



Knowledge of Formal and Informal Regulations Affecting Wild Plant Foraging Practices in Urban Spaces in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Although foraging wild plants is commonly perceived to be synonymous with rural areas, it is now increasingly recognized in urban areas. Notwithstanding, the regulations conditioning access to and rights to foraging in urban green spaces have seldom been examined. This study explored the formal and informal regulations governing access to and defining rights to forageable plant resources in the towns of Potchefstroom and Thabazimbi, South Africa. A random sample of 374 households was considered for the survey, complemented by in-depth interviews with 26 participants. Foraging occurred in a variety of public and private spaces, with the frequency of access differing with the type of space. The majority of the respondents were unaware of formal and informal regulations governing access to and use of urban landscapes. Recognizing foraging activities in urban landscapes is a fundamental step toward fostering active community involvement in the management and production of urban green spaces.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 11 December 2020
Accepted 26 August 2021

KEYWORDS

Access; food justice and sovereignty; green spaces; regulations; social justice; urban foraging

Introduction

Although foraging wild plants is intuitively associated with rural areas (McLain et al. 2014; Negi and Subramani 2015), it is increasingly being recognized in urban areas too (Poe et al. 2013; McLain et al. 2014; Mollee, Pouliot, and McDonald 2017; Garekae and Shackleton 2020a). Foraging provides provisioning, cultural and psychological benefits to urban residents (Kaoma and Shackleton 2014; Schlesinger, Drescher, and Shackleton 2015; Mosina and Maroyi 2016). The prevalence of foraging differs across space and over time (Shackleton et al. 2017). Although not being a primary source of subsistence, urban foraging plays an important role in the livelihoods and wellbeing of many, especially the urban poor. Urban foraging takes place in a mosaic of spaces, governed by different and sometimes complex tenure regimes. The spaces include both formal and informal green spaces situated on public, private, institutional, and communal land (Davenport, Gambiza, and Shackleton 2011; McLain et al. 2014).

Until recently, there has been limited understanding of the governance of urban green spaces (Zamanifard, Alizadeh, and Bosman 2018). Most literature has focused on