truthful or not?

- Does it matter?

- Professional pandering and political correctness

- Everyday life vs 'ivory tower' and academic relevancy

- Managing expectations: Asking, taking and reward

- Approach and methods

- The public vs private planner

- Interview length

- Follow-up

- Trust and sensitive information

- Anonymity and coding

PARTICIPANTS: TRUTH and TRUST

THE ENTHUSIAST

- The curious researcher
- Interest in topic
- Shallow vs exploratory
- Just ticking boxes?
- Who is assisting
- First contact
- Teamwork and responsibility
- Quality of the data and the output
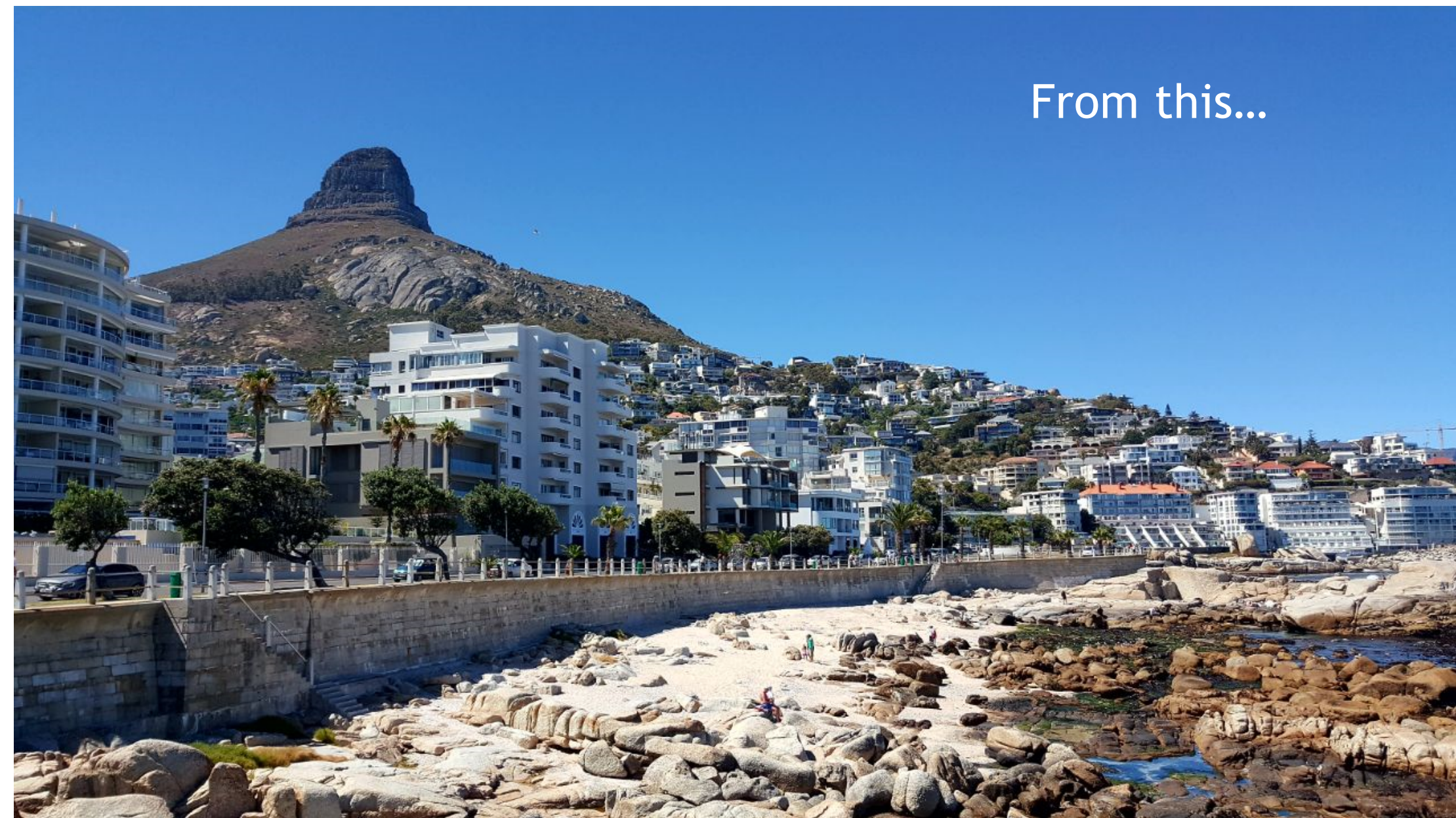- Energy and timelines: Waxing and waning

TECHNOLOGY

- Advantages and limitations
- Efficient, quick and convenient
- Global reach and possibilities
- Impersonal
- Telephonic interviews...
- Skills gap
- UK vs South Africa
- Software: Coding and analytics

TRAVELLING TO UNDERSTAND

- Context, circumstances, insights and understanding

- Sense of space

- Human and non-human

- Places and identity

- Changing landscapes: Cape Town, JHB, the Karoo to PE.

- Interactions – fleeting and enduring

- Examples

From this…

... to this.

COMMONALITIES: GEOGRAPHY, POLITICS AND SOCIETY

- South Africa and Brazil
- Cross-continental similarities
- Urban and social issues
- Informality
- Planning
- Inequality
- Language
- Customs by other names

POST-FIELD WORK

- Solo nature of the work
- Energy curves: Slump in energy
- Record keeping and organization
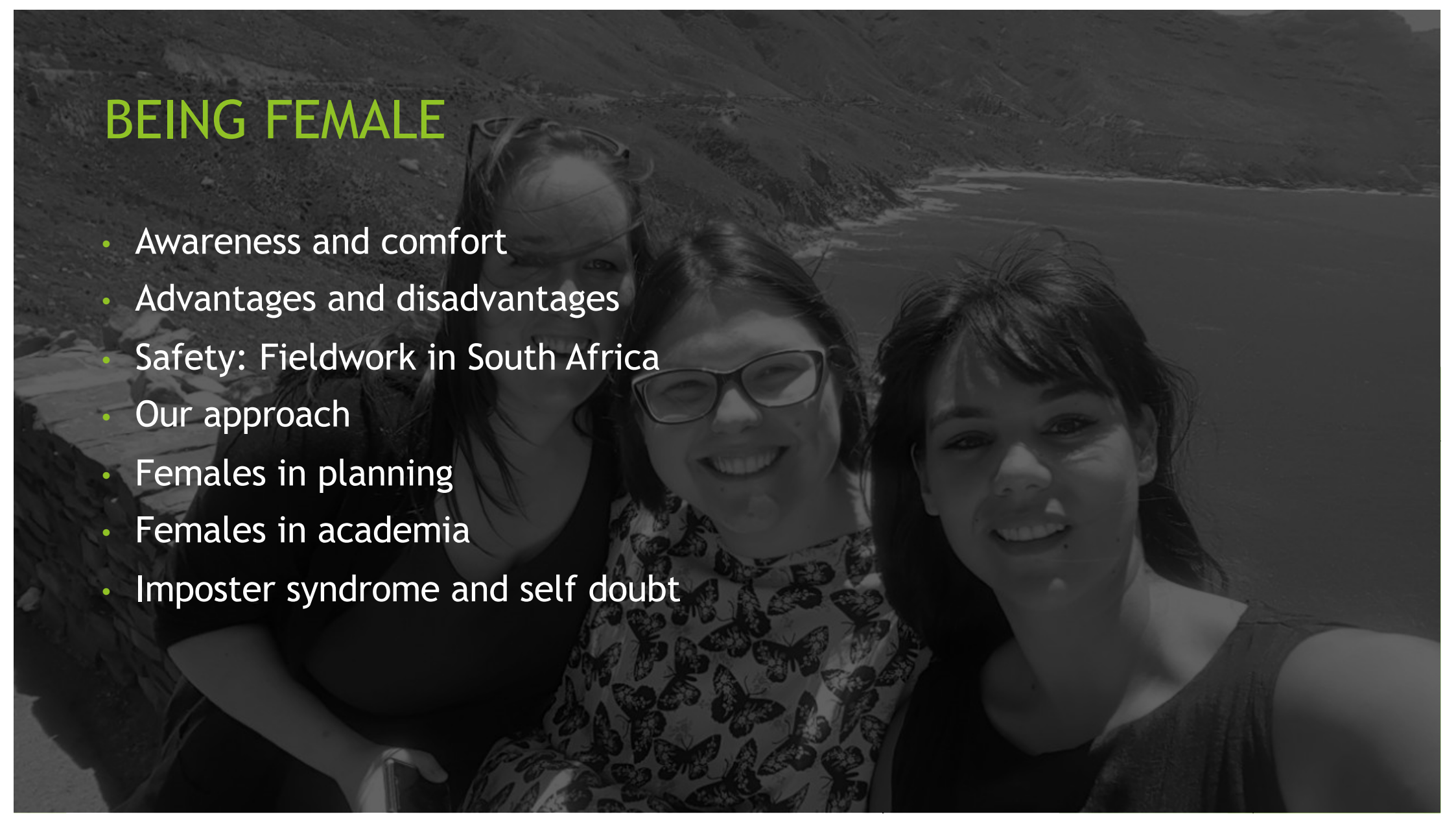- Responsibilities and output
- Less participatory

- Research culture

- Hospitality

- Vulnerability and extreme circumstances: Home, family, work, the unknown…

- Blurred lines

- Active interest in each other

- Care and connection: Beyond professional courtesy?

- Trust

- Our relationship and exchanges enhanced the working environment

- Resulted in higher quality outputs

- Post-SAPER: Will remain in each other's networks for years to come

STRANGERS: THE NEED FOR SUPPORT

BEING FEMALE

- Awareness and comfort

- Advantages and disadvantages

- Safety: Fieldwork in South Africa

- Our approach

- Females in planning

- Females in academia

- Imposter syndrome and self doubt

EARLY CAREER

- Differences between RSA and UK
- Academic process, roles and expectations
- International standards – How do we achieve this?
- Mentorship
- Capacity
- Constantly thinking for the future
- Divided focus
- Exposure
- Feedback

ACHIEVEMENTS

- A deeper understanding of South African planning
- International exposure
- A project to measure others by...
- Participation in high quality research
- Full project cycle
- Networking
- Expansion of knowledge
- Trickle down effect: Conferences and workshops
- Travel

- More regions: KZN and Limpopo

- Traditional authority areas and planning

- More interaction in the writing process (observe)

- Western vs traditional planning knowledge

- Black South African planners and their experiences?

IN RETROSPECT

FINAL THOUGHTS