

**Conserving Spaces of Memory and Heritage: The Complexities, Challenges
and Politics of the Stone Wall Project on Bluestone Quarry at Robben Island**

MWAYI WOYAMBA LUSAKA

(Student no.3377919)

A mini- thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
in History with specialisation in Museum and Heritage Studies, University of the Western Cape.

Supervisor: Professor Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie.

Date submitted: 02 NOVEMBER 2015.

Conserving Spaces of Memory and Heritage: The Complexities, Challenges and Politics of the Stone Wall Project on Bluestone Quarry at Robben Island

MWAYI WOYAMBA LUSAKA

(Student no.3377919)

KEYWORDS:

heritage

conservation

restoration

oral history

memory

authenticity

cultural/natural significance

bluestone- quarry

robben island

world heritage site

ABSTRACT

This thesis is a critical study of a conservation project on restoration of a Stone Wall at Bluestone Quarry on Robben Island, a world heritage site. The Stone Wall was built by the ex-political prisoners, in the early 1960s, as part of their hard labour. The thesis mainly focuses on the contestations that arose during the twelve year period of the project (2002 to 2014) among the stakeholders that included the ex-political prisoners, the environmentalists, the heritage managers and South African Heritage Resource Agency. Central to this study was the question, when a restoration project of a significant heritage site is informed by oral history and memories how are the concerns of diverse range of interest groups addressed and resolved? The thesis is grounded in the theoretical frameworks of sites of memory, heritage and conservation. The study involved both archival research and oral history as its research methodologies. The thesis shows that during the restoration project of the Stone Wall, the proposed designs had impacts on authenticity and biodiversity of the site. The various stakeholders that were involved debated and sought ways to influence decisions in resolving these impacts. Where necessary compromises were made. The thesis argues that during the project, oral history and memory work, and by extension the ex-political prisoners, had a significant role in influencing some of the important decisions. Among other things, the thesis seeks to provide a critical understanding of issues of heritage and conservation management on sites that are of cultural/historical significance.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents **Mr and Mrs Lusaka** and **Ron Viney** , a colleague in heritage practice(May his soul rest in peace).

Declaration

I declare that '**Conserving Spaces of Memory and Heritage: The Complexities, Challenges and Politics of the Stone Wall Project on Bluestone Quarry at Robben Island**' is my own work that has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by full references.

Full Name: MWAYI WOYAMBA LUSAKA

Date.....

Signed.....

TABLE OF CONTENTS

KEYWORDS.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
DECLARATION.....	iv
CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS.....	vii
ABBREVIATIONS.....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ix
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: MEMORY, ORAL HISTORY AND CONSERVATION AT BLUESTONE QUARRY	23
Introduction.....	23
A Brief Background of Emergence of Oral history.....	25
Making Public Pasts Using Oral history	27
Robben Island Museum and use of Memory and Oral history In Heritage Conservation.....	31
Oral history, Memory and the Stone Wall Restoration Project.....	33
Remembering Experience and Interpreting Memory at Bluestone Quarry.....	37

CHAPTER TWO: RESTORATION AND THE DISCOURSE ON AUTHENTICITY AND INTEGRITY OF THE STONE WALL.....	58
Introduction	58
Authenticity and Integrity in Cultural Heritage Resource Management.....	61
Proposed Designs, Public Participation and Issues on Authenticity of the Stone Wall	68
Impact of the Proposed Designs on Authenticity of the Stone Wall and Bluestone Quarry Site..	82
CHAPTER 3: RESTORATION AND THE CULTURAL/NATURAL CONFLICT ON BLUESTONE QUARRY.....	86
Introduction.....	86
Nature and Fauna on Robben Island and at the Bluestone Quarry.....	88
The Environmental Impact assessments and the Environmental Report on Bluestone Quarry...	90
The Avifauna Assessment Report and the Stone Wall Project on Bluestone Quarry.....	95
The Environmental Report and Contestations on the Significance of Bluestone Quarry.....	101
CHAPTER 4: RESOLVING THE HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION ISSUES OF THE STONE WALL PROJECT.....	112
Introduction.....	112
Use of Legal Instruments and Conventions to Evaluate the Suitable Proposed Design.....	114
Cultural Significance as the Overarching Significance of Bluestone Quarry.....	116
The Accepted Design for the Restoration of the Stone Wall.....	119
The Accepted Construction Period and Specialists Assessments.....	127
CONCLUSION.....	132

BIBLIOGRAPHY	138
---------------------------	------------

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure 1. Bluestone quarry Reference Group.....	34
Figure 2. John Muhapa demonstrating the packing of Stones.....	45
Figure 3. RIM recording the memories of one of ex-political prisoners at Bluestone quarry.....	51
Figure 4. Layout (Alternative five) Showing position of Dolosse Structure.....	69
Figure 5. The Breached Middle section of the Stone Wall	72
Figure 6. Caspian Tern (Female) with two chicks at the nesting site at Bluestone quarry.....	89
Figure 7. A Kelp Gull Chick taking shelter from predation by adult Kelp Gulls.....	98
Figure 8. Penguins basking	99
Figure 9. Bluestone Quarry pit.....	106
Figure 10. A section of the Stone Wall.....	108
Figure 11. Alternative One, showing a slope as Penguin Ramp.....	120
Figure 12. Showing Alternative Two, with full structural Penguin Ramp.....	122
Figure 13. Alternative Four, showing proposed concrete free standing wall.....	124

ABBREVIATIONS

RIM.....	Robben Island Museum
DPW.....	Department of Public Works
SAHRA.....	South African Heritage Resource Agency
ICOMOS.....	International Council on Monuments and Sites
UNESCO.....	United Nations Educational and Scientific Cultural Organisation
WHC.....	World Heritage Committee

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In expressing my profound gratitude and a sense of indebtedness to many who have helped and guided me in one way or the other to realize the completion of this work, I would like to invoke the words of John Mbiti. Observing the spirit of communitarianism in African societies John Mbiti comments that ‘whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say “I am, because we are, and since we are, therefore I am”.’ It is on the basis of these words that I realize and acknowledge that this work has been made possible because of others that surrounded me in the course of my study. I therefore profoundly acknowledge my supervisor Professor Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie for her patience, guidance and unrelenting support towards the successful completion of this work. She combined the qualities of both a caring mother and a critical supervisor with my work. As someone who can claim that I have fully developed in heritage matters I would like to recognize the roles of Professor Ciraj Rassool and Professor Leslie Witz, the co-coordinators of the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS), for having an immense impact on my development both scholarly and professionally in the discipline of museum and heritage. I recognize also the influence and motivation of late Ron Viney, who introduced me to the discourse of heritage conservation at Bluestone quarry site, may his soul rest in peace.

I also feel indebted to Robben Island Museum (RIM) for its support in various ways towards my professional development as well as success of my work. On this I recognize the roles of Dr Olusegun Morakinyo, the former coordinator of APMHS, for making it possible for me to come

for the Masters in Museum and Heritage Studies. I also acknowledge Vanessa Mitchel the current coordinator of APMHS for perfectly coordinating my research with RIM. Nolubabalo Tongo, the Senior Heritage Officer with RIM, Sabelo Madlala, the Environmental Manager with RIM and Pascal Taruvinga, the Chief Heritage Officer with RIM, were crucial in furnishing me with relevant information that constitutes the bulk of this thesis. I am also indebted to the staff at Mayibuye Archives for their assistance during my time of oral history research.

I would like also to recognize the financial support from Andrew Mellon foundation through the Center for Humanities Research (CHR) that I received during my period of pursuing the Masters Degree in History (Museums & Heritage). The CHR through Mellon offered me a full scholarship as a Masters Fellow. It was also through the critical scholarship at CHR that has moulded me into an analytical scholar, a skill that helped me much to approach and produce this work with a touch of critical scholarship. Still at CHR I would like to personally thank Mrs Lameez Lalkhen, the administrator of CHR for her untiring support, and Professor Premesh Lalu, the Director of the CHR for his accommodativeness, down to earth personality and support.

In the Department of History I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the lecturers Nicky Rousseau, Professor Andrew Bank, Professor Patricia Hayes and Sipokazi Sambumbu for shaping me and being part of my academic experience. I thank Miss Janine Brandt and Mrs Jane Smidt for assisting in many of the administrative issues to do with my Masters studies.

Back home in Malawi, I am grateful for the support that Museums of Malawi through the office of the Director of Museums of Malawi has given me throughout the duration of my studies. I

therefore personally thank Mr. Lovemore Mazibuko, the Director of Museums of Malawi, and Dr Elizabeth Gomani Chindebvu, the Director of Culture, for providing me the platform to develop in my career as a museum professional.

The following colleagues have been crucial in supporting me morally, socially, academically and of course emotionally during the course of my studies; Mary Mbewe Mazimba, Luvuyo Mdzudzo and George Agbo have been my colleagues who have shaped and inspired my critical scholarship here at UWC. Tamanda Comfort Mtotha, Antonio Butler, Nephtali Mumba, Jabulile Chinamasa, Asandiswa Manatha, Patrick Ilunga, Nokuthula Zinyengere , Martha Jere , Maloto Chaura , Hope Mawuwa and Madalitso Chidumu have been wonderful social company for me. I am grateful to all.

To my siblings Joseph, Kenneth, Innocent and Natasha Lusaka, I say, we will always remain the Lusaka five!

Above all I thank and praise Jehovah God for taking me where I am and guiding me where I am going.

INTRODUCTION

My passionate interest and enthusiasm in conservation of heritage, particularly heritage sites, can be attributed to the year 2013. This was the year when I had enrolled as a student in the African Programme in Museum and Heritage Studies (APMHS), a programme sponsored and run by Robben Island Museum (RIM) and the History Department of the University of the Western Cape (UWC).

One of the modules of the programme, Conservation and Site Management, requires students to familiarise themselves with conceptual, theoretical and technical frameworks that are critical in conservation and management of intangible and tangible, cultural and natural heritage on a national or world heritage site. Our lecturer, Ron Viney, introduced our class to the Bluestone Quarry site on Robben Island. More importantly, he explained to us the history of Bluestone Quarry as a cultural and historic fabric and how it is understood as a natural heritage site.

During that time, the project of the restoration of the Bluestone Quarry wall was in progress at a consultative phase and it was facing challenges from various stakeholders. To provoke debate among the students he invited Sabelo Mdadla, the Environmental Officer of Robben Island Museum to share and debate with the students issues of heritage management of the site vis-à-vis the Bluestone Quarry wall project that was underway. Sabelo Mdadla's arguments leaned towards the conservation of the natural heritage of the site. Subsequently, the class was confused and polarised along those who argued for the natural significance of the site and those who argued for the cultural and historic significance of the site. At the core of the debate, was whether the

Bluestone Quarry could be defined as a natural heritage site or a cultural heritage site. This dilemma was compounded by the fact that the site is rich and inhabited by a diverse range of marine life and has some historic relics, for example, the Stone Wall. My argument was that the site was a mixed heritage site and should be treated as such. That debate was never resolved to the satisfaction of each side.

The experience on that day inspired me to probe and investigate further about issues of heritage conservation. More specifically, I was interested in the project of the Stone Wall, with the aim of exploring the heritage contestations that were emerging from various stakeholders in the process of conserving heritage on a world heritage site. The discussion of the project brought home to us students that the conservation of cultural heritage resource can be hugely challenging. In one part, this is due to the scale and complexity involved in understanding the philosophy, terminology, methodology and techniques of cultural heritage conservation. On the other, it is due to involvement of many different professions in cultural heritage management. Consequently conservation activities do not follow a simple formula rather they depend on an appropriate understanding of the values of the heritage resource. Often this becomes a contested enterprise hard to resolve.¹ In the course of time, I found parallels with Laurajane Smith's book on *Uses of Heritage* in which she identified what she calls the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD), which mostly informs heritage decisions in the conservation and management of heritage institutions, for instance, museums and sites. She also identified the subaltern discourse in heritage

¹ B. Feilden and J. Jokilehto, *Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Sites* (Rome; ICCROM, 1998), p.64.

conservation that often works in resistance to the AHD.² These aspects were evident in the Stone Wall project. That was the beginning of my interest in this study.

This body of work therefore revolves around issues of conservation of heritage resources, more specifically heritage sites. Through the Bluestone Quarry Stone Wall project, the thesis theorises the conservation and management principles of heritage sites. The study explores some of the conservation principles, complexities and challenges involved during conservation of a cultural heritage resource. The thesis situates memory and oral history at the core of conservation practice in heritage management. This is a departure from the AHD in which heritage is seen as a ‘thing’ and far removed from meaning making.³

Laurajane Smith makes an important argument that ‘heritage is not a thing, it is not a site, building, or other material object and while these things are important they are not in themselves heritage.’ Rather ‘heritage and its conservation is a social and cultural practice of meaning making of the material things that constitute heritage.’⁴ Thus through the memory of the ex-political prisoners of Robben Island my study attempts to demonstrate that contrary to AHD, the practice of heritage is not only confined to management and conservation protocols, techniques and procedures that heritage managers, archaeologists, architects, museum curators and other experts undertake. However, it is also about memory work and meaning making of the fabric that is referred to as heritage.

My work therefore is an attempt to analyse the role of memory and oral history in conservation practice, more specifically in informing interpretation and conservation of a cultural heritage site.

² L.Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p.44.

³ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p.11.

⁴ Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, p.45.

Equally, it seeks to examine the range of interest groups involved and how conflicts are resolved.

I find it instructive at this juncture to clarify that my study has the possibilities to be approached from various vantage points. This is because heritage as a discipline and as a concept is multidisciplinary with various but related heritage typologies. Thus, heritage draws its existence and form from various disciplines for example history, archaeology, architecture, paleontology, geography and environmental studies among others. Therefore, as someone who has a strong background in history unlike in archaeology and other disciplines my approach to the study is arguably relative to a historical perspective. However, the same study could be approached from vantage points of other heritage typologies.

Background

Between 1961 and 1991, Robben Island served as a political prison for anti-apartheid activists. In 1994 with the birth of the democratic era and the spirit of the Mandela presidency, the island became a beacon of reconciliation. It was declared a national museum and heritage site in December 1996. The island was officially opened to visitors in January 1997 and work soon commenced on various infrastructural upgrades. In December 1999, the site was declared a World Heritage Site as a symbol of the ‘triumph of the human spirit over adversity.’⁵

On the island there are different sites with different layers of histories. The quarries on the island contribute to the history of this island. There are twenty quarries recorded on the site register data

⁵ H. Deacon, ‘Intangible Heritage in Conservation Management Planning; The Case of Robben Island’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 10, 3, (2004), p.1.

base for the island. Many of these are concealed by vegetation and some have been filled in.⁶ The oldest quarry is the Jan van Riebeeck Quarry – or Jan se Gat (Jan’s Hole) – situated to the southeast of the Island. It is said that the quarry was opened and extensively mined for slate at the time of Jan van Riebeeck from 1652, employing forced labour. The slate was used in construction works in the emerging European settlement at the Cape that today is Cape Town. This quarry continued to be worked intermittently for 300 years until 1963 when it was closed, but not before the early political prisoners kept at the Ou Tronk had been forced to work there.⁷

Another important quarry is the Limestone Quarry. It is a large excavation located inland, southwest of Murray’s Bay Harbour. Lime was first quarried there during the Dutch colonial period. From 1963 political prisoners from the general section were deployed to work on it. However, inmates from the isolation cells of B-Section who worked there for many years soon replaced them.⁸ Much of the limestone excavated from this quarry was used to surface the roads on the island. The northern side of the Limestone Quarry was partially filled by the prison authorities in the late 1980s, as was the practice on the mainland. At the entrance of the quarry there is an isivivane (a cairn of stones commemorating the political prisoners of the apartheid era on Robben Island). Ex-political prisoners, led by Mandela, during their 1995 reunion, created this.

The Bluestone Quarry, which constitutes the focus of this thesis is located in the northern western corner and it is the site where both the common law prisoners and the political prisoners

⁶ See Robben Island Museum Integrated Conservation Management Plan 2013-2018, RIM (Unpublished, 2013), p.34.

⁷ Conservation Management Plan, p.37.

⁸ Conservation Management Plan, p.39.

endured hard labour. The Bluestone Quarry was opened and operated by prison labourers in 1963 for the mining of slate, also called bluestone. This was to meet demand for the stone used for cladding buildings on both the island and mainland.⁹ Most of the bluestone for the construction of the maximum prison and network of roads on the island was extracted from this site from the labouring and suffering of these prisoners.

Before the prisoners started to work on the quarry, they built a Stone Wall or dyke to separate the sea from the quarry. This was because sea water, even under moderate tide, easily gained entry into the quarry, thereby disrupting operations on the site. The Stone Wall was made from the locally available materials on the site, for example, sand, sea shells, and beach pebbles. The apartheid government could have built a more permanent dyke but did not. The prison warders cynically took pleasure at the prisoners' futile task of offloading sand and grit to buttress the dyke only for them to find it washed away by the waves.¹⁰ In 1978 all quarrying activities on the island ceased because of the pressure from the International Committee of the Red Cross which was advocating for the rights of prisoners. The Bluestone Quarry was consequently closed. However, the site was still looked after by the Department of the Correctional Services until they finally left the island in 1997.¹¹ The Robben Island Museum (RIM) established in 1996 took over the responsibility of maintaining the structures on the island.

⁹ See Ron Viney-RIM Quarries and Robert Sobukwe Final Document (Unpublished 2011), p.25.

¹⁰ See Stone Quarry 2, 12 October 2003, Tape 14c RF 0842 , Mayibuye Archives, University of Western Cape, and Cape Town.

¹¹ Information from Ron Viney, Conservation Consultant with Ad Festina, 14 July 2014.

In September 2001, a maritime storm destroyed a middle section of the Stone Wall resulting in the tide breaking into the quarry and creating a wide gap 15 m wide.¹² The Stone Wall was later severely damaged by the actions of sea waves. A survey of the Stone Wall in 2002 found that it exhibited signs of general and progressive collapse. This was chiefly due to the combined effects of the application of heterogeneous building materials, variation in size of those building materials, building techniques and the action of the sea. The fragility of the Stone Wall rendered it ‘sensitive heritage’ from a conservation perspective.¹³

As part of conservation management and in response to the degrading condition of the Stone Wall, in 2002 RIM contracted the Department of Public Works (DPW) to restore the Stone Wall. Among other plans, DPW recommended the placement of concrete cubes in a line along the shore to absorb the force of the sea.¹⁴ However, an independent survey carried out in May and August 2004 by archaeologist, Edward Matenga, concluded that it was necessary to comply with international guidelines adopted by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention and affiliated organisations, such as the International Committee on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), on the treatment of places of heritage significance. Specific reference was made to the Australia ICOMOS charter for places of cultural significance, also called the Burra Charter. Article 15 of this charter clearly stipulates that ‘change may be necessary to retain cultural significance, but is undesirable where it reduces cultural significance’. It further provides that ‘the amount of change to a place should be guided by cultural significance and its history.’¹⁵

¹² E. Matenga, ‘Proposals for the Conservation of a Dry Stone Wall at the Blue Stone Quarry on Robben Island’, File 9/2/018/0004, SAHRA Archives (Unpublished Report, 2004), p.10.

¹³ Matenga, p.11.

¹⁴ Matenga, p.12.

¹⁵ Matenga, p.15.

In the light of this, questions were asked from both the South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA) and representatives of the ex-political prisoners who constitute the board of RIM on whether the new additions would retain the cultural/historical significance of the Stone Wall. The Stone Wall project became a contested project as it tried to find a middle ground to satisfy all the stakeholders. These stakeholders included environmentalists, heritage managers, engineers, SAHRA and the representatives of the ex-political prisoners. The contestations around the Stone Wall Project were long drawn. The debates commenced in 2002 and the resolution emerged in 2014.

Research problems/Aims of study

This research thesis aims to investigate how the project of the Stone Wall came to be heavily contested and how it was resolved. At its core is the question, when a restoration project of a significant heritage site is informed by oral history and memories, how are the concerns of a diverse range of interest groups and subsequent contestations resolved? The thesis therefore aims to provide an account of the Stone Wall project, to examine the role of oral history and memory work during the project, to identify the different stakeholders and their arguments, to examine how the matter was resolved and, finally, to understand issues of heritage management on a world heritage site. In essence, the thesis provides an example of restoration and conservation and conflict management.

Rationale for Study

Robben Island and the Bluestone Quarry, in particular, are significant heritage sites given their place in the political struggle against apartheid. Much of the scholarly literature that is available

about these spaces focuses mainly on their history. However, there has not been a focus on the Bluestone Quarry as heritage and how this heritage is conserved and managed. This research project therefore contributes by departing from the seemingly conventional approach of historicizing the Bluestone Quarry by studying how its history and its heritage are conserved and managed.

Literature Review

Robben Island, located eleven kilometers from Table Bay has attracted some attention from various scholars. Much of what has been written ranges from the general history of the island and the memories and experiences of the ex-political prisoners who once served on the island during the time when it was a notorious prison from 1961 to 1990. Charlene Smith in her book *Robben Island* detailed the island's significant political and social history. She provided engrossing accounts of the leper colony once housed on the island, the exile of the Xhosa chiefs, the ships wrecked along its shores and the diversity of the island's ecosystem.¹⁶

Harriet Deacon's edited book *The Island: A History of Robben Island; 1488-1990* has provided a genealogy of Robben Island. It comprehensively documented the various functions which the island performed through its different historical phases. In chapter two, 'Robben Island -1488-1805', Nigel Penn traced the island's early European contacts. According to Penn, the Portuguese explorer, Bartholomeu Diaz, was possibly the first mariner to land at Robben Island in 1488.¹⁷ The Europeans on sea voyages used the island as a pantry to feed the sailors on passing ships. In chapter three, Harriet Deacon discussed the period when the island served as a

¹⁶ C.Smith, *Robben Island* (Cape Town: Struik Publishers, 1997), p.8.

¹⁷ H. Deacon (ed), *The Island: A history of Robben Island: 1488-1990* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1996), p.9.

British prison from 1800-1896 for those who resisted colonial rule.¹⁸ In a further chapter, Deacon focused on the time when the island served as a medical institution.¹⁹ The last two chapters by Fran Buntman focused on resistance on Robben Island during the time of the anti-apartheid political prisoners.²⁰

Fran Buntman has provided a more sustained analysis of prisoner memories of the island in a subsequent monograph entitled *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid*.²¹ She has provided a remarkable study of prison lives and resistance among the different groups of political prisoners incarcerated on Robben Island. Basing her account on extensive interviews with many who had spent considerable parts of their adult lives on the island, she provided valuable insight into prison conditions, collective resistance and responsibility, apartheid struggle, political imprisonment more generally and its connections to political transformation.

Buntman argued that ‘the most brutal aspect of day to day life was the hard labor the prisoners performed and the abuse associated with it, especially in the early years.’²² Robben Island’s ‘serious human rights violations occurred during the working hours. Most prisoners would quarry lime or stone, chop wood, crush stone, repair or make roads with a pick and shovel or drag seaweed from the beaches and the sea’.²³ Buntman pointed out that in the 1990s, much of the public focus on the difficult and dangerous conditions of hard labour that the prisoners on Robben Island faced was directed to the lime quarry, as this was where Nelson Mandela and the

¹⁸ Deacon (ed), *The Island*, p.33.

¹⁹ Deacon (ed), *The Island*, p.57.

²⁰ Deacon (ed), *The Island*, pp.93-137.

²¹ Buntman, *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003), p.49.

²² Buntman, *Robben Island*, p.49.

²³ Buntman, *Robben Island*, p.50.

single cell prisoners labored. She pointed out that the damage to Nelson Mandela's eyes after years of work at the quarry without eye protection was perhaps the most common example.²⁴ However, Buntman highlighted the fact that the worst abuses took place in the stone quarries. In concentrating on the lime rather than the stone quarries,²⁵ the press ignored where the torture really was on Robben Island. Buntman's work thus points to the significance of the stone quarry.

Apart from these general histories, the democratic era has seen a proliferation of writings by and about ex-political prisoners of their lives on the island. These writings have been in the forms of memoirs, biographies, autobiographies and published letters of the ex-political prisoners.

Ciraj Rassool has described this trend as 'the biographic complex' in South Africa.²⁶ Cases of systematic racism and discrimination, brutality of the warders, back-breaking hard labour in the quarries and learning are common themes in most Robben Island literature post 1994.²⁷

In *Island in Chains*, Indres Naidoo narrated his ten year prison experience at Robben Island. Naidoo's memoirs are significant in alerting one to the construction of the Stone Wall/dyke at the Bluestone Quarry. They detail his first encounter with the Bluestone Quarry and its associated hardships and they provide an account of the construction of the Stone Wall.²⁸ In

Memoirs of a Saboteur, Nattoo Babenia shared similar experiences of suffering at the Bluestone

²⁴ Buntman, *Robben Island*, p.49.

²⁵ There are two stone quarries on Robben Island, the old quarry also called Jan van Riebeeck quarry and the new stone quarry also known as the Bluestone quarry. This thesis is about the Bluestone quarry.

²⁶ See C. Rassool, 'The individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa' (unpublished PhD UWC, 2004).

²⁷ See, for example E. Daniels, *There and Back: Robben Island 1964-1979* (Bellville: Mayibuye Books, University of the Western Cape, 1998); N. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (Randburg: McDonald Purnel Ltd, 1994); A. Kathrada, *Memoirs* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004); A. Kathrada, *Letters from Robben Island: A Selection of Ahmed Kathrada's Prison Correspondence, 1964-1989* (Rivonia: Zebra Press, 2000); E. Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In Our Life Time* (Claremont: David Philip Publishers, 2002); N. Alexander, *Robben Island Prison Dossier 1964-1974: Report to the International Community* (Cape Town: UCT Press (PTY) Ltd, 1994); W. Sisulu, *I Will Go Singing* (Ndabeni: Rubic Press, 2001); A. Naidoo, *Island in Chains: Prisoner 885/63* (London: Penguin Group, 2003); N. Babenia, *Memoirs of a Saboteur* (Bellville: Mayibuye Books, 1995).

²⁸ A. Naidoo, *Island in Chains: Prisoner 885/63* (London: Penguin Group, 2003), p.76.

Quarry like those of Naidoo. He vividly described the hard labour and the penalties imposed on prisoners by the warders when they failed to meet their required quota of crushed bluestone.²⁹

In *Long Walk to Freedom*, the autobiography about the epic life of Nelson Mandela right from his birth and his political activism through the struggle until the time he became president, Mandela shared his experiences of working on the Limestone Quarry. He recounted that ‘worse than the heat at the quarry was the light. Our backs were protected from the sun by our shirts but the sun’s rays would be reflected into our eyes by the lime itself. The glare hurt our eyes and along with the dust made it difficult to see...It would take long after each day’s work for our eyes to adjust to the diminished light.’³⁰ Attempts to request for sunglasses fell on deaf ears until the visit of legislator Helen Suzman who negotiated with the authorities.³¹ This highlights the significance of the Limestone Quarry more than the Bluestone Quarry.

In his book, *Letters from Robben Island*, which comprises a selection of his prison correspondence from 1964 to 1989, Ahmed Kathrada wrote about hard labour on Robben Island. However, he did not go into details about the quarries apart from mentioning that there were two quarries on the island; the stone quarry where the prisoners in the main prison worked and the lime quarry where he worked together with others in section B of the prison.³²

In the biography of *Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In Our Life Time* which is about the political activism of Walter and his wife Albetina, Walter Sisulu noted that hard labour was the central feature of the island. The prison population was divided into work teams assigned to different

²⁹ Babenia, *Memoirs of a Saboteur*, p.136.

³⁰ Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p.392.

³¹ Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, p.392.

³² Kathrada, *Letters from Robben Island*, p.151.

tasks, which included digging for stone in the Stone quarry or lime in the Limestone Quarry, chopping wood, making or repairing roads, collecting seaweed and cleaning the yards and cells. Sisulu recounts that most prisoners worked in the Limestone Quarry. He further recalled that political prisoners were generally allocated the most difficult jobs, while the common law prisoners were generally assigned the less strenuous staff jobs in the hospital, offices and kitchen.³³

Life for the prisoners was not only about hard labour but also education and studies. Ahmed Kathrada in *Memoirs* asserted that ‘the single advantage of being sent to Robben Island was the education it offered to many of the early inmates in particular.’³⁴ He became the first ‘islander’ to obtain degree. Much of the teaching was taking place at the quarries and the teachers were the prisoners themselves.³⁵

There are also articles on Robben Island which focus on issues of heritage, interpretation of this heritage and its conservation. Harriet Deacon has provided a significant start to understanding conservation management on Robben Island. Her article ‘Intangible Heritage in Conservation Management Planning-The Case of Robben Island’ centred on the challenges of managing a historic fabric whose significance is defined as primarily symbolic. She explored the implications for conservation management planning of interpreting and managing the intangible heritage of such sites which have symbolic value. She analysed how Robben Island’s symbolic significance has been defined in terms of a triumphal narrative and how competing

³³ Sisulu, *Walter and Albertina Sisulu*, p.184.

³⁴ Kathrada, *Memoirs*, p.226.

³⁵ Kathrada, *Memoirs*, p.281.

interpretations should be included in the management plan. She called for inclusion of sites like Bluestone Quarry in the management plan of the island.³⁶

In the paper entitled 'Memory and History at Robben Island' Harriet Deacon discussed the debates and contestations of heritage on Robben Island. She problematised Robben Island Museum's motto of 'triumph of human spirit over adversity'. She argued that 'the very nature of Robben Island as a symbolic site creates many opportunities for disagreement over its meaning.'³⁷ She further argued that 'to describe this triumph simply as moral good over evil is however to downplay the political dimension.' The anti-apartheid movement was never very united with major ideological differences, for example, between the African National Congress and the Pan African Congress. For her, the triumphal narrative is politically constructed. She further pointed out how the lime quarry, where most of the leadership of ANC worked, is given more publicity than the Bluestone Quarry worked by the rank and file and where much suffering occurred.³⁸

In 'Shades of Dark Tourism: Alcatraz and Robben Island', Carolyn Strange and Michael Kempa have explored how former sites of punishment and incarceration have become popular tourist destinations as defunct prisons are converted into museums and heritage sites. They drew comparisons between Alcatraz in the United States and Robben Island in South Africa. They argued that 'while some theorists might categorise such practices as "dark tourism" it is

³⁶ H. Deacon, 'Intangible Heritage in Conservation Management Planning: The Case of Robben Island', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 10, 3, (2004), p.11.

³⁷ H. Deacon, 'Memory and History', A Paper presented at Memory and History Conference at University of the Western Cape (unpublished, 2000), p.1.

³⁸ Deacon, 'Memory and History', p.5.

important for an analysis that accounts for multiple shades of penal history marketing and interpretation.³⁹ Drawing on policy documents, site observations, tourist surveys and interviews with museum staff, their article showed ‘how multi-hued forms of interpretation have been produced, through not only shifting priorities of memory managers but also the expectations of tourists and the agendas of external interest groups.’⁴⁰

Nancy Phwaswana- Mafuya and Norbert Haydam provided an insight into some of the roles and activities of RIM as a heritage institution mandated to manage the heritage of the island. Their objective was to explore the expectations of tourists visiting Robben Island Museum. They identified the following functions of RIM: maintaining the political and universal symbolism of its heritage, conserving and managing natural and cultural heritage resources and promoting itself as platform for critical debate and lifelong learning among others.⁴¹ Myra Shackly highlighted debates surrounding the future of the island that included its position within the multicultural heritage of the Western Cape, whether or not it should be developed as a conference centre including residential accommodation, and to what extent its message should be politicised.⁴²

Almost twelve years since the Stone Wall on Bluestone Quarry was washed away and the project on its restoration began nothing has been written about the Stone Wall and how the memories of the ex-political prisoners influenced the project. This thesis, therefore, contributes to a better

³⁹ C.Strange and M.Kempa, ‘Shades of Dark Tourism: Alcatraz and Robben Island’, *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30, 2(2003), pp.386-405.

⁴⁰ Strange and Kempa, ‘Shades of Dark Tourism,’ pp.386-405.

⁴¹ N. Phaswana-Mafuya and N. Haydam, ‘Tourists’ Expectations and Perceptions of the Robben Island Museum-World Heritage Site’, *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 20, 2(2005), pp.149-169.

⁴² M.Shackly, ‘Potential Futures for Robben Island: Shrine, Museum or Theme Park?’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 7, 4(2001), pp.355-363.

understanding of the Bluestone Quarry by critically analysing the conservation project of the restoration of the Stone Wall and the challenges it faced.

Conceptual framework

Concepts of memory, heritage and conservation manifest themselves at the Bluestone Quarry through the Stone Wall Project. This study is influenced by several significant works on memory and places, sites of memory and conservation management.

Steven Hoelscher and Derek Alderman have argued that there is an inextricable link between memory and place. Thus certain spaces are markers of history and memory. In such a relationship, they argued, ‘memory and place conjoin to produce much of the context of modern identities and often rigorous contestations of these identities.’⁴³ This is quite the case with the Stone Wall Project on Bluestone Quarry when the ex-political prisoners memorialise their experiences embedded on the site. Thus the Bluestone Quarry becomes the ‘site’ on which their memories are located and any changes to this site, through new developments, affect the ex-political prisoners and their remembering. Hoelscher and Alderman also noted that ‘the preservation of recollections rests on their anchorage in space.’⁴⁴ Following on Hoelscher and Alderman, this study is concerned with how memories about this space manifested themselves during the Stone Wall conservation project and how they influenced the resolution of the project.

The French historian Pierre Nora put forward the notion of ‘sites’ of memory- or *lieux de memoir*. He gives prominence to the various ways in which memory is spatially constituted. For

⁴³ S. Hoelscher and D.Alderman, ‘Memory and Place: Geographies of Critical Relationship’, *Social and Cultural Geography*, 5, 3, (2004), pp.347-55.

⁴⁴ Hoelscher and Alderman, ‘Memory and Place’, pp.347-55.

Nora memory is attached to 'sites' that are concrete and physical: the burial places, cathedrals, battlefields, prisons that embody tangible notions of the past as well as the 'sites' that are non-material or not physical. Sites of memory, therefore, encompass geographical spaces.⁴⁵ The Bluestone Quarry because of its connections with the memories of the ex-political prisoners becomes a site of memory in a geographical space.

Sean Field has argued that 'the selective character of memory is not a problem but a structuring principle of how people temporally and spatially work through their memories of the 'then and there' of the past in the 'here and now' of the present.'⁴⁶ He further argued that 'these selections are both conscious and unconscious, and reveal the agency of people constructing memories to meet their needs, wants and desires.'⁴⁷ Memory thus involves imagination as Field's book suggests and is not necessarily a resource for retrieval of facts. This provides a basis to examine memory making during the Stone Wall Project. In his project on sites of memory in Langa, Sean Field has problematised the binaries between tangible heritage(e.g. buildings,places,etc.) and intangible heritage(e.g. oral histories, performances and rituals) when it comes to heritage conservation on sites of memory. He saw no separation between the two when they exist on a site. He argued that 'heritage conservation cannot only be about the taking care of buildings, objects and sites. Heritage practitioners need to conceptually integrate people's concerns and memories into conservation work.'⁴⁸ Influenced by this argument my thesis seeks to investigate how the Stone Wall Project has responded to issues of memory and oral histories of the ex-

⁴⁵ P. Nora, 'Between Memory and History', *Representations*, 26, 2 (1989), p.7.

⁴⁶ S. Field, 'Sites of Memory in Langa' in S. Field, R.Meyer and F.Swanson (eds.) *Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town* (CapeTown: HSPC Press, 2007), p.22.

⁴⁷ Field, 'Sites of Memory in Langa', p. 22.

⁴⁸ Field, 'Sites of Memory in Langa', p. 30.

political prisoners. It further seeks to establish how significant the latter was given that there were other stakeholders in the project.

Conservation, particularly that concerned with heritage resources, constitutes one of the major concepts in this paper. The Burra Charter which is a document that sets a standard of practice in management of cultural resources defines conservation as ‘all the processes of looking after a place so as to retain its cultural significance.’⁴⁹ F. Benard and J.Jokilehto in their work that deals with different guidelines in conservation management have provided a typology of different processes of conservation of a heritage site. The most prevalent ones are restoration, consolidation, reconstruction, and anastylosis. Restoration is understood as ‘means of returning the existing fabric of a place to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material.’ On the contrary, reconstruction means returning a place to a known earlier state and is distinguished from restoration by the introduction of new material into the fabric.⁵⁰ Anastylosis, the Greek word for restoration or re-erection of columns, has come to mean the ‘re-assembling of existing but dismembered parts.’ Anastylosis is generally used ‘when referring to structures consisting of clearly identifiable components such as dry masonry or timber, and not monolithic structures such as brick walls with mortar.’⁵¹ These conservation concepts of restoration, reconstruction and anastylosis are critical to the Bluestone Quarry project as they were at the center of debates on whether use of new building materials or the old building materials and techniques would enhance or compromise authenticity of the site and the wall.

⁴⁹ See *The Burra Charter: The Australian ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, 1999, p.2.

⁵⁰ F. Benard and J.Jokilehto, *Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Sites* (Rome: ICCROM, 1998), p.61-62.

⁵¹ Benard and Jokilehto, *Management Guidelines*, p.63.

Conservation of heritage resources is mostly characterized by contests and complexities. Brempong Osei-Tutu in his article provides a case study of a multimillion-dollar project to restore and conserve the Cape Coast and Elmina Castles world heritage sites. This was for cultural exposition and tourism development. The context of his paper rests with the ‘contradictions between the Ghanaian authorities’ quest for economic self-determination through the restoration and commodification of these world heritage monuments, and African American’s preference for preserving the same monuments as shrines not to be desecrated.⁵² My work draws some parallels with this especially in how different stakeholders held opposing views on how the restoration should proceed based on various interests.

Kodzo Gavua noted that in addition to performing their orthodox functions, sites and monuments actively feature in contestations and negotiations of power between and within groups, and this is key to designations, construction, maintenance, and conservation of monuments.⁵³ This has relevance for understanding the debates around the Stone Wall.

In their edited work on case studies of conservation and restoration of world heritage sites along the Swahili coast in Kenya, Peter Meusburger and Michael Hefferman , have not only shown how use of memory of the communities helps inform conservation and restoration of the sites, but also how use of memory informs the proper use of some of the cultural heritage resources in

⁵² O.Brempong, ‘The African American Factor in the Commodification of Ghana’s Slave Castles’, *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, No.6(2002), pp.115.

⁵³ See Kodzo Gavua, ‘Monuments and Negotiations of Power in Ghana’ ,Paper presented at a conference of The Politics of Heritage, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, July 2011; Gavua,K. ‘Monuments and Negotiation of Power in Ghana’ in Petersen, D., Gavua, K.and Rassool,C.(eds.), *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economics, Histories and Infrastructures* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.97-112.

the Swahili coast of Kenya.⁵⁴ This has relevance to my study in assessing how memory of the ex-political prisoners of Robben Island informed some of the important decisions during the conservation and restoration project of the Stone Wall.

In summary, the concepts of sites of memory, conservation, and heritage underpin the theoretical framework around which my research is formulated and structured.

Research Methodology

The research involved two historical methods of inquiry, archival research and oral history. The archives I used include the South African Heritage Resource Agency archive (SAHRA) in Cape Town, the library on RIM and the Mayibuye Archives at the University of the Western Cape. The SAHRA archive has a substantial body of reports on the Stone Wall Project from 2001 to 2014. In addition, the library of Robben Island Museum based on the island provided a full set of minutes of the numerous meetings that were held with stakeholders about the Stone Wall project. These minutes are valuable as they reveal how issues manifested themselves and were resolved. The Mayibuye archive has a valuable collection of eleven recorded oral history interviews of the Bluestone Quarry Reference Groups (ex-political prisoners who worked on the quarry). The Heritage Department of RIM itself interviewed these ex-prisoners at the Bluestone Quarry site. I transcribed and analysed them.

Academics have employed oral history to provide empirical data that written sources may not yield. Paul Thomson has asserted that oral sources give us information of social groups whose

⁵⁴ P.Meusburger and M. Hefferman, 'Oral history and Conservation Of Immovable Heritage in Swahili Coast', *African archaeology Today*, Vol 27(16) (2008), pp.330-55.

written history is either missing or distorted.⁵⁵ For this thesis I have interviewed three officials of RIM to provide background information about the entire process of conservation and restoration. They also provide their opinions and assessments. These are ; the Chief Heritage Manager on Robben Island, the Senior Heritage Manager of Robben Island and the Environmental Manager on Robben Island. The questions revolved around the history of the site, the events leading to the project, the conservation challenges and major contestations that emerged and resolution of differences. RIM granted me permission to use the full names of the ex-political prisoners in the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group.

Yet this thesis also seeks to establish the meanings of the memories of the ex-political prisoners in relation to the historical fabric of the site. This was possible through the analysis of oral interviews already recorded in the tapes. Portelli has argued that ‘oral history tells us less about events than about their meaning.’⁵⁶ This thesis is therefore sensitive to processes of memory making during the Stone Wall project. It acknowledges that while memory is an active source that is subject to recreation and reconstruction, it can be a source of information and clue to understanding meanings. The thesis embraces both these seemingly contradicting uses and application of oral memories and show how oral memories were crucial for the interpretation of the site during the project.

⁵⁵ See P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁵⁶ Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (Albany: State University of New York Press,1991), p.50.

Chapter Outline

The first chapter locates the Stone Wall project in the wider discussion of the role of oral history and use of memory in heritage projects that is aimed at conserving the intangible elements of a heritage site. It discusses how Robben Island Museum has used oral history in some of its conservation projects and the place of oral history and the memories of ex-political prisoners during the Bluestone Quarry and Stone Wall project. It also demonstrates how the Authorised Heritage Discourse in heritage management is challenged by the subaltern discourse as manifested by the role of the ex-political prisoners through their memory work.

The second chapter explores conceptually and broadly the debates and contestations on heritage that emerged during the project and contextualizes them within the discourses of authenticity and integrity in conservation of heritage on a world heritage site.

The third chapter explores the heritage contestations within the context of the conflict between the natural and cultural heritage on Bluestone Quarry. It also provides a discussion of the impacts and challenges of the project on environmental and cultural heritage on the site.

The fourth chapter provides some of the resolutions that were reached to accommodate all the stakeholders that were involved. It calls into question the various conventions, charters, statutes governing the conservation of a heritage sites as dictated by the authorizing institutions of heritage. It further looks at the role of experts and the position of oral history and memory in that discourse. The conclusion provides the summary of the thesis. It also further shows how the thesis reflects some of the theoretical concepts on which it is framed.

CHAPTER 1

MEMORY, ORAL HISTORY AND CONSERVATION AT BLUESTONE QUARRY

INTRODUCTION:

Conservation of cultural resources in general and heritage sites in particular always involve interpretation of the tangible and intangible elements of the site. It has been observed that lack of proper methodologies of interpretation during conservation projects on heritage sites often lead to regrettable distortion of history of the site. One methodology that is frequently used in interpretation of heritage sites during conservation projects is oral history. In 2003, Robben Island Museum used this methodology in its project to discuss the restoration of the washed away Stone Wall on Bluestone Quarry site. The Heritage Department of RIM introduced the ex-political prisoners reference group known as Bluestone Quarry Reference Group. Through memory work, the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group was to assist RIM in the interpretation and conservation of both the tangible and intangible significance of the Stone Wall and the entire quarry site during the restoration project. The question that one may pose therefore is how effective and useful was this approach in interpreting the tangible and intangible elements on the site for the project?

In response to this question, this chapter discusses the use of memory via oral history in landscape interpretation and heritage management at Bluestone Quarry during the Stone Wall project. The chapter therefore takes memory as its overarching concept. The central argument which I advance in this chapter is that the use of oral history and memories of ex-political

prisoners during the restoration project was influential and had a significant impact on the interpretation of the Bluestone Quarry site. This was apparent because without memories of the ex-political prisoners the project engineers could not have successfully achieved the appropriate designs of the Stone Wall. This was evident when the initial engineering designs had failed to meet the test of authenticity and integrity as far as conservation management of heritage sites is concerned. Issues of authenticity and integrity will be articulated more in the next chapter. I would also like to argue that the fact that most ex-political prisoners who served at Bluestone Quarry were low ranked and their histories were never recorded played a significant role in the way they retold their experiences of the Bluestone Quarry.

In order to put the discussion into the right perspective bordering around issues of memory and oral history, I have briefly described the emergence of oral history as a methodology in historiography. I have also provided specific case studies of how memory and oral history have been used in museums in curating exhibitions and constructing public histories. I have then narrowed down the discussion to how memory through oral history work has been used in landscape/site management on Robben Island with other projects.

The last section of the chapter then puts the use of oral history and memory during the Stone Wall project into spot light. The section provides the historical context that necessitated the project and the use of oral history at Bluestone Quarry. By looking at the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group, the section provides a detailed description of the entire process of using oral history as methodology during the project. The chapter also highlights how vital the role of ex-

political prisoners was in informing the decisions of the project as far as the engineering designs were concerned.

I conclude the chapter by arguing that even though oral history and memory have been problematized, their use during the project was critical as it informed issues of interpretation of the site and its significance.

A Brief Background of Emergence of Oral History

One may reflect on some definitions of oral history. Lynn Abrams defines it as ‘the process of conducting and recording interviews with people in order to elicit information from them about the past. But an oral history is also the product of that interview, the narrative account of past events.’⁵⁷ It is also defined and understood as ‘“recovery history”; the practice of interviewing people to provide evidence about the past events which could not be retrieved from conventional historical sources, usually written ones or to uncover the hidden histories of individuals or groups which had gone unremarked in main stream accounts.’⁵⁸ In both these definitions oral history is regarded as a source for history but attention is also drawn for its production and the process of the narration.

The birth of contemporary oral history is usually traced to the resurgence after the Second World War in the use of memory for recovering the past. Paul Thompson charted the prehistory of the modern oral history movement, explaining that ‘historians from the ancient times relied upon eyewitness accounts of significant events, until the nineteenth century development of an

⁵⁷ L. Abrams, *Oral history theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), p.2.

⁵⁸ Abrams, *Oral history theory*, p.5.

academic history discipline led to the primacy of archival research and documentary sources, and the marginalization of the oral evidence.⁵⁹ He argues, ‘gradual acceptance of the usefulness and validity of oral evidence, and the increasing availability of portable tape recorders, underpinned the development of oral history after the Second World War.’⁶⁰

Vivian Bickford-Smith, Sean Field, and Clive Glaser note that in South Africa it was from the late 1970s that oral history became one of the important methodologies in South Africa’s historiography. They acknowledge that the techniques of oral history were instrumental in exploring important areas that had hitherto been unearthed. Such areas included social history inquiries on themes like ‘migrancy, sharecropping and labour tenancy, urban squatter movements and removals, household struggles, youth subcultures and political movements.’⁶¹

Ciraj Rassool, in his doctoral thesis ‘The individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa’, observed that it was post 1994 that saw the proliferation of memory works through biographies of mostly those involved in liberation struggle and also those associated with such prisons like the Robben Island. And these memories works largely involved oral history as its methodology.⁶²

The methodology of oral history has been subjected to a number of criticisms. Some have questioned its subjectivity and unreliability as it relies much on human subjects whose memories are liable to forgetting and manipulation. Others still question the logic of regarding one person’s experience or life story as being the whole representative and reflection of the entire community.

⁵⁹ P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.), p.25.

⁶⁰ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, p.25.

⁶¹ V. Bickford-Smith, S.Field and C. Glaser, ‘The Western Cape Oral History Project: The 1990’s, *African Studies*, Vol. 60, 1(2001), pp.5-23.

⁶² See C. Rassool, ‘The Individual, Auto/Biography and History in South Africa’ (Unpublished PhD, UWC, 2004).

Thus at the core of criticism of oral history in the early 1970s was the argument that memory is vulnerable to manipulation, forgetting and bias during interviews from both the researcher and the interviewee.⁶³ For example, the Australian historian Patrick O'Farrell wrote in 1979 that oral history was moving into 'the world of image, selective memory, later overlays and utter subjectivity ...And where will it lead us? Not into history, but into myth.'⁶⁴ Portelli has, however, urged scholars to embrace the subjectivity of oral history work and South African scholars like Sean Field have done much to explore the nature of memory making in the present and have stressed the process of active imaginings. Rassool and Minkley have been crucially influential in urging an attention to narrative construction and the production process involved in oral history work.⁶⁵

Oral history has been used to obtain information but oral history work has also interrogated memory production. The next section focuses on how memory work through oral history has been crucial in making public pasts in museums and spaces of public history.

Making Public Pasts Using Oral History

I would like to argue that memory work has been crucial and useful in the construction of heritage and public pasts. Further, it has been pivotal in providing meaning as well as interpretation of these constructed pasts and heritage. To substantiate this assertion I would like to discuss a few projects in the heritage and public history disciplines that have engaged with

⁶³ A. Thompson, 'Four Paradigm Transformation in Oral History'. *Oral History Review*, No.6 (2004), p.53.

⁶⁴ P. O'Farrell, 'Oral History: Facts and Fiction,' *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, No.5 (1982-83):3-9

⁶⁵ See A. Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991); Field, *Oral history, Community and Displacement: Memories in Post- Apartheid South Africa* ; G.Minkley and C. Rassool, 'Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa', in S Nuttall and C Coetzee (eds.) in *Negotiating the Past: The Making Of Memory In South Africa* (Cape Town, OUP,1998).

oral history work before I examine how effective these concepts and methodologies have been in the Stone Wall project.

Chrischene Julius has shown how oral history and memory work have been central to the museum making and practices of District Six Museum. The District Six Museum works with the memories of the former residents of District Six in its curatorial practices. She has demonstrated how the flagship exhibition of District Six Museum relied considerably on oral histories and testimonies in museum making and curation. Thus the exhibition ‘Streets: Retracing District Six’ which marked the official opening of the District Six Museum was made possible through the testimonies and memories of the former residents of District Six and their descendants. She focused on how oral historian made the transition to texts by tracing the oral history processes of interviewing, translating, transcribing and exhibiting the text. She argues that oral history texts/transcripts accord authority to the exhibition.⁶⁶ This use of memory and oral history has some marked symmetries in how Robben Island Museum, as will be discussed later, has relied on orality and memory in curating and ‘museumising’ itself as a heritage institution.

Noeleen Murray and Leslie Witz have shown how oral history was central to the whole museum project of Hostel 33 at Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum from its inception. Notably they have shown how the first project coordinator, Bongani Mgijima, ‘planned that oral history –collecting would be the moving force of the museum and that exhibitions would ... be the mechanism to

⁶⁶ J. Chrischene, ‘Digging Deeper than the Eye Approves; Oral Histories and their Use In the Digging Deeper Exhibition of the District Six Museum, *Kronos: Southern African Histories* Vol.34 (2008), p.131.

gather more diverse recollections.’⁶⁷ Thus, Mgijima had wanted the new museum to not only depend on objects but also on stories as part of the exhibition. The museum staff therefore embarked on theme identification, oral history interviews with subsequent translations and transcriptions for curation and exhibition purposes.⁶⁸ Describing the restoration and rehabilitation processes particularly in determining how the rooms should be compartmentalized and organized, they note that ‘it was only when participants were divided into two groups to discuss and draw their visions for Hostel 33 on large sheets of paper that memories were sketched into reconstructing the hostel’s past.’⁶⁹ The authors note that ‘one group indicated that the hostels had changed over time, showing how initially there had been no separation between the compartments, then later how residents had installed self-made curtains for privacy, which became more permanent as partitions were hammered together using a variety of boarding and wood off-cuts, assembled into timber frame.’⁷⁰ This approach to restoration by relying on memories of former hostel residents has marked similarities with the use of ex-political prisoners to recount how the Stone Wall was built.

Perhaps to emphasise strongly the relevance of orality and memory in the context of this thesis it is proper to demonstrate how it specifically works in management of cultural resources that are landscapes or sites in nature as opposed to exhibition collections and making of museums. David Harvey and Mark Riley in ‘Landscape Archaeology, Heritage and the Community in Devon: An Oral History Approach’ have discussed how oral history methodology can engage with the fields

⁶⁷ N. Murray and L. Witz, *Hostels, Homes, Museum: Memorializing Migrant Labour Pasts in Lwandle, South Africa* (Claremont: UCT Press, 2014), p.118.

⁶⁸ Murray and Witz, *Hostels, Homes, Museum*, p.119.

⁶⁹ Murray and Witz, *Hostels, Homes, Museum*, p.36.

⁷⁰ Murray and Witz, *Hostels, Homes, Museum*, p.36.

of landscape archaeology and heritage studies. Working with the management of the heritage sites in Devon, Britain, they have shown how the oral history approach has engaged with aspects of landscape heritage. They have further explored the success of such an approach in terms of how oral history data can ‘augment, destabilize and even challenge the existing scientific knowledge as well as offering alternative narratives’.⁷¹ In the case of the Stone Wall project, this chapter and of course the other chapters, will show that the memories of the ex-political prisoners provided a competing discourse to the discourse of the ‘experts’ and ‘specialists’ in heritage management.

Harvey and Riley have further charged that orality and memory ‘have considerable potential for how we interpret and manage our landscape heritage, through offering a more nuanced and dynamic and rich account of the landscape that is seen as being far more than a collection of physical attributes and measurable artifacts.’⁷² What this means, I suggest, is that through orality and memories, in terms of site/landscape management, it is the intangibility of the place that is more significant than the materiality of the objects. This suggestion finds synergy with Howarth who contends that oral history is not only limited and confined to recording information for the sake of recording or collecting, it is also aimed at the interpretation of objects and historical buildings, providing the meaning and uses of certain objects, educational resources and collections research thereby opening links with the publics.⁷³

⁷¹ D. Harvey and M. Riley ‘Landscape Archaeology, Heritage and the Community in Devon: An Oral History Approach’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies* Vol.54,242: pp. 217-242.

⁷² Harvey and Riley ‘Landscape Archaeology’, pp.217-242.

⁷³ K .Howarth, ‘Oral History’, *Junta Statutes of South Africa*, Vol 12, 2003-2004, pp.367-378

Sean Field has noted how some places become the central point on which memories ‘crystalise.’ He has observed that in their daily lives, people interact with their spaces in various ways and after sometime due to particular events such spaces and their memories become significant. In such situations, oral history becomes an invaluable tool.⁷⁴ Sean Field has therefore shown how use of oral history is productive in conservation and management of sites of memory and heritage. Through oral history, he has described how it was possible for the older people of Langa to identify the sites of historical importance and suggest possible ways on how the intangible heritage as embodied in historical accounts could be integrated with the tangible heritage as embodied in the physicality of the sites in conservation management of those sites. This has synergies in how through oral history work, the Stone Wall project sought to integrate the intangible at Bluestone Quarry with its tangible heritage.

Robben Island Museum and the Use of Memory and Oral History in Heritage Conservation

Guided by its Conservation Management Plan, which is a ‘manual’ that helps heritage sites to properly implement their conservation activities, RIM has successfully managed various conservation projects. Since its opening in January 1997, RIM has relied on memories and orality in many of its exhibitions and restoration projects. In 1997, oral history was used to obtain information about the island under the Memories Project. These were memories drawn from life history interviews with ex-political prisoners, ex-warders or people who lived on the island for other reasons.⁷⁵ Approximately 300 life history interviews with ex-political prisoners

⁷⁴ Field, *Oral history, Community and Displacement: Memories in Post- Apartheid South Africa*, p.103.

⁷⁵ N.Tongo ‘The Use of ex-Political Prisoners Reference Group as a Research Method for Conserving the Intangible and Tangible Significance of the Robben Island Maximum Security Prison: A Case Study.’ *Historic Environment*, Vol.19, 2(2006), pp.38-59.

and almost 100 site visits were documented.⁷⁶ Out of these life history interviews the ‘cell stories exhibition’ was opened on the island in November 1999. The ‘cell stories exhibition’ relied on the use of an intercom sound system placed inside each cell. At the press of the button, the visitor could listen to the recorded voice and memories of the occupant of that cell. Some recordings of military and freedom songs sung in the prison formed part of the exhibition. It was a way of giving multiple narratives to prison life on Robben Island. Tongo has argued that the “‘cell stories exhibition” signified implicit acknowledgement of the need for debate about the historical meaning of political imprisonment for South Africa’s public history.’⁷⁷

In 2001 a Reference Group Project was initiated .The focus of the project was to look at all aspects of recording the holistic picture of imprisonment and how to conserve and interpret various historical layers of prison experience. It also aimed at gathering more information about different working spans (teams)⁷⁸ and the possibilities of introducing tours for the visitors. Specifically it was meant to establish the intangible significance of imprisonment for keeping and passing it on to future generations. The project consisted of groups of ex-political prisoners who were invited to the island to share their collective experiences about working together in the same section or working together in the same span.

Tongo has provided a concise analysis of the 2001 Reference Group project. She has argued that the entire exercise opened up important areas of inquiry and challenged some of the assumptions and essentialised narratives about imprisonment on Robben Island. For example, stories told by

⁷⁶ Tongo ‘The Use of ex-Political Prisoners Reference Group’, p.39.

⁷⁷ Tongo ‘The Use of ex-Political Prisoners Reference Group’, p.45.

⁷⁸ In the language of prison during the time of apartheid at Robben Island, the term Span denoted a group of prisoners working together according to the division of labor in the prison

the ordinary prisoners contributed to the history of Limestone Quarry, which is normally told through the narratives of those who were in the leadership of the apartheid struggle. However, she lamented that not all prisoners were invited and there was need for RIM to find ways to make their voices heard.⁷⁹ Oral history therefore provides new possibilities for interpretation and nuanced understanding of Robben Island's history.

Oral History, Memory and the Stone Wall Restoration Project

In 2003, the Heritage Department of RIM formed the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group which was principally composed of the ex-political prisoners who had worked on the Bluestone Quarry as part of prison labour. This restoration project, as discussed in the introduction, was initiated because of the deteriorating condition of the Stone Wall. Thus in 2001 a 35m breach was created in the middle section of Stone Wall during a maritime storm.⁸⁰ Later in 2003, a second section of the wall was breached causing an additional 20m opening. The total breached section of the Stone Wall continued to deteriorate by more storm activity in subsequent years. Following the breach, water would fill the quarried space thereby covering the whole quarry and visitors could no longer see the quarry properly and appreciate the depth of the quarry and its symbolized suffering.

In order to protect the quarry and the history it represented from further deterioration, the Bluestone Quarry therefore needed to be restored. RIM and the Department of Public Works therefore proposed to reinstate the breached section of the Stone Wall so as to restore the quarry and its surroundings to the state when the political prisoners mined the quarry. In addition, steps

⁷⁹ Tongo, 'The Use of Ex-Political Prisoners Reference Group', p.52.

⁸⁰ See 'Reinstatement of the Blue Stone Quarry Wall and Limestone Road Way, Robben Island: Draft Environmental Management Programme,' Reference number 14/12/16/3/3/1/747, RIM (Unpublished, 2014), p.3.

were to be taken to ensure the future protection of the quarry and its associated heritage value.⁸¹ For this to be achieved, therefore, there was need for the surviving ex-political prisoners to identify, through their memories, important historic fabric on the site that needed to be protected and to provide a brief account of how the breached wall was constructed and how it appeared during the time of imprisonment. This was to respect issues of integrity and authenticity in conservation of the Bluestone Quarry and the Stone Wall.



Fig 1. Bluestone Quarry Reference Group posing in front of the Stone Wall (Picture by RIM-2003)

In order to identify and select the ex-political prisoners who had worked on Bluestone Quarry the Heritage Department of RIM conducted a survey in 2002. The survey forms outlined different spans in prison and an ex-political prisoner was required to tick the box where he served his labour during the time of imprisonment. The prison records of the surviving prisoners

⁸¹Interview with Nolubabalo Tongo, Senior Heritage Officer, Robben Island Museum, Nelson Mandela Gateway, on 28 April, 2015.

after the closure of the maximum prison in 1991 were fundamental in tracing the whereabouts of the former prisoners.⁸² A total of eighty ex-prisoners was invited to be part of the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group and participate in the interviews. Their ages ranged from sixty to ninety years old. They were divided into two groups because RIM did not want a scenario where there was one clustered group. This was to avoid some individuals dominating the contributions over their colleagues.⁸³

The questions that the ex-political prisoners were asked were normally open ended and it was the facilitator from the Heritage Department who controlled the proceedings. It is important at this moment to point out that there was a marked difference in terms of the structure of the questions especially when compared to the Memory Project of 1997. In the 1997 Memory Project, the interview guide sought to capture the life histories of the prisoners.⁸⁴ Thus for that project, the interview guide was divided into three sections. The first section was concerned with potential data and family background. Questions in this section dealt with information on date of birth, parents and description of social conditions under which they grew up. The second component was concerned with the dynamics of the time, for example which organisation did the informant belong to, why he joined that organisation, what campaigns he participated in and what were the reasons for his arrest. The third part was about the journey to the Robben Island, life in the prison and life after prison.⁸⁵

⁸² Interview with Nolubabalo Tongo, Senior Heritage Officer, Robben Island Museum, Nelson Mandela Gateway, on 28 April, 2015.

⁸³ Interview with Nolubabalo Tongo,

⁸⁴ Interview with Nolubabalo Tongo,

⁸⁵ N,Solani 'Memory and Representation: Robben Island 1997-1999' (Masters Thesis, University of the Western Cape, Bellville,2000) , pp. 47-53.

In contrast, the approach to the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group in 2003 was to focus on life stories and not life histories of the prisoners on Bluestone Quarry site. It also focused on identification of important features on the site that had profound meaning to the ex-political prisoners.⁸⁶ I suggest this was because the Stone Wall project was specific in nature and therefore the questions needed to be specifically focused on the site. These interviews were conducted on the quarry site where a marquee was pitched.⁸⁷ I suggest this was owing to two factors. Firstly, it was because the project was about site management and therefore it was proper to be on the site. Sean Field has referred to this approach as ‘on- site interviews.’⁸⁸ Secondly, this was a memory project and drawing from Pierre Nora’s work Bluestone Quarry had presented itself as a ‘site of memory’ on which memories of the prisoners resided. Thus for Nora sites of memory are ‘sites where memory crystallises and secrets itself and where a sense of historical continuity persists.’⁸⁹ This had implications as to how the remembering process occurred.

The ex-political prisoners were also allowed to discuss the questions in groups thereby bringing individual memories into collective memories. Through ‘walk interviews’ they were free to take a walk along the beach and the quarry surroundings so that they could encounter what Sean Field refers to as mnemonic devices and objects that would trigger their memory and hence

⁸⁶ See Stone Quarry Reference Group 0807, Tape 2A,09/10/2003, Mayibuye Archives, University of the Western Cape ; The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kasified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

⁸⁷ Interview with Nolubabalo Tongo, Senior Heritage Officer ,Robben Island Museum , Nelson Mandela Gateway, on 28 April, 2015 .

⁸⁸ Field, *Oral history, Community and Displacement*, p.113.

⁸⁹ P.Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’ , *Representations*, 26, 2 (1989), p.8

facilitate their remembering.⁹⁰ Those who could not express themselves freely in English had the freedom to use their mother tongues.

The entire exercise lasted for four days, between 9 and 12 October 2003. All the interviews were recorded on voice recorders and audio-visual tapes. All these audio-visual recordings have been archived at University of the Western Cape and Robben Island Mayibuye archives. Only two DVDs with English subtitles were produced and are in the custody of the Heritage Department of RIM.

Remembering Experience and Interpreting Memory at Bluestone Quarry⁹¹

Drawing on Sean Field's approach in analysing the oral histories and memories of Langa I would like to analyse some of the memories during the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group interviews based on four fundamental questions. 'How did imagining memories create and frame the telling of the stories within oral history dialogues?'⁹² What histories were constructed through the memories and stories of the ex-political prisoners as individuals and as a collective group? How did the ex-political prisoners construct emotional ties to the Bluestone Quarry site and show a sense of connectedness to the site? Finally, I would like to briefly explain how the memories and histories gathered during the interviews were used for the purposes of the restoration, an issue that will also be returned to in subsequent chapters. It is this last question that provides the evidence relevant to the argument of this chapter that the memory work during the project had a substantial impact in the interpretation of the site and in establishing the significance of the Stone Wall.

⁹⁰ See Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003 Tape 14c RF 0842, Mayibuye Archives, University of Western Cape, Cape Town; The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kasified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

⁹¹ This subheading has been adopted from a subtitle in Field, *Oral history, Community and Displacement: Memories in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, p.33.

⁹² Field, *Oral history, Community and Displacement*, p.10

As stated earlier on, the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group was divided into two groups, each constituting of about forty ex-political prisoners. For purposes of focussed discussion, my analysis dwells upon The Second Bluestone Quarry Reference Group, as it was called. On the first day of the interviews and discussions, Mr Denmark Tungwana from RIM welcomed the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group. He briefed the group on the biography of the Robben Island Museum and its mandated objectives. Members of the group in turn introduced themselves indicating the duration of time incarcerated on the island.⁹³ In this group, the average years spent on the island was ten years with one, Mr. Fezile Mlanda, being the longest serving member from 1964 to 1986.⁹⁴ Later Mr. Grant Davis, the senior heritage manager of RIM ‘lectured’ the group on the importance and use of the conservation management plan on world heritage sites. He explained that the conservation management plan provides a professional and expert guide when it comes to management of heritage sites. The whole process of the project therefore was part of the activities of conserving and managing the site.⁹⁵ Mr. Gobe from RIM briefed the group on ethical issues of research. He explained that it was important and crucial they participate with full understanding of the scope of the project and with their heartfelt consent. He discussed issues bordering around the use of agreement forms as a symbol and an embodiment of legal understanding and agreement between RIM and the ex-political prisoners. The members of the group were free to discuss the forms amongst themselves and raise the issues after finishing. The

⁹³ Stone Quarry Reference Group 0457, Tape 2C,09/10/2003, Mayibuye Archives, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town; The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kasified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

⁹⁴ Stone Quarry Reference Group 0457. Tape 2C.

⁹⁵ Stone Quarry Reference Group 0457, Tape 2C.

proceedings of that day were concluded when Mr. Grant Davis from RIM took the group through the program of the following day.

On 10 October, which was the second day for the oral history process, Mr. Shawn presented to the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group the suggested option designs of the Stone Wall by the engineers from the Department of Public Works. To put things in graphic and visual language he illustrated the designs by drawing them on the flip chart. His brief account of the scope of the project could be read in the transcribed text below:

....The first time the water broke through was the storm of September 2001 and the break in the rest of the wall happened with the winter storm we had last year about the same time. Now to tell the story of Robben Island correctly the stone quarry is part of that history. So what we have been in discussion for the past six months is how do we do the repairs or rehabilitations of the wall well to honour your memories. We are busy developing two wall quarries to one bring visitors from prison and back to the prison. The wall stood for almost forty years and we would like to make sure that if anything is done it will stand for much longer than that.

Now we and the Department of Public Works, a government department which maintains some of the buildings on the island appointed professionals, now they developed the plans from an engineering point of view. Our response to them was we want the wall fixed as you remember it.

There are some of the ideas was to place the concrete structures out to the sea to break, reduce some of the force of the waves that crushed on the wall. After some discussion in the museum and the professionals we decided what we are proposing is an intervention into the wall where we can combine modern engineering with the stone masonry because that is what the parking of the stones is there.

Now this new government of ours has put some laws that we as the administration persons has to follow. So where we are today? If we are to prepare the wall, what we do in 2013 is not what happened in the early

1960s. So what we need to do is prepare the section that has been broken. And what is being proposed is to build a concrete wall lower than the wall and in the inside we will be fixing the wall to look as it was. So our exhibition unit will take memories that you have so that the visitors will be seeing how the wall was in the early 1960s. So I don't know I will try to answer questions you have about what we want to do. But the museums will appreciate any comments on what you are proposing.
Thank you.⁹⁶

These remarks highlighted the major problem that the project was facing: the restoration of the Stone Wall, an important feature in the history of the Island, was under threat. This was because the proposed engineering designs did not comply with the principles of conservation practice. The only way through which the Stone Wall could be properly restored was through reliance on the memories of those who constructed it during the years of apartheid imprisonment. The ex-political prisoners and their memories therefore could be an important resource in this restoration project. The proposed designs will be elaborated on and discussed in further chapters, here the focus is on the memory recovery process as Davis emphasized 'we want the wall fixed as you remember it'.

After the presentation by Davis on the designs of the proposed Stone Wall, the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group was allowed to take a 'site survey' around the quarry so as to determine the extent of the damage and be able to identify and remember other important spots and stories that would add meaning and aid interpretation of the site. While on site, the ex-political prisoners started to react to the presentation. There were a number of concerns from the ex-political prisoners on the proposed designs of the project. The discussions and

⁹⁶ See Stone Quarry Reference Group 0790, Tape 1B, 10/10/2003, Mayibuye Archives, University of the Western Cape Town; The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kasified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

conversations that followed were never short of acrimony, emotions and anger from the ex-political prisoners.⁹⁷

Mazabane Letsoko, an ex-prisoner who had served from 1963 to 1980 expressed his concern, ‘my worry is the concrete wall that are going to build, is it going to be natural as we built the wall? My worry is the naturality of the wall.’⁹⁸ Solomon Magapi Moetsi who served in the quarry in the years 1963 to 1973, shared similar sentiments, ‘I want us to agree on one important thing. A solid agreement, a very important, on the question of let us protect the original pattern we made over there’.⁹⁹ Melidin Pistoli, a prisoner from 1963 to 1978, was more vocal but instructive when he recalled how they would restore the wall when it was washed away. His advice was to reconstruct using the same stones and not introduce other materials. ‘And the wall which we built when we were here must be rebuilt to reflect the exact same way it was. Because there are now parts, which are badly, damaged. It should be started there because it was the same way even back then. We could keep rebuilding the damaged parts.’¹⁰⁰

Other ex-prisoners like Masiza Duru whose imprisonment was from 1964 to 1966, were concerned about the proposed design of the new wall how it could affect the setting of the site. Duru explained: ‘My idea is that the concrete wall to be built here should not be as near as all that .It should be a little bit far from here because we still want the naturality of this, you see?’¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Stone Quarry Reference Group 0790, Tape 1B.

⁹⁸ Stone Quarry Reference Group 0456, Tape 2A,10/10/2003, Mayibuye Archives, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town; The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kasified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

⁹⁹ Stone Quarry Reference Group 0456, Tape 2A.

¹⁰⁰ Stone Quarry Reference Group 0456, Tape 2A.

¹⁰¹ Stone Quarry Reference Group 0456, Tape 2A.

The use of the phrase ‘naturalness of the wall’ by the ex-prisoners was bordering around the concept of authenticity or historicity of the wall. Thus, in their view, the proposed engineering designs could not preserve the Stone Wall as it was during their time.

The same concern on maintaining what was ‘original’ was vented by two other ex-political prisoners Wongamo Ngqondela, who had been on the island from 1964 to 1973, and Raymond Masalo who served his sentence from 1964 to 1966. Wongamo Ngqondela retorted, ‘Would ...[it] no... [be] better for you to construct something almost the same as the wall?’¹⁰² Raymond Masalo provided some suggestions; ‘There should be a concrete wall built in front of the damaged wall to maintain the old one. I would also advise that the opening in the wall should be rehabilitated and strive to work it as when we worked on it so that when tourists come [they] should see the whole wall.’¹⁰³

It was therefore clear that during the discussions much of the concern from the ex-political prisoners with regard to the proposed designs by the DPW had to do with the concept of authenticity of the wall. More miscellaneous inputs from the ex-political prisoners had to do with the need to protect some of the historical fabric on the site during the reconstruction of the Stone Wall. Others were appealing for the reinstatement of the road at the top of the quarry. The ex-political prisoners also felt that the stones that were part of the washed Stone Wall should be the main materials for reconstruction of the new Stone Wall.

¹⁰² See Stone Quarry Reference Group 0456, Tape 2A, 10/10/2003, Mayibuye Archives, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town; The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kasified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

¹⁰³ Stone Quarry Reference Group 0456, Tape 2A.

Many memories flowed about the Stone Wall in the prisoners' lives. Stanley Magoba who was incarcerated on the island from 1963 to 1974 spoke of how he and others in 1964 constructed the Stone Wall:

The stone quarry is the bluestone, is the kind of the stone that we used to build the prison. When you see the prison walls with the bluestones it is the stone that came out of here. So in recent time this prison was built by us here from the stone. We had to quarry that out from special quarry because initially we had to build a dyke, to keep the sea out so that we could work on the stone. It took us about four to out five months and a good part of winter season and rain season. Because we could build up the dyke and Monday, Sunday, it rains, then it gets washed away. Then we start filling it up again with stone and sand while others are working on the quarry. Rebuilding the dyke was partly digging the rock and maintaining the dyke itself.¹⁰⁴

Magoba's comment provided an insight into how the prisoners built the Stone Wall. His mention of the duration in which they took to construct the wall, the frustration at the wall being washed repeatedly was a way to convey how the wall symbolizes their suffering and torture and therefore is a significant historical resource to regard with care during the project. Even though he did not mention how his account related to the proposed designs of the Stone Wall, I would argue that he wanted to stress the significance of the Stone Wall to the ex-political prisoners in the present times. Sean Field, drawing from Raphael Samuel, has argued that 'for the interviewee the first purpose is not to describe the past as it was or even as it was experienced but to confer to the past experience a certain meaning, a meaning which will contribute the meaning of the present'.¹⁰⁵ I find this assertion compatible with Stanley Magoba's account, which I suggest, was meant to stress the meaning of Stone Wall for the ex-political prisoners. This meaning, I further suggest, is that the Stone wall is a special monument of both their suffering

¹⁰⁴ Stone Quarry Reference Group 0456, Tape 2A.

¹⁰⁵ Field, *Oral history, Community and Displacement*, p.35.

and triumph. Therefore because of its historical importance all its conservation work must respect aspects of its history and what the Stone Wall symbolizes.

As a way of arguing for the preservation of the building materials, pattern and techniques of the previously washed Stone Wall, John Muhapa volunteered to demonstrate how they built the Stone Wall with the local materials. His demonstration and description as he was laying, piling and interlocking up the stones together was insightful and a spectacle:

Let me put this way. This place, initially it is a flat land. Stones were brought from that corner, one, one, one, one. No foundation was being done here. That is how they were placed then. As they keep on coming, the other side is the gap. Wheelbarrow comes and offload on the gap. And then, as they keep on placing the stones, the first ones are flat like this, the second row you slide it up a little bit. Then comes the wheelbarrow to load on top of this. You take another stone, you put it next to this one. Put sand, put a stone there to cover it up and to balance this one .Next thing you take another big piece of stone like this one put it here. Then the soil on top of it. Another piece of stone you put it here. It goes up and up just gradually.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ See Stone Quarry Reference Group 0456, Tape 2A, 10/10/2003, Mayibuye Archives, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town; The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kasified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.



Fig 2. John Muhapa Demonstrating the packing of Stones to raise the Stone Wall (Picture by RIM-2003).

James Ben, a prisoner from 1964 to 1970, described the kind of stones that were specifically used for building and maintaining the Stone Wall.

The stones that were used were the ones considered useless for the knyplyn¹⁰⁷ and useless for the bluestone that was desired. But we still dig through underneath then to reach the bottom part which is the bluestone, which was necessary for building. Which means these were the actual stones. Others are good for knyplyn and useless ones taken to the wall, and so on with some useless pieces to help elevate the wall to a necessary level.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ In the discourse of Robben Island knyplyn was the Bluestone or any quarried stone that was suitable for building purposes and it was skillfully cut before it could be used for construction. Sometimes that process of cutting could be referred to as knyplyn as a verb.

¹⁰⁸ See Stone Quarry Reference Group 0456, Tape 2A, 10/10/2003, Mayibuye Archives, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town; The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kasified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

It was emphasized by Zolire Keke, who had served his sentence from 1964 to 1975, that it was their experience and imagination and not certified engineering skills that made it possible for them to build the wall.

You see what became clear was the fact that people had observed that on previous occasions when they were trying to build the wall they would find at time the whole thing had been messed up by the sea. Now using their imagination, especially this man and other people, using their imaginations they explored the various methods of ensuring that the wall was going to be something, which would not be easily blown away by strong winds or by the sea waves. That is how the whole thing was imagined. Otherwise, they were using their imagination not necessarily the question of being certified engineers. There were no engineers, but it was really imagination which resulted to success of this.¹⁰⁹

In this way the ex-prisoners established their importance and their memories and experiences were meant to further contrast with experts who were proposing new designs.

After a lengthy dialogue and conversation relating to the Stone Wall, the talk switched to other memories that were wide in scope. Most of these memories that ‘crystalised and secreted’ themselves on this ‘site of memory’ can be categorized and itemised into seven themes. These are opening of the Bluestone Quarry, building of the Bluestone Quarry wall, division of labour on the Bluestone Quarry, information about the surrounding of the quarry and the fence from the prison, the prison conditions, working conditions at the Bluestone Quarry and personal stories both traumatic and comical.

¹⁰⁹ See Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003 Tape 14c RF 0842 , Mayibuye Archives , University of Western Cape, Cape Town; The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kasified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

On the discussions surrounding the opening of new stone quarry (Bluestone Quarry), the common narrative was that they moved from the old stone quarry (Jan van Riebeeck quarry) because the bluestone used for the building of the maximum prison was no longer available. In their recollection upon arrival on the new stone quarry, the site was a flat surface sometimes covered with water when the tides were high. In order to explore if bluestone was available for mining they had to remove the top soil.¹¹⁰ Jefta Masemola, who had worked on the quarry in 1978, recalled that there were no criteria in selecting who was to work on the quarry. According to Masemola, people were only selected into groups whilst standing in lines outside their sections.¹¹¹ Other prisoners like Peter Magano who had worked the quarry in 1964 when it was opened remembered that it was the warder who had discovered that there was blue stone in the surface, therefore prisoners had to start working. Some prisoners who were critically minded questioned the logic for the prison officials to open the quarry at the Bluestone Quarry. For Mahedera Nkosi, the prison authorities wanted them to die from the biting Benguella cold ocean current during winters at the Bluestone Quarry.¹¹²

Almost all the ex-political prisoners agreed that the new stone quarry, which is the Bluestone Quarry, was opened in 1963. The memory work was thus crucial in providing information about the quarry's history and methods of working. On organization of work, the Bluestone Quarry was well organized and systematic. This was because the prisoners were compartmentalized in various divisions of labour. Jefta Masemola who worked as a blacksmith

¹¹⁰ See Stone Quarry Reference Group 0456, Tape 2A, Mayibuye Archives, University of Western Cape, Cape Town; The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kasified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

¹¹¹ Stone Quarry Reference Group 0456, Tape 2A .

¹¹² Stone Quarry Reference Group 0456, Tape 2A.

by sharpening the tools for quarrying described the different divisions on Bluestone Quarry. According to his account, the boring spans were responsible for boring stones and most of them were the ones who were borers in the old quarry. Klep dressers were responsible for dressing the stones. Tou trek span had to pull the stones from the quarry. Those on lorry span rolled the dressed stones into the lorry for it to be used for building the prison. The block spans were processing stones into blocks.

Marcus Solomon who had served sentence from 1963 to 1974 described how they woke up in the morning all in file to work at the quarry. He vividly described how the bluestone was quarried and processed.

I remember we were about hundred fifty prisoners marching, all in one line to work early in the morning. We were going to dig up the rocks and some sand. That is the rock you see on the walls of our prison of Robben Island. We made the cement blocks which were inside of the rocks. We dug that rock, dressed that rock and put it into position. First, we started with breaking stones, making gravel, breaking stones with fourteen-pound hammers to make concrete.¹¹³

But there was more than method being described .The memory work on the site produced many accounts of the brutality of the warders and the harsh working environment, especially during winter. For those who worked in the 1970s, the warders Delpport and the Kleinhans brothers loomed large because of their draconian supervision and treatment. Masuku vividly remembered the Kleinhans brothers,

¹¹³ See Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003 Tape 14c RF 0842 , Mayibuye Archives , University of Western Cape, Cape Town.

Those two brothers were devils; they could not allow you, to go and help yourself. I remember someone refused to say *baas* and he had a running stomach, he had to help himself with his trousers on and those devils will be laughing saying ‘kyk hy kaak op sy broek’ (Look he is shiting himself in his trousers).¹¹⁴

During cold winters Delport, the senior warder on the quarry used to force the prisoners to face the direction of the cold wind so that they may catch the cold. Nape Matlala remembered this quite vividly.

As far as Delport is concerned, you see we were wearing short pants no underwears. Delport is a very cruel somebody. Now this place the weather changes now and again. He would put us up there knyplyn. When cold air comes from this side, we must face this side. If cold air comes from that side, we must face that side. Now you are sitting on a small stone like this. This whole cold air gets into you (pointing inside of the pants) .Then you are going to get sick. That is why many people got sick.¹¹⁵

Torture and hardship at Bluestone Quarry took many forms. For others it took the form of chipping stone to gravel and from gravel to dust. Those who were in the wheelbarrow group had to transport huge stones from one place to another on sand, which made it difficult for an old rusted wheelbarrow to move in the sand.¹¹⁶ Buyaphi recalled how brutally Delport the ‘beast’, because of failure to push the wheelbarrow, beat his fellow prisoner Khumalo:

We were over there near the wall. Buyaphi told me that he would not push the break my heart, because that was what we called the wheelbarrow, you know it was squeaky and hard to push in the sand. He showed me the blisters in his palms. Delport wanted him to still push the wheelbarrow. The devil saw that he could no longer make him push, he said let me give you a holiday for tomorrow. Delport crushed the blistered hands with the

¹¹⁴ See Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003 Tape 14c RF 0842 , Mayibuye Archives , University of Western Cape, Cape Town.

¹¹⁵ See Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003 Tape 14c RF 0842 , Mayibuye Archives , University of Western Cape, Cape Town ; The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kassified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

¹¹⁶ See Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003 Tape 14c RF 0842 , Mayibuye Archives , University of Western Cape, Cape Town; The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kassified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

shambook until Buyaphi cried like a baby. The following day he was on holiday he did not come because of the wounds.¹¹⁷

For some political prisoners, like Zwelonke, the Bluestone Quarry is synonymous with the Robben island prison. According to him that is where everything happened, he says, ‘the island was no other place but the quarry, not the cells, not the ugly vegetation, the quarry had become symbolical, the graduation center, torture and the island, suffering and the island and that was the Bluestone Quarry.’¹¹⁸ Mzube and Roto who worked the quarry in 1967 recalled Van der Berg who was a cruel doctor. He would not attend to sick prisoners hence they worked while ill and later died. Torture was being executed in collaboration with criminal prisoners. Indres Naidoo could not forget how his colleague Masombo broke his back due to cruelty of the warder as the result of beating while carrying a load of stones in a bag.¹¹⁹ Many of the ex-prisoners testified how they turned their misery into an opportunity. They were able to teach and educate each other while on the quarry and some even graduated with bachelors from the education on the quarry. Many still pay tribute to the quarry because it is where they learned the masonry skills, which helped them when they left the prison.¹²⁰ Thus, they could easily be employed in construction works due to experience and skills in dressing stones. Some were even able to point other notable ‘sons’ of the quarry who later became prominent in society like the current president Jacob Zuma.¹²¹

¹¹⁷ See Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003, Tape 14c, RF 0842 , Mayibuye Archives , University of Western Cape, Cape Town; The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kasified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

¹¹⁸ Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003, Tape 14c RF 0842.

¹¹⁹ Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003, Tape 14c, RF 0842.

¹²⁰ See Stone Quarry Reference Group 0807, Tape 2B,09/10/2003, Mayibuye Archives, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town; The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kasified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

¹²¹ See Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003, Tape 14c, RF 0842 , Mayibuye Archives , University of Western Cape, Cape Town .



Fig 3. RIM recording the memories of one of ex-political prisoners at Bluestone Quarry (Picture by RIM-2003).

Apart from the memory work and establishing the significance of the quarry, the ex-prisoners were also asked to recall some important surrounding features associated with the Bluestone Quarry. Many pointed to the trenches. Thus, in the early 1960s, they were forced to dig a trench from the prison to the quarry but it was closed within a short period. During that period, the warders used to patrol with dogs on top of the trench.¹²² Some recalled the open shed used for eating and were able to identify some of the rocks that they used for sitting and cooking. Others identified the holes that were bored into the ground by the chisels and the borers. They requested

¹²² See Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003 Tape 14c RF 0842 , Mayibuye Archives , University of Western Cape, Cape Town.

that these features be protected during the time of construction, as they were part of the story of Bluestone Quarry and the Stone Wall.¹²³

These discussions and site interviews were never short of laughter and hilarious moments. These transformed the moments of the ‘then and there’ of the past which was full of pain and torture to the ‘now and here’ of the present where they could laugh. For instance, Simuka joked about how he was stripped naked during winter and made to lie on the beach. He froze up until he felt nothing when he pinched himself! Maphanga was suffering from flu while working on the quarry. The warders forced him to stand in the cold waters for long time. According to him, when he came out the flu was cured! It is important to consider why stories are told the way they are. Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie has observed in her work on forced removals that interviewees often told jokes as a way of relieving some of the stresses and pain when telling stories and to retain their dignity in some of those humiliating accounts.¹²⁴ This I suggest could be explained as the motive of jokes during the ex-political prisoners during the project.

On the last day of the site interviews, the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group erected a small memorial where they demonstrated how they erected the wall, the materials they used and the packing and interlocking techniques of the materials.¹²⁵ At this moment, I would like to return to the crucial questions posed earlier on at the outset of this section drawing from Sean Field. First is, ‘how did imagining memories create and frame the telling of the stories within oral history

¹²³ See Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003 Tape 14c RF 0842 , Mayibuye Archives , University of Western Cape, CapeTown.

¹²⁴ U.Dhupelia-Mesthrie, ‘Dispossession and Memory: The Black River Community of Cape Town’, *Oral History* (2000) , p.42.

¹²⁵ See Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003 Tape 14c RF 0842 , Mayibuye Archives , University of Western Cape, Cape Town.

dialogues?’ Philosophical as this question sounds I think in the case of the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group it was noted that each person wanted his memories to be heard and this produced some sense of competition among them as to who must speak first. Again, everyone wanted to tell and make his experiences livelier, touching and more moving than his colleague. For me I find this to have worked to the advantage of the project because it made the ex-political prisoners reveal more as far as issues of intangible heritage were concerned in relation to the project. Furthermore memories were produced in a group context as opposed to individual one to one sessions and this dynamic had an important influence on the production of narratives.

I wish also to draw on the notion of ‘willingness to remember’ that Pierre Nora has put forward in his work. He questions who has the ‘willingness to remember’ in an oral history interview.¹²⁶ Is it the oral historian, the institution sponsoring the project or the interviewee? Whoever is responsible for ‘willingness to remember’ shapes the memory and the narratives. I would like to argue that the ‘willingness to remember’ rested in the hands of the former prisoners. This is because the ex-political prisoners found the project as the platform on which they could imprint their names on the history of Robben Island and more importantly the Bluestone Quarry. A look at David Mmutle’s response to why he had come for the exercise is telling, ‘...that we should face reality and tell the truth, the history of Robben Island is distorted. It started in 1964 but I was the 496th prisoner in 1963. They do not say anything about me. They cannot start our history in 1964 with the Rivonia trial. I was here, I was the 496 prisoner.’¹²⁷ I therefore argue that such enthusiasm and motivation to correct the history had a role to play in how they constructed their

¹²⁶ Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’, p.19.

¹²⁷ See Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003 Tape 14c RF 0842, Mayibuye Archives, University of Western Cape, Cape Town.

memories and framed the narratives during the project. Again, most crucially for the project, the ‘willingness to remember’ was also sparked off by the possibilities that histories could be erased if the proposed designs went ahead.

The second question is what history or histories can be constructed from this oral history methodology through the memories and stories of the ex-political prisoners of Bluestone Quarry Reference Group? A response to such a question would be that through the oral history research and the memories of the ex-political prisoners it was apparent and clear that the Stone Wall was built by the prisoners using locally available materials with no engineering instructions. It was also understood that the Stone Wall and the Bluestone Quarry were emblematic of the suffering and torture that the ex-political prisoners had endured. Importantly for the project, it was clear that the ex-prisoners through their rejection of some proposed interventions to the wall wanted the designs of the Stone Wall to be reworked in order to preserve history of the site and what the site symbolised. The ex-prisoners posited themselves as the ‘experts’ thus dislodging the role of the engineers who lacked history and memory. History was thus restored to the site by the memory work.

The third question is how the former prisoners constructed emotional ties to the landscape of the Bluestone Quarry and established a sense of connectedness to the site. I would like to refer to the emotional expressions of anger, anguish and dismay that the ex-political prisoners displayed on some occasions during the interviews. These arose out of their reaction to the proposed professional designs. On the expression of these emotional traits, Sean Field working with memories of the older residents of Langa in Cape Town noted that often interviewees

constructed emotional ties to a place or landscape through expressions in various ways of emotional connection to certain sites of memory in Langa.¹²⁸ Drawing from Field's analysis, I would like to argue that the expressions of anger and anguish by the ex-political prisoners in relation to the Stone Wall was an apparent signifier of their sense of emotional ties and sense of connectedness to the Bluestone Quarry site and its history which they felt was at stake because of the proposed designs. It was this sense of connectedness therefore that conveys the symbolic meaning of Bluestone Quarry and Stone Wall to the former prisoners.

It is important to highlight that confusion and disagreements emerged amongst the ex-political prisoners on how they remembered the characteristics, and nature of the earlier Stone Wall as each of them gave experiences and memories of the wall in relation to the specific time that they worked on the quarry. This was owing to different times that they served on the quarry. Thus, different time spaces led to different memories of the wall.

Briefly, I would like to explain the importance and effect of the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group to the project. The memories, which at this stage I would refer to as the intangible heritage, proved to be valuable for decision making at various levels of the project. Firstly, it was this intangible heritage gathered through oral history that influenced what designs should be adopted for the restoration of the wall (see chapters 2, 3 and 4). Secondly, it was through this knowledge of intangible heritage of the site as provided by the group that allowed the project to identify what aspects of historical importance ought to be conserved and protected on the site during the project in order to maintain the integrity of the site. In the next chapters, it will also be seen that the subsequent surveys and basic assessments that were conducted on the site as part

¹²⁸ Field, *Oral history, Community and Displacement*, p.111.

of the ongoing consultation for the project relied considerably on the oral history evidence from the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group. This contributed in making informed decisions on the site as far as issues of intangible heritage were concerned. The Edward Matenga Survey and the Ron Viney survey are such examples that relied on the product of Bluestone Quarry Reference Group.

While memory is an elusive changing creature, RIM drew on the reference group as experts and utilized the process for knowledge generation. Scholars like Joan Scott have pointed to how experience is a construct and cannot be regarded as real. Nora too has pointed to memory being construct and product of mediation.¹²⁹ As opposed to the propensity of academic historians to interrogate oral history and memory production, in heritage and, specifically at Robben Island, oral history and memory have a functional use in conservation management.

The Bluestone Quarry Reference Group, therefore, proved to be an essential resource for research and memorial processes within the Bluestone Quarry precinct. The ex-political prisoners' memories contributed to understanding and interpretation of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage on the site and in the long run helped the entire institution to make informed interventions on the site. Of significance is the fact that some of the engineering plans that were initially proposed were modified to address the concerns as raised by the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group (see chapter 4). Thus, the oral histories and the memories had a profound bearing on the project.

¹²⁹ See J W. Scott, 'Experience' in Judith Butler and Joan W Scott(eds.) *Feminists Theorise the Political* (London, Routledge:1998); P. Nora, 'Between Memory and History', *Representations*, Vol.26, 2.

As might have been observed in this chapter the ex-political prisoners had issues with the designs as far as authenticity was concerned. What is authenticity and why was this an issue during the project? The next chapter addresses these questions.

CHAPTER 2

RESTORATION AND THE DISCOURSE ON AUTHENTICITY AND INTEGRITY OF THE STONE WALL

INTRODUCTION;

When the project on the restoration of the Stone Wall at Bluestone Quarry took ground in 2002, there had been a series of negotiations, discussions and consultation processes. These consultation processes were shaping the project at each turn until matters were resolved in 2014. As a process of heritage production on the site, the restoration project involved ‘disparate constituencies, interests, goals and perspectives’ that produced ‘debates, tensions, collaborations, contests and conflicts of many sorts at many levels....’ This situation is what Karp and others have referred to as ‘museum frictions.’¹³⁰ Adapting their line of thinking in the context of this thesis, I would like to suggest calling the contests that emerged during the project as ‘conservation frictions’.

The stakeholders that were involved in these ‘conservation frictions’ during consultative processes of the project were as diverse as their interests demanded. These stakeholders were categorized into primary, internal and external. The primary stakeholders were the ex-political prisoners. This is because Robben Island is a place of memory and it was a ‘beneficiation’ to them that the project was meant to keep their memories alive.¹³¹ The ex-political prisoners, as discussed in the preceding chapter, also contributed in informing, through their memory, how the

¹³⁰ I.Karp, *et al. Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p.2.

¹³¹ Interview with Mr Sabelo, Environmental Heritage Management Officer with RIM on 14 April 2015 at Robben Island.

site used to look like when it came to conceptualization of the project. The internal stakeholders of the project comprised of the research unit in the heritage department of RIM and the Built Environment Unit. The external stakeholders included SAHRA but also the Department of Environmental Affairs especially the component responsible for integrated coastal management and Cape Nature, which is responsible for the conservation of nature within the province of the Western Cape together with its affiliates. The latter included Bird Life South Africa, South African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB) and Earth Watch because of their special interest in the African penguin.¹³²

SAHRA was one of the most significant stakeholders. SAHRA's involvement was because it is a custodian of the site and it is empowered in terms of the South African Heritage Act to ensure that there is no development project implemented without an understanding of the conceptual document, and it is responsible for issuing permits as far as heritage is concerned.¹³³ The Department of Public Works had a role to play because by law, it is responsible for maintenance of any government and national asset and therefore it was the implementing agent in terms of the site maintenance.¹³⁴ Finally, RIM and the Department of Arts and Culture were the funders of the project.

In the course of discussions, the contestations that emerged prominently were about issues of authenticity, integrity, cultural significance and natural significance of the site. This chapter

¹³² Interview with Mr Sabelo, Environmental Heritage Management Officer with RIM on 14 April 2015 at Robben Island.

¹³³ Interview with Mr Sabel, 14 April 2015 at Robben Island.

¹³⁴ Interview with Mr Sabel, 14 April 2015 at Robben Island.

focuses on the issue of authenticity during the project while tensions around the cultural and natural significance of the site are addressed in the next chapter. This chapter discusses the concerns that were raised by the Edward Matenga report, SAHRA, World Heritage Committee, ex-political prisoners and the contracted heritage specialist of a heritage consultant group Ad Astra Festina, Ron Viney. These concerns were on how the proposed engineering plans for the restoration of the Stone Wall fell far short in addressing the important aspects of authenticity and integrity of the site as required in conservation management principles of heritage sites.

The central argument that I advance in this chapter is that in restoration projects of cultural heritage resources it is difficult and sometimes impossible to fully meet the demands of authenticity of the fabric during the project. As a result, it is the ahistorical authenticity as opposed to absolute/objective authenticity that is always achieved. Thus the quest for returning to the original historical form of the fabric during restoration projects is an illusion that mostly evades heritage practice. This was evident during the Stone Wall project when the terms restoration, reconstruction, rehabilitation were considered in trying to bring back the fabric to its former original form. Through the proposed addition of new materials to the original fabric of the Stone Wall, these methodologies betrayed the whole essence of what authenticity is all about.

To put the discussion into focus and perspective the first section of the chapter dwells on the discourse of authenticity in conservation of heritage sites. The second section focuses on the proposed restoration plans of the Stone Wall and the debates that emerged in relation to authenticity. The third section attempts to link the discourse of authenticity and the Stone Wall in a critical discussion. Finally, the chapter concludes with an argument that as far as the project

was concerned it was not possible to attain full historical or absolute authenticity if the methodologies of rehabilitation, reconstruction or even restoration itself can be evaluated critically.

Authenticity and Integrity in Cultural Heritage Resource Management

The discourses on authenticity and integrity have always been at the center of any project dealing with conservation of a cultural heritage resource since the Venice charter of ICOMOS in 1964 and the UNESCO's World Heritage Convention in 1972. Even though these concepts have been variously defined, the underlying meanings are the same. Herb Stovel has provided an understanding of authenticity as being 'the ability of a property to convey significance over time.'¹³⁵ The Nara Document on Authenticity, which was drafted by heritage experts that had convened to revise the Venice charter's definition of authenticity in Japan's ancient city of Nara, has a more simplified understanding of what authenticity is. The document construed authenticity as 'a measure of the degree to which the values of heritage property may be understood to be truthfully, genuinely and credibly expressed by the attributes carrying the values.'¹³⁶

At the heart of the concept of authenticity is the essential consideration that there should be no doubt as to whether it is the original site or structure and in the case of the structure that it represents original material and workmanship. Authenticity is therefore a crucial aspect in the assessment of heritage resources and, generally speaking, authenticity is ascribed to a heritage

¹³⁵ S. Herb, 'Effective Use of Authenticity and Integrity As World Heritage Qualifying Condition', *City and Time*, 2(3), p.23.

¹³⁶ See the Nara Document On Authenticity ,<http://whc.unesco.org/events/gvt-zimbabwe/nara.htm>

resource that is materially original or genuine as it was constructed and as it has aged and weathered in time.¹³⁷

Benard Feilden and Jukka Jokilehto have outlined the different aspects of authenticity that must be observed and respected when conducting any form of repair or restoration on the cultural heritage resource. These aspects are authenticity in material, authenticity in workmanship, authenticity in design and authenticity in setting. Together they have argued that any treatment that is planned for a monument or sites should respect these criteria.¹³⁸

The notion of authenticity in material has to do with ‘evidence on original building material, historical stratigraphy, evidence and marks made by impact of significant phases in history and the process of ageing (patina of age).’¹³⁹ The aim of any treatment to the historic fabric in relation to authenticity in material therefore has to be ‘to respect historic material, to distinguish new material from the historic so as not to be fake or to mislead the observer. And ‘in historic areas, the material should be understood as referring to the physical structures and the fabric to which the area consists.’¹⁴⁰ Feilden and Jokilehto have therefore suggested that meeting authenticity in material, maintenance and conservation of material substance should be related to periods of construction. They have further argued that ‘in historic areas this would entail maintaining the historic fabric, and avoiding replacement of even the oldest structures so far as these form the historical continuity of the area.’¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ S.Jones and T.Yarrow, ‘Crafting Authenticity, An Ethnography of Conservation Practice’, *Material Culture*, Vol.8(1), p.17.

¹³⁸ Feilden and Jokilehto, *Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Sites* (Rome: ICCROM, 1998), p.66.

¹³⁹ Feilden and Jokilehto, *Management Guidelines*, p.66.

¹⁴⁰ Feilden and Jokilehto, *Management Guidelines*, p.67.

¹⁴¹ Feilden and Jokilehto, *Management Guidelines*, p.68.

The aspect of authenticity in workmanship addresses the retention of the evidence in a fabric that reveals signs of original building technology and techniques. Any form of conservation activity therefore has to respect the evidence of original building techniques and structural systems.

Feilden and Jokilehto have asserted that only conservation and maintenance of original materials and structures with creation of harmony between repairs and eventual new parts by using traditional workmanship and techniques can pass the test on authenticity in workmanship.¹⁴²

Authenticity in design is particularly concerned with ‘securing the original artistic, architectural and engineering design of the heritage resource.’ All maintenance work therefore must be tailored ‘to retain the design conception as expressed and documented in the historic forms of the original structure, architecture, urban or rural complex.’¹⁴³ The last test of authenticity deals with authenticity in setting. This is more focused on the evidence of the setting of the resource in relation to the periods of construction.

Another key issue in the identification, definition and conservation of a heritage resource is certainly its integrity. According to the world heritage operation guidelines of 2005, integrity is ‘the measure of wholeness and intactness of the natural/cultural heritage’.¹⁴⁴ Herb Stovel has defined integrity as the ability of a property to secure or sustain its significance over time.¹⁴⁵ In simple terms, integrity addresses the questions; ‘are all elements necessary to tell fully the story

¹⁴² Feilden and Jokilehto, *Management Guidelines*, p.69.

¹⁴³ Feilden and Jokilehto, *Management Guidelines*, p.67.

¹⁴⁴ Feilden and Jokilehto, *Management Guidelines*, p.67.

¹⁴⁵ Herb, ‘Effective Use of Authenticity and Integrity’, p.19.

of the site? Is the cultural property of sufficient size to hold all features and processes necessary to convey significance?’¹⁴⁶

The challenge therefore for heritage practitioners, particularly those preoccupied with conservation of cultural heritage resources is how to retain the past that is embodied by buildings, sites, and monuments while interventions necessary for their preservation require material change in the present? This situation can easily be related to the restoration of the Stone Wall in terms of the proposals for restoration that were suggested by DPW and the subsequent rejection of such proposals by the ex-political prisoners (as has been partly seen in the previous chapter), SAHRA and the Matenga report. This conundrum has prompted some heritage scholars and experts to wage wars of criticism against the conventional thinking behind the discourse of authenticity in conservation practice. These criticisms are worth exploring before I move to discussion of the proposals of restoration by DPW in the context of authenticity as argued by the stakeholders.

S. Jones and T. Yarrow have outlined two approaches to authenticity: the objectivist or absolute approach to authenticity and the constructivist approach. They argue that those with an objectivist approach look for the ‘original’ or ‘genuine’ restoration of the element. This is usually associated with the definitions of experts concerning objects or elements as authentic.¹⁴⁷ Those who espouse constructivist authenticity argue that what is understood as ‘real’ or in this case authentic is the result of interpretations and constructions. This means that ‘authenticity of

¹⁴⁶ Herb, ‘Effective Use of Authenticity and Integrity’, p.19.

¹⁴⁷ Jones and Yarrow, ‘Crafting Authenticity’, p.4.

an object is established within inter-subjective communication, negotiated and projected on the object.’¹⁴⁸

Ning Wang has shown that, in earlier periods, the objective of restoration was the objective recovery of the original condition. However today it is more usual to let a historic building show the changes it has undergone and the parts that have been added or altered over the years are left intact. For Ning Wang therefore the search for authenticity is not confined to the period in which the building or artefact was constructed but involves everything that happened to the building or artefact afterwards. This is what he refers to as ahistorical authenticity as opposed to historical authenticity. He strongly asserts that ‘the only complication that is often ignored is that most objects, natural species, landscapes and folkways have no clear starting point being original’. Therefore, the only suitable authenticity that must be sought is ahistorical authenticity or progressive authenticity and not historical authenticity.¹⁴⁹

Other scholars have also argued in a similar tone proposing that authenticity analysis is a relative concept and due recognition should be given to progressive authenticity. At the end, conservation emerges as an important sphere through which buildings, sites, and cultural heritage are actively made and remade. For example, Endsor Wilson similarly highlights ‘how practices of maintenance and repair stabilize St Anne’s Church in Manchester while simultaneously transforming its original form and fabric.’¹⁵⁰ Some still assert that while retention of evidence and authenticity is emphasized, policies must balance this overriding ideal with recognition that

¹⁴⁸ Jones and Yarrow, ‘Crafting Authenticity,’ p.6.

¹⁴⁹ Ning Wang in Jones and Yarrow, ‘Crafting Authenticity’, p.7.

¹⁵⁰ Jones and Yarrow, ‘Crafting Authenticity’, p.8.

some changes may be unavoidable or even desirable.¹⁵¹ One might draw examples from the case of the restoration of Hostel 33 at Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum to illustrate this.

In their ethnographic discussion on the restoration of the hostel 33 to become Hostel 33 as a museum site, Murray and Witz have highlighted the challenges to authenticity that the project encountered. There was a dilemma as to which time period they should adopt in the history of the hostel 33 that would appropriately represent the authentic history of the fabric for museum purposes. They commented:

There were intense debates around the representational possibilities for the space among the museum board members. Some proposed a going back to a time when the hostels were policed as male only zones; others wanted to depict the 1980s when women and children defied the influx control laws and came to live in the hostels :while a third suggestion was to portray a more comprehensive image from the 1960s to the present.¹⁵²

Murray and Witz seem to admit the difficulty in meeting authenticity in its narrow sense (in objectivist/historical approach) when they assert that although in the proposal for funding that was submitted to the United States Ambassadors Fund it was claimed that careful attention would be paid to securing the structure while ‘preserving a sense of the very conditions of poverty that it represent’, how this would be achieved remained an immense worry. ‘Rather than making old, the movement of hostel 33 to a museum involved a process of rehabilitating and re-inhabiting the site.’¹⁵³ Thus the restoration involved removing the historical objects that were dilapidated and replacing them with new ones that were strong. The activities comprised ‘masonry work to treat and repair walls that were damp and rebuild sections of a wall that were

¹⁵¹ Jones and Yarrow, ‘Crafting Authenticity’, p.11.

¹⁵² Murray and Witz, *Hostels, Homes, Museum*, p.28.

¹⁵³ Murray and Witz, *Hostels, Homes, Museum*, p.29.

collapsing, the replacement of broken beams which appeared to be rotten as result of leaks.’ They further argued that the philosophy of rehabilitation that guided them was ‘the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural and architectural values.’

Murray and Witz expressly admit the difficulty in meeting authenticity when they further add, ‘the aim was not to create an illusion of authenticity but to intervene as little as possible in the existing structure, make repairs where necessary and make it completely apparent where there had been recent interventions.’¹⁵⁴ For them ‘stabilisation and restoration’ were key principles of the restoration. In the end, what was achieved with Hostel 33 was constructive authenticity as opposed to the much-sought objectivist authenticity. It was also progressive/ahistorical authenticity and not the much-yearned for historical authenticity.

The foregoing discussion on authenticity therefore demonstrates that even though in conventional heritage discourse the concept of authenticity is highly essentialised some have attempted to challenge its essentialised notions and have contributed to how this issue should be dealt with in specific situations of cultural heritage management. This approach has some bearings on the Stone Wall restoration project. I argue that it was not possible as some stakeholders demanded for the designs during the restoration of the Stone Wall to fully meet authenticity in an objectivist or historical sense . That would have been an illusion, as there was need to stabilize and reinforce the wall, which entailed addition of new strong building materials and perhaps techniques to protect the Stone Wall from the strong elements of the sea.

¹⁵⁴ Murray and Witz, *Hostels, Homes, Museum* , p.33.

Proposed Designs, Public Participation and Issues on Authenticity of the Stone Wall

As explained earlier in the thesis, the destruction of the middle section of the wall by the sea waves in 2001 had rendered the fabric a ‘sensitive heritage resource’ that needed urgent conservation attention. DPW was therefore contracted by RIM to facilitate the restoration of the Stone Wall. In what appeared to be a quick and hasty response to the situation, in 2001, large concrete cubes were placed in line along the shore to absorb the force of the sea waves. However according to the sources, this plan was not completed, as the blocks did not span the entire sea front of the wall.¹⁵⁵ In 2002, more plans with options for selection were then suggested. These included the placement of offshore dollosse structures, essentially as it was the case with the concrete in an earlier plan, except that dollosse are concrete structures of an irregular shape.¹⁵⁶ Another option was to erect a protective concrete wall between the quarry and the sea. An alternative to this was the mass concrete integrated with the wall on the side. The final option was a cement stabilized sand fill.¹⁵⁷ These remedial actions, as proposed by the engineers, were informed by an understanding of the strength of the materials and proposed structures to withstand the harsh impact of the sea. These plans were to be presented to other stakeholders like the ex-political prisoners.

However, in 2003, when these plans were first revealed to the ex-political prisoners who were invited as part of the stakeholders in the project, as already described in the preceding chapter, there were concerns about authenticity.

¹⁵⁵ R. Viney . ‘RIM Quarries and Robert Sobokwe Complex Final Report’, File 9/2/018/0004, SAHRA Archives, Cape Town (Unpublished, 2011), p.30.

¹⁵⁶ R. Viney . ‘RIM Quarries’, p.32.

¹⁵⁷ R. Viney . ‘RIM Quarries’, p.35.

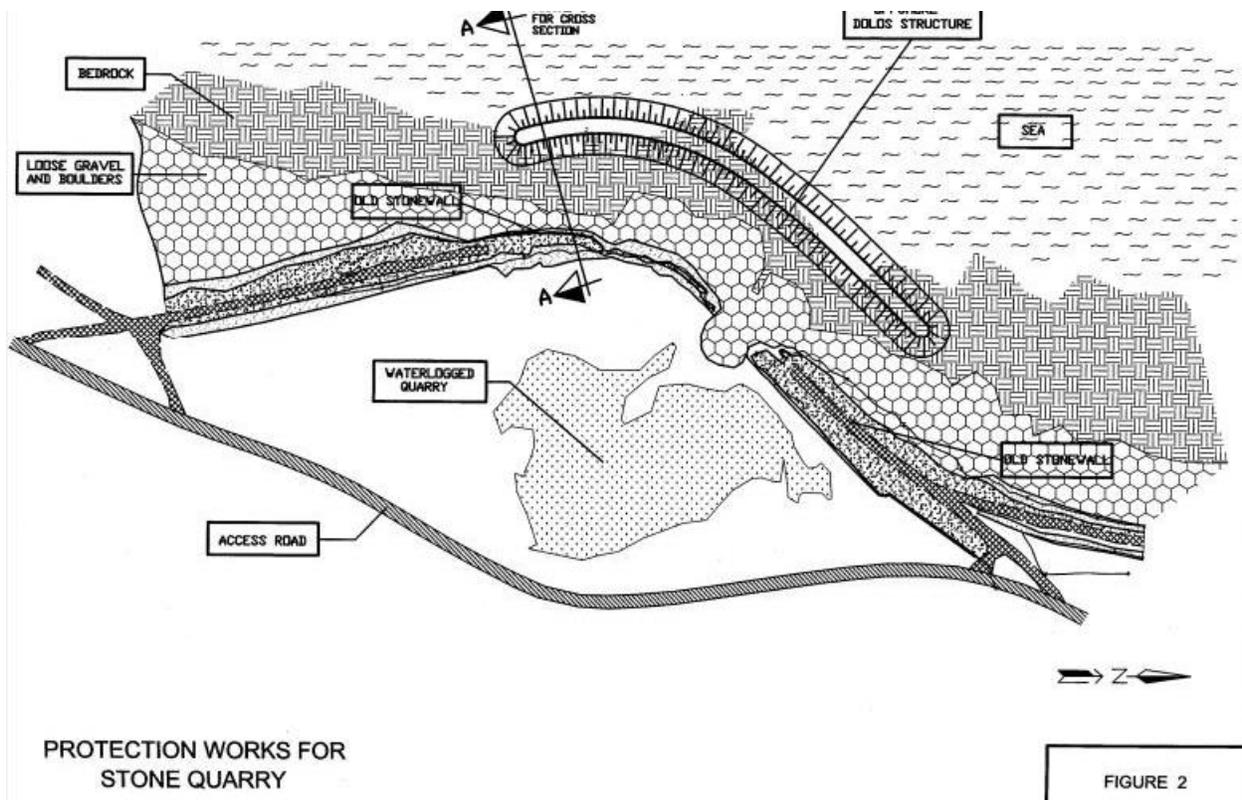


Fig.4 showing the position of the proposed Dolosse Structure (Picture by WSP-2013).

As part of ongoing process of public participation and consultations of the project, RIM sought the assistance of Edward Matenga to carry an independent survey on the site in 2004. Matenga's biography positioned him as an expert in the field. He is a Zimbabwean archaeologist who specializes in conservation and management of archaeological sites and is widely consulted on a number of conservation projects to do with restoration of heritage sites that are identified with archaeological relics. Among his credentials, he has worked with the restoration of the dry Stone Walls of Great Zimbabwe. Matenga's task was to provide the Conservation Condition¹⁵⁸ of the

¹⁵⁸ Conservation Condition sometimes called Condition of Conservation is a technical term in heritage conservation management that implies an assessment of the condition of the heritage resource for purposes of informed decisions and activities meant for its conservation.

site. Specifically, he was tasked to provide a description of the Stone Wall in terms of its materials, technologies and techniques of building by the ex-political prisoners, identify the continuous and perceived threats to the Stone Wall and provide remedial actions that would assist and inform the restoration project. It is important to mention that Matenga's survey drew on some of the intangible aspects from the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group to complement his archaeological survey and heritage interpretation of the site.

According to Matenga's report, the predominant building material was slate, a sedimentary rock. The type of slate that was used for the construction of the wall seemed to have come from varying degrees of strength and hence durability. 'Some blocks were brittle and others of lower grade that disintegrated into grains, yet others could weather into brown powder.' Some blocks split into thin parallel sheets. His report further revealed that 'material decomposition was an important cause of wall failure and that without careful selection slate was not the suitable material for the construction of the dyke against the seawater.'¹⁵⁹

The building technique was simply packing sand, slate grit and seashells in the voids between the face building blocks. In his assessment, the loose materials for the most part formed the heart or core of the wall. 'As no through stones or large-tie stones appeared to have been used as binders, the placement of the sand/grit between the two wall faces presented the engineering flaw. The two faces of the wall were therefore too independent to retain a heap of sand /grit and shells lodged in between them.' If water therefore penetrated the wall due to tidal action it was likely to wash down the sand and other smaller stones, thus creating voids in the structure which

¹⁵⁹ E. Matenga, 'Proposals for the Conservation of a Dry Stone Wall at the Blue Stone Quarry on Robben Island', File 9/2/018/0004, SAHRA Archives, Cape Town(Unpublished Report, 2004), p.10.

could cause the wall to ‘settle’, sink or sometimes to bulge. He noted that movements of this kind would usually result in a collapse. He observed that ‘it was not therefore surprising the entire north side of the wall facing towards the sea crumbled with the smaller materials being washed away and a deposit of medium sized stones remaining along the shore.’¹⁶⁰

On identification of specific threats to the wall, he observed that ‘the wall was experiencing progressive collapse and since the structure of its kind in which no mortar was used a disturbance in one area was likely to have a domino effect on adjacent areas.’ Marine action was identified as one major threat to the wall. He observed that even before the September 2001 destruction, the Stone Wall had been subjected to intense and violent actions of the sea. He reported that ‘even when the seaside of the Stone Wall was rehabilitated it would continue to be subjected to the abrasive action of the sea’. He advised that long-term observation and evaluation of marine action on the wall was therefore required.¹⁶¹

Influence of vegetation was reported to be among the threats to the condition of the Stone Wall. Matenga found that an indigenous succulent creeper, *Messmbryanthemum crystallium* commonly known as the ice plan was growing on the walls. This plant forms a mat or carpet cover, ‘which improves moisture retention in the walls particularly during the wet season. The mat cover also presents with obstructed visibility of the walls.’ He advised that its impact on conservation should be studied further. Human intervention was also part of the threat. He found that the table of the Stone Wall was used at the time as a walkway. Vehicles also used to drive

¹⁶⁰ Matenga, p.10.

¹⁶¹ Matenga, p.12.

along the top of the Stone Wall. He advised that it should be considered that the wall was too fragile to be used for those purposes. The last threat was that of fauna. He advised that the



Fig 5. The breached middle section of the Stone Wall at Bluestone Quarry (Picture by RIM-2013).

impact of a large population of gulls that use the quarry for nesting and breeding should be assessed. The guano (droppings) deposited on the walls did not only exude an unpleasant smell, it was acidic and the effects of resultant chemical reactions were yet to be determined by

scientific research. Again, he reported that the penguins also nest in the area and the rabbits open burrows in the sand and into the walls.¹⁶²

What was then the relevance of Matenga's report in terms of addressing issues of authenticity and integrity of the site, a challenge that was presented by the proposed engineering designs of DPW? After assessing the suggested plans by DPW, he was of the opinion that it was necessary to comply with international guidelines adopted by the UNESCO World Heritage Center and affiliated organisations such as ICOMOS on the treatment of places of heritage significance. Specific reference was made to the The Australia ICOMOS Charter for places of cultural significance, also called the Burra Charter (1979). He then argued that in view of the guidelines offered in these legal instruments of conservation practice, the proposed designs by DPW if considered, would fundamentally affect the authenticity and integrity of the site. He therefore proposed that there should be an application of local compatible materials in the rehabilitation of the wall, on condition that such repair work was 'reversible'.¹⁶³

As to further remedial actions for the Stone Wall, he suggested fourteen recommendations. Six of these have some significance for the argument made in this chapter. He suggested the construction of a stabilizing seaside façade wall using durable high-grade slate. With this, the wall would be integrated with what remained in situ of the original wall so that they would become an organic structure. The wall was to be founded on bedrock that will serve as the foundation. Large-sized blocks of slate that could sufficiently resist the action of the waves had to be laid in the bottom sections and small sections laid in the upper sections of the wall. The

¹⁶² Matenga, p.14.

¹⁶³ Matenga, p.15.

wall had to be constructed with a strong batter to give it stability. The face of the wall should resemble as much as possible that of the quarry side façade. Ex-political prisoners who worked in the quarry had to be involved in the rehabilitation programme.¹⁶⁴

I will return later to the implications of these recommendations and show whether authenticity when defined in terms of objectivist approach or historical approach was attainable with these recommendations. The next section will look at the reaction of other stakeholders in the project to the engineering plans as far as issues of authenticity and integrity were concerned.

While RIM was consulting with experts like Matenga and the ex-political prisoners on the restoration of the Stone Wall, it was also involved in discussion with another significant stakeholder of the project, SAHRA. There had been some correspondence between DPW and SAHRA regarding the designs of the Stone Wall. These dealt mostly with the responses of SAHRA's ad hoc permit committee to RIM and DPW. RIM and DPW had applied to SAHRA for permission to be granted so that the reconstruction of the Stone Wall should commence. On 9 June 2004, DPW and RIM had submitted, as part of the application, the design proposal for the restoration. According to sources, this first design proposal was to 'integrate mass concrete with the old Stone Wall.'¹⁶⁵ However, SAHRA rejected this submission. The reasons that the permit committee raised for the objection were bordering around issues of authenticity, significance of the site and respect of memory of the ex-political prisoners. A letter dated 31 August 2004, from Beverly Crouts, Provincial Manager of Western Cape signing for the ad hoc

¹⁶⁴ E. Matenga, 'Proposals for the Conservation of a Dry Stone Wall at the Blue Stone Quarry on Robben Island', File 9/2/018/0004, SAHRA Archives, Cape Town (Unpublished Report, 2004), p.15.

¹⁶⁵ See WSP & Ad Astra Festina, RIM Bluestone Quarry Identification and Assessment of Previous Studies and SAHRA Decisions, File 9/2/018/0004, SAHRA Archives, Cape Town (Unpublished Report, 2013), p.1.

permit committee of SAHRA to Chief Executive Officer of RIM rejected the DPW and RIM design proposal,

Thank you for your submission dated 9 June 2004. The SAHRA ad hoc Council Permit Committee reviewed your application on 12 August 2004 at the meeting held at the SAHRA Cape Town Office. The committee decided the following;

The most suitable heritage principle in the treatment of this heritage was deliberated by the committee. The general feeling was that the document did not investigate all the options available in the treatment of this heritage. This is whether rebuilding of the wall should be in the form of reconstruction of the original wall and, if the structural requirements should be dealt with separately from those issues pertaining to memory? In the opinion of the committee, the document presented did not distinguish between the various principle issues, making it difficult to make an informed decision.

To this end, the Committee advises that the other options, based on differing conservation principles, be submitted to SAHRA to enable the committee to fully apply their minds to the matter.¹⁶⁶

From this letter, it is easy for one to comprehend that issues of memory and construction of the wall were not fully addressed in the design proposal. And issues of memory have implications on originality and authenticity of the fabric when it comes to restoration.

With reference to this letter, I would like to highlight and clarify some important points with regard to my argumentation in this thesis before I proceed further in this chapter.

¹⁶⁶ See Letter to Robben Island Museum, titled 'Proposals for the Conservation of Dry Stone Wall at the Bluestone Quarry', ref. 9/2/018/4, File 8, 18 January 2006, SHARA Archives, Cape Town (Unpublished).

This letter and correspondence was in 2004 after the Bluestone Reference Group project in 2003. One may therefore be lured to be under the impression that the memories and the wishes of the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group were neglected and totally ignored. However as I have argued in the concluding paragraph of the preceding chapter the memories of the ex-political prisoners were invaluable in informing the decisions of the designs at the later stages in the continued consultations on the project.

Again, the contribution of the ex-political prisoners in the subsequent participatory meetings will show how they influenced the choice of the appropriate design for restoration. This letter, for me, therefore suggests that there was continuous designing and redesigning in an attempt to meet authenticity.

At another meeting of the SAHRA ad hoc permit committee held on 4 November 2005, a similar design proposal to integrate mass concrete with the old Stone Wall was rejected. Inter alia, it was felt that the hard mass concrete would not be compatible with the softer materials of the wall. Furthermore, the committee decided that any intervention should be done through the ceremonial repacking of the stones by ex-political prisoners or their descendants and not by permanent stabilization techniques. The committee was emphatic that no rebuilding or any other rehabilitation should take place other than as a ceremonial act.¹⁶⁷ Beverly Crouts informed the Chief Executive Officer of RIM on 18 January 2006:

The committee was of the opinion that the proposed rebuilding and the strengthening of the wall would result in the central part being stronger than

¹⁶⁷ See WSP & Ad Astra Festina, RIM Bluestone Quarry Identification and Assessment of Previous Studies and SAHRA Decisions, SAHRA Archives, Cape Town (Unpublished Report 2013), p.1.

the two outer sections which may cause later collapse of the outer edges. An alternative method of breaking the force of the sea needed to be found.

An environmental impact assessment may be required if ‘dollosse’ were used to protect the wall from the sea.

The heritage value of the wall is that it historically symbolized the futility and hardship of prisoners having to repack the wall against the elements and there in lay the **significance of the wall**. In this regard the significance of the heritage resources is more intangible; any intervention should therefore be done through the ceremonial packing of the stones by the ex-political prisoners or their descendants and not by the permanent stabilization techniques....After careful consideration and much deliberation the committee decided that no rebuilding or any other rehabilitation should take place other than as ceremonial act by the ex-political prisoners.¹⁶⁸

At a meeting of the SAHRA Built Environment and Landscape Committee [BELCom] held on 14 April 2009 it was realized that the applicant [RIM and DPW] wished to reconsider the previous SAHRA decision for RIM/DPW to repack the wall as a ceremonial act. The other engineering proposals that were put forward were also questioned by SAHRA, as it was felt that ‘a series of underwater wave energy breakers should be considered in contrast to the more visual and intrusive elements proposed.’¹⁶⁹ RIM, in fact, never proceeded with the repacking option. I suggest this was because issues of the stability and strength of the wall against the sea waves were the great concern as repacking would make the StoneWall more vulnerable to sea waves.

Because this project was taking place on a world heritage site, the World Heritage Commission had a stake in the development of the project especially as far as issues of authenticity were

¹⁶⁸ See letter entitled, ‘Bluestone Quarry; Application Permit’, ref 9/2/018/0004, File 13, 18 January 2006, SAHRA Archives, CapeTown (Unpublished).

¹⁶⁹ See letter entitled, ‘Bluestone Quarry; Application Permit’, ref 9/2/018/0005, File 13, 12 May, 2009, SAHRA Archives, Cape Town (Unpublished).

concerned in conservation. In its report of February 2011, the Commission stressed that the Blue Stone quarry must not remain unresolved. The commission was critical of the approach whereby structures were brought ‘to as new standard as an asset rather than conserving evidence of its heritage values and history.’The commission went further to argue that ‘the practice is seen as inappropriate and will cumulatively erode evidence and values of the site, especially in the absence of ‘as found’ documentation.’¹⁷⁰

Ron Viney of Ad Astra Festina, a heritage consultant group, assessed the decisions by the SAHRA ad hoc committee in order to inform RIM and DPW on the design proposal as to what is and is not acceptable to the World Heritage Centre in Paris and to SAHRA as the permitting agency. In his assessment in 2013, he concluded that the decision of the SAHRA Committee in 2005 followed international best practice for world heritage sites. According to him, these practices demanded that changes that reduce cultural significance should be reversible. The mass concrete design proposal integrated into the wall would be permanent and difficult to reverse. He also pointed out that the design proposal should not hinder the possibility of later access to all evidence incorporated into the wall. Finally, he advised that the decisions by the committee were suggestive that authenticity in materials, workmanship, design and setting needed to be respected and that any major permanent intervention could jeopardize the authenticity of the heritage resource.¹⁷¹

In February 2013, Ron Viney carried out a heritage survey to assess the impacts of the entire project on the cultural aspects. The legal frameworks of National Heritage Resources Act, 25 of 1999 and the National Environmental Management Act, 1999 Act No.107 informed this

¹⁷⁰ See WSP & Ad Astra Festina, RIM Bluestone Quarry Identification and Assessment of Previous Studies and SAHRA Decisions, File 9/2/018/0004, SAHRA Archives Cape Town (Unpublished report, 2013), p.1.

¹⁷¹ WSP & Ad Astra Festina, p.2.

assessment. In his brief report, Viney stated that ‘the impacts on most of the heritage elements will be temporary and low provided the mitigation measures have been put in place.’ His report further explained, ‘the highest impact will be on the authenticity and integrity of the wall’.¹⁷²

The report suggested ‘the impact on authenticity and integrity could be mitigated if the construction of the concrete wall and reconstruction of the seal wall would be an act of memorialization with longer term less maintenance option to secure the intangible form from the memory of the prisoners.’¹⁷³ It was also recommended that ‘the reconstruction should follow as closely the vernacular design, materials and workmanship of extant walling.’ This was to be correlated by historic photographic evidence. The report advised that other precedents such as at Great Zimbabwe where well-hidden concrete slabs were introduced to stabilise slipping walls could be emulated.

Viney further observed drawing on evidence from the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group, that the reconstruction of the wall by DPW/WSP would re-introduce new features on the site that were not present earlier on in the 1960s. These features had the impact on the authenticity in setting because they would create new setting of the site quite different from the memory of the ex-political prisoners. This was quite evident when the RIM officer during the time of interviews responded to a question by the ex-political prisoner in relation to the authenticity in setting. His response was ‘yes I agree that there would be an interference of the modern with the old wall’.¹⁷⁴

This complex dilemma presented DPW/WSP and RIM with a challenge. How could they restore the Stone Wall in such a manner that it would be stabilized and stand firm against the forces of

¹⁷² See WSP & Ad Astra Festina Summary Draft 3, RIM, (Unpublished, 2014), p.5.

¹⁷³ WSP & Ad Astra Festina, p.5.

¹⁷⁴ See Stone Quarry Reference Group 0791, Tape 1B,09/10/2003, Mayibuye Archives, University of the Western Cape,Cape Town

the sea and at the same time ensure continuity of memory and history of the fabric by maintaining its authenticity?

It must be stated that since the inception of the project in 2001, DPW was at the center stage of the engineering designs and plans of the Stone Wall. However, due to rising environmental concerns that the designs generated, DPW felt it necessary to seek the services of WSP in 2012. WSP is an engineering group of companies, which also has a section that deals with environmental issues, WSP Environmental (PTY). WSP had therefore designed new plans in addition to the earlier ones by DPW. In 2012 WSP began conducting focused group meetings with the stakeholders.¹⁷⁵ These included: DEA(Integrated Coastal Management); Earth Watch(UCT-ADU); DEA(Oceans and Coasts); DEADP(Land Management);City of Cape Town(Environmental and Heritage); Cape Nature; Heritage Western Cape; RIM; SAHRA; Bluestone Quarry Reference Group Representatives (ex-political prisoners) and finally Ron Viney's Ad Astra Festina. Four focused group meetings with these stakeholders are of relevance for this thesis. All the meetings were held at RIM's Nelson Mandela Gate Way. In these focused group meetings there were two dominant themes that, in essence, were the crucial challenges to the project. These challenges were concerned with authenticity of the site in relation to the proposed designs and conflict of the interpretation of the site as far as tensions between cultural and natural heritage were concerned. The focus here will be on the debates with regard to authenticity, while the environmental issues will be taken up further in the next chapter.

¹⁷⁵ See RIBSQ Public Participation Report, RIM(Unpublished 2014), p.4.

It was at the meetings on 23 August and 25 September 2013 where the issues of authenticity and integrity were strongly and intensely contested.¹⁷⁶ WSP presented its newly developed designs along with the modified ones from DPW. In all there were five designs. Alternative one of the design involved the reinstatement of the original Stone Wall with internal reinforcement and aesthetically integrated into the existing sections of the wall. Alternative two was like alternative one only that it had an introduction of a new feature for easy movement of birds on the site. Alternative three was a mass concrete wall erected on the breached side. Alternative four was a freestanding concrete wall positioned on the seaside offshore. Alternative five was a Dolosse Structure (See Chapter four for the full discussion on the designs and the final resolution).¹⁷⁷

It was strongly felt among the stakeholders, particularly the representatives of the ex-political prisoners and representatives from SAHRA, that the extent of addition of new structures and features that the engineers were proposing would adversely compromise aspects of authenticity and integrity of the historical fabric and site. They requested WSP to scale down the degree of new additions. However, the general response from the WSP engineers was that the reinstatement of the quarry could not happen without additional structures. It was apparent from these focused group meetings that the kind of authenticity that the ex-political prisoners and the representatives of SAHRA were asking for was that of historical and absolute authenticity. This was difficult to attain considering some of the additions that the engineers had to incorporate to

¹⁷⁶ The following were present at the meeting of 23 August 2013; Michael Limba (Bluestone Quarry Reference Group Representative), Monde Mkunqwana (Bluestone Quarry Reference Group Representative), Nolobabalo Tonga-Lewayo (RIM),Thisibodi Madafambane (Bluestone Quarry Reference Group Representative),Sabelo Madlala(RIM),Gcobani Sypoyo (SAHRA), Greg Ontong ((SAHRA),Ron Viney (Ad Astra Festina) Jorge Simoes (WSP), Jacqui Fincham (WSP),Surina Brink (WSP),JFD de Kock ((DPW); The following were present for the 25 September Meeting;Pascal Taruvinga (Chief Heritage Officer - RIM) ,Luyanda Mpahwla (Councillor: Heritage – RIM), Sibongiseni Mkhize , (Chief Executive Officer – RIM), Margaret Louw ((Finance – RIM Management Accounts),Ron Viney (Ad Astra Festina) Jacqui Fincham (WSP).

¹⁷⁷ See Figure 4 for Alternative five of the design (in this chapter), Figure 11 for alternative one , Figure 12 for alternative two and Figure 13 for alternative four (in chapter four).

reinforce the wall so that it would be strong enough and longstanding against the action of the sea. This does not mean that memories of the ex-political prisoners were rendered irrelevant as far as the design of the wall was concerned. In fact, the engineers continuously considered the wishes of the ex-political prisoners but they had to consider the durability and strength of the wall. There had to be a compromise on the authenticity of the wall in absolute /historical terms and move towards ahistorical/progressive authenticity. It is from these debates on which I argue that in restoration projects of cultural heritage resources it is difficult and sometimes impossible to fully meet the demands of authenticity of the fabric during the project in historical or objectivist sense.

Impact of the Proposed Designs on Authenticity of the Stone Wall and Bluestone Quarry Site

The proposed restoration strategies by DPW/WSP had presented challenges to issues of authenticity of both the site and the Bluestone Quarry wall itself. Thus, the proposed five designs with use of concrete, cement and other new ‘unhistorical’ additions all had implications to different dimensions and aspects of authenticity and integrity. This was the great concern for the stakeholders that were involved, particularly, the ex-political prisoners, SAHRA and Ron Viney who was a cultural heritage specialist. Any compromise to authenticity meant misrepresentation of memory of the site. Thus, for the ex-political prisoners, the Stone Wall and the entire site held the memories of the tortuous history of the island. Its original form presented the surviving symbols of the political punishment.

The modern engineering designs that were mooted by DPW/WSP impacted the authenticity of the site. The ex-political prisoners had built the wall by piling the stones in interlocking technique without proper engineering instruction. The worry of the ex-political prisoners

therefore was that the new designs would not represent the ‘original’ building techniques of the prisoners.¹⁷⁸ This was the reason why SAHRA advised against any use of other materials on the site and recommended restoration of the wall by anastylosis. Anastylosis ‘ is the type of restoration that aims to make the spatial characters of a ruined structure more comprehensible by restating its original form, using the original material that is both in suitable condition and is located at the site. It involves the re-assembling of existing but dismembered parts.’¹⁷⁹

The suggestion by SAHRA therefore, for ceremonial packing of stones by either the ex-political prisoners or their descendants in order to maintain the symbolic value and significance of the Stone Wall in terms of its authenticity in design as well as authenticity in material was informed by anastylosis.¹⁸⁰

It was noted by the ex-political prisoners and SAHRA that use of cement and other reinforcing materials as proposed by the DPW/WSP meant a compromise of authenticity in material since the Stone Wall was originally constructed from the locally based materials like sand, seashells and other locally available materials. Further, the fact that it was the engineers who were to construct the wall with their new modern engineering techniques this compromised the original workmanship of the Stone Wall. SAHRA’s suggestion was to allow the ex-political prisoners themselves to pile the stones to keep the spirit of maintaining the workmanship of the Stone Wall.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ See Stone Quarry Reference Group 0790, Tape 1B,09/10/2003, Mayibuye Archives, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town.

¹⁷⁹ Feilden and Jokilehto, *Management Guidelines*, p.63.

¹⁸⁰ See letter entitled, ‘Bluestone Quarry; Application Permit’, ref 9/2/018/0004, File 13, 18 January, 2006, SAHRA Archives, Cape Town (Unpublished, 2006).

¹⁸¹ See letter entitled, ‘Bluestone Quarry; Application Permit’, ref 9/2/018/0004, File 13, 18 January 2006, SAHRA Archives, Cape Town (Unpublished, 2006).

As things were, it was hard and impossible for the restoration project to attain the essentialised notions of authenticity as specifically demanded by the ex-political prisoners and SAHRA. Thus, absolute or historical authenticity was far from being attained during the project. This was because in terms of the strength to withstand the force of water from the ocean the materials and techniques that were employed by the ex-political prisoners were weak and not stable. If the approach as argued by the ex-political prisoners was to be adopted, it would entail continuous repair of the Stone Wall and that would be costly. There was need therefore to have a restored Stone Wall that would both be strong and cost effective. In this case, the methods and language of restoration had to be rehabilitation and reconstruction whereby a fabric is brought back to its former condition by means of adding new materials. What was to happen therefore was the situation of restoration at Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum where Murray and Witz commented that ‘rather than making old, the movement of hostel 33 to museum involved a process of rehabilitating and re-inhabiting the site.’¹⁸² Thus the restoration involved removing the historical objects that were dilapidated and replacing them with new ones that were strong. Moreover, in the recommendations of the Matenga report in 2004 the approach to restoration was through mixing new strong materials with old ones. This meant that the Stone Wall would not reflect authenticity in absolute/objectivist/historical sense.

Because of the fact that it was rehabilitation/reconstruction, as called for by all the five designs, whereby strong and new building materials as suggested by the engineers were to be blended and made compatible with the old features of the Stone Wall as suggested by other stakeholders, as opposed to restoration which requires no addition of new materials, I argue that the reconstructed Stone Wall would fail to meet the essentialised notions of authenticity in the form

¹⁸² N, Murray and L.Witz, *Hostels, Homes, Museum*, p.30.

of absolute or historical authenticity. However the kind of authenticity that would be achieved is that of progressive or ahistorical authenticity which reflect all layers of old and new features to the fabric and in the end help 'narrate' the genealogy and biography of the fabric from its time of formation to the present .

However, my argument does not necessary intend to negate the role and memory of the ex-political prisoners during the project. As I have shown their arguments in the two forum meetings, their role was crucial and forced the engineers to respect certain aspects of the wall and their history.

The proposed five designs of the Stone Wall had not only presented challenges on authenticity of the Wall and integrity of the site, they had also presented other challenges and concerns on the environment surrounding the Bluestone quarry. Before one discusses how the final design was selected, one has to explore the contestations that emerged between cultural and natural heritage in relation to the designs.

CHAPTER 3

RESTORATION AND THE CULTURAL/NATURAL CONFLICT ON BLUESTONE QUARRY

INTRODUCTION;

Bluestone Quarry on the north- west corner of Robben Island forms a coastal boundary with the Atlantic Ocean. This proximity to the ocean has made it possible for the site to be easily encroached and inhabited by marine creatures like penguins, coastal birds and other creatures that are drawn to coastal areas. This ecosystem, which the site sustains, has made Bluestone Quarry one of the important ecological and environmental sites on the Island. However, regardless of this environmental aspect or natural characteristics, the site is officially recognized as a cultural heritage site. This is coherently articulated in the nomination and inscription of the entire island as a world heritage site on 4 December 1999. The World Heritage Committee had inscribed the island based on criteria (iii) and (vi) of the Outstanding Universal Value. Criterion (iii) states that ‘the buildings of Robben Island bear eloquent witness to its somber history’. Criterion (vi) stipulates ‘Robben Island and its prison buildings symbolize the triumph of the human spirit, of freedom, and of democracy over oppression.’¹⁸³

When the Stone Wall restoration project began in 2002, the main objective was only to conserve the Stone Wall and the site as a cultural/historical site. However, because of the biodiversity present on the site it was necessary per the requirements of section 23 and 24 of the National

¹⁸³ See World Heritage Nomination Documentation File 916, in File 9/2/018004, SAHRA Archives, Cape Town (Unpublished, 2000).

Environmental Management Act(NEMA) of the Republic of South Africa to carry out surveys and basic assessments of the site in order to identify the impact of the project on the ecosystem and to suggest possible mitigation measures. When the survey findings were presented to the rest of the stakeholders, debates and contests ensued among those who espoused environmental protection of the site and those who defended cultural protection of the site. This created a status of conflict between the natural heritage on the Bluestone Quarry and its cultural heritage. It is this conflict which is the subject of the chapter.

The central argument I would like to advance in this chapter is that when a heritage site embodies and exhibits mixed aspects of heritage, cultural and natural heritage, it is inevitable that conflicts emerge and surface between these two ‘heritages’ in the course of conservation of the site. The natural /cultural conflict on Bluestone Quarry is the case in point. The debates and counter debates amongst the stakeholders testify to this argument. Further, I would like to argue that nomination and inscription of a site as a world heritage site is essentially a political and sometimes arbitrary process. What some may consider as cultural heritage is actually considered natural heritage by others and vice versa.

The chapter therefore explores these debates on cultural and natural conflict. The first section provides a discussion on the natural resources and biodiversity on Robben Island and Bluestone Quarry. The second section discusses the environmental management report through the specialists’ report on Avifauna and Heritage surveys. The last section, perhaps the zenith of the chapter, explores some of the debates and counter debates during the focus group meetings of the stakeholders.

Nature and Fauna on Robben Island and at the Bluestone Quarry

Robben Island is not only rich in cultural and political history. It is also endowed with natural resources that range from different species of birds like penguins, the tortoises, the antelopes and many more. The worth of its natural resources in the past was so immense that an English sailor of 1607 was captivated to declare that ‘in my opinion there is not an Island in the world more frequented with fowls and seals than this island.’¹⁸⁴ The ‘records of other sailors who were more practically minded estimate that in 1604 there were about 50 tons of penguins on the island.’ ‘Others remarked that the penguins were in such abundance that one might take them up with their hands as many as they would.’ It was because of this that the English called the island ‘penguin island’. However, the Dutch knew the island as ‘seal’ or ‘seal dog island’- Robbeneiland- and it was from this Dutch word that Robben Island derived its name.¹⁸⁵

Presently the island has about 132 bird species.¹⁸⁶ These include sea birds, water birds and terrestrial birds. The island is also rich with two species of amphibians, eight species of lizards and geckos, three species of snakes and various species of tortoise. Small herds of bontebok, springbok, steenbok, fallow deer and eland, as well as an increasing number of ostriches live on the island. Marine life in the surrounding waters of the island complete the whole set of fauna on the island. Aquatic animals, for example, large number of seals and whales populate the waters around the island. The Bluestone Quarry itself is occupied by several bird species. These include African Penguins (*Spheniscus demersus*) which are listed as endangered, Black

¹⁸⁴ Riley, ‘Robben Island Conservation Survey’ File 9/2/018/0004, SAHRA Archives (Unpublished, 1993).

¹⁸⁵ Deacon, ‘Introduction’ in H. Deacon (ed) *The Island*, p.17.

¹⁸⁶ Chapman et al, ‘Robben Island: A Baseline Terrestrial Ecology Study and Recommendations for Vegetation Rehabilitation’ File 9/2/018/0004 SAHARA Archives, Cape Town (Unpublished, 2010), p.24.

Oystercatchers (*Haematopus bachmani*) which are listed as nearly threatened. There is also a significant amount of Kelp Gull (*Larus dominicanus*) present on site.¹⁸⁷



Fig 6.Caspian Tern (Female) with two chicks at the nesting site at Bluestone Quarry (Picture by Arnold van de Westhuizen,RIM-2013).

Vegetation of different species is scattered on the island. It is believed that ‘ the original indigenous vegetation resembled typically that of the *strandveld* type commonly found on the mainland of the west coast of the Western Cape, from the Cape Point area to the Olifants River several hundred kilometers to the north.’¹⁸⁸ Alien plant species such as Rooikrans, Manatoka

¹⁸⁷ See A.Westhuizen and L.G Underhill ‘Proposed Reconstruction of the Dry Stone Wall an Bluestone quarry Robben Island,Avifaunal Assesment Report’,RIM(Unpublished,2014), p.17.

¹⁸⁸ Westhuizen and Underhill, p.17.

and Eucalyptus were imported by the settlers and now manifest in the landscape.¹⁸⁹ However much of this more recent vegetation provides sheltering and nesting for the rich variety of bird life found on the Island. This rich biodiversity has colonized the island including the Bluestone Quarry. Consequently, the Bluestone Quarry can be identified not only with its cultural history as testified by the traumatic experiences of the ex-political prisoners but also as a significant natural heritage site on the island. In the discourse of heritage management, the Bluestone Quarry undisputedly qualifies to be a mixed heritage site. Conservation of such sites therefore entails consideration of all aspects of heritage on the site. It was on this understanding that when the restoration of the project was initiated it was important to consider the impact of the project on the surrounding biodiversity of the site and assess if the project was feasible and viable. In order to assess the risks and threats on biodiversity, DPW/WSP facilitated assessment surveys to look at the impact on avifauna and cultural heritage on the site in relation to the project. The two reports from these surveys were then merged to produce the environmental management report that was to guide the project activities on the site.

The Environmental Impact Assessments and the Environmental Report on Bluestone Quarry

As required by section 23 and 24 of National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) of Republic of South Africa, an investigation of ‘the potential consequences or impacts of reasonable and feasible alternatives to the activity on the environment must be provided before any implementation of a project on national heritage site.’¹⁹⁰ The obligation to undertake such a process underscored the calls for the Bluestone Quarry project to simultaneously respect and

¹⁸⁹ Westhuizen and Underhill, p.17

¹⁹⁰ See National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) sections 23 and 24.

recognize the natural and cultural significance of the site irrespective of which significance the project was meant to conserve.

In order to identify and assess these environmental impacts that the project would trigger, RIM and its partner DPW, contracted the expertise of WSP Environmental (Pty) in 2012.¹⁹¹ WSP was to undertake the function of Environmental Assessment Practitioner (EAP). In this capacity, it was tasked to facilitate the stakeholder engagement process for the application for an Environmental Authorisation of the project in accordance with NEMA.¹⁹² Pre-application consultation was conducted with the National Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) during the course of 2012. A site visit was conducted with Mr Tambudzani Malaudzi(a representative from DEA), and Mrs Jacqui Fincham,(an associate with WSP Environment and Energy South Africa) on the 18 April 2012. According to her resume, Jacqui Fincham has 16 years working experience as an environmental consultant, undertaking environmental impact assessments and basic assessments. She is experienced in developing environmental management programs, undertaking site audits (due diligence and environmental control officer), sustainability assessments (SAs), strategic environmental assessments (SEAs) and ecological foot printing studies. She worked in the United Kingdom for eight years from 2000 to 2008 and has been working in South Africa since 2009.¹⁹³

Following on their site visit, Malaudzi and Fincham met at the Clock Tower, at the waterfront on 22 June 2012 to discuss the potential triggers and the requirements in terms of environmental

¹⁹¹ WSP is a leading International environmental consultancy with broad range of expertise in the environmental industry.

¹⁹² See 'Reinstatement of the Blue Stone Quarry Wall and Limestone Road Way, Robben Island: Draft Environmental Management Programme,' Reference number 14/12/16/3/3/1/747(2014,RIM(Unpublished,2014), p.6.

¹⁹³ See the appendix of 'Reinstatement of the Blue Stone Quarry Wall and Limestone Road Way, Robben Island: Draft Environmental Management Programme,' Reference number 14/12/16/3/3/1/747,RIM(Unpublished,2014).

authorisation. It was confirmed at this meeting that a basic assessment process must be followed and that the DEA was the competent authority to oversee the process. On 31 October 2012, the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (DEADP) confirmed that it would be the commenting authority on the application and would provide comment to DEA directly. An application was made to DEA which was accepted on 28 November 2012.¹⁹⁴

Following this application and as required by NEMA (No. 107 of 1998), WSP had to undertake the stakeholder engagement process. The first stage of the stakeholder engagement process involved a broad consultation casting the net widely to invite any interested and affected parties to register their interest in the project. This stage included press adverts, site notices and formal notifications that were sent directly to stakeholders identified by the regulations as statutory consultees. To this end, WSP placed an advert in the *Cape Times* on 9 January 2013, which served as a notification of an application and calls for consultation process. Furthermore, WSP placed two site notices in order to notify the public of the application for environmental consultations. The site notices were placed at Robben Island's security offices as well as Robben Island's local cafeteria on 9 January 2013.¹⁹⁵ Prior to this, WSP had also initially identified and notified possible interested and affected parties of the application for consultation process on 18 December 2012. These parties were given 30 days (until 1 February 2013) to register their interest and make representation or request additional information if required. A number of organisations and individuals responded to the notification and wished to be registered as interested and affected parties. Once registered, they provided comments on the application. These new stakeholders were to be added to the already existing group of stakeholders, which

¹⁹⁴ See 'RIBSQ Public Participation Report,' RIM(Unpublished, 2014), p.2.

¹⁹⁵ 'RIBSQ Public Participation Report', p .3.

primarily and previously was constituted of RIM, DPW, SAHRA and the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group. A brief look at some of these comments on the application reveals different interests of the stakeholders and the ensuing tension and conflict between natural and cultural heritage during the project. On 15 January 2013, Chris Wilke of Wilke's Eco Solutions commented:

Am currently the appointed service provider to RIM for the problem animal control project dealing with the rabbits and feral cats. The area in question has been a significant rabbit density area, albeit at a very low level now due to the project. I wish to remain informed of the changes to the environment in the immediate area surrounding the quarry. Eg, the removal of the stockpile of rocks close to the quarry, so as to monitor rabbit responses.¹⁹⁶

Monde Mkungwana, an ex-political prisoner, wrote on his application:

The Blue Stone Quarry was a designated place by the authorities. It is here all the iniquities of all sorts were committed by warders, to dampen the spirit of our commitment to the revolution. But we all rose above the challenges. The quarry also became a school for human and intellectual development. This is where every political decision was made in relation to the 'internal and external' political activities, the president of SA and others were produced by the quarry.¹⁹⁷

On 1 February 2013, Rhetti Smart of Cape Nature wrote:

The BID states that the quarry is utilised by several marine bird species, including the African Penguin (*Spheniscus demersus*), listed as Endangered. Therefore Cape Nature supports the recommendation in the BID that an avifaunal specialist study must be undertaken to inform the basic assessment report. Particular attention should be paid to the potential impact on African Penguins, as the global population of this species is known to be declining. The avifaunal specialist must consult with researchers working on the island. The proposed activity [restoration] could also have an impact on the adjacent coastal and marine environment. These impacts also need to be assessed, preferably by an appropriately qualified specialist, unless it can be sufficiently motivated otherwise. Cape Nature reserves the right to

¹⁹⁶ 'RIBSQ Public Participation Report', p.19.

¹⁹⁷ 'RIBSQ Public Participation Report', p.19.

revise initial comments and request further information based on any additional information that may be received.¹⁹⁸

From these comments it is therefore clear that the project had drawn interest groups who had various and conflicting concerns for the project. From the perspective of the ex-political prisoners it was history that was important and from others it was the environment.

Immediately, after the identification and notification of these interested and affected parties, in February 2013, WSP Environment facilitated an application to SAHRA for a permit to undertake an avifaunal assessment and cultural heritage assessment on Bluestone Quarry. The avifauna assessment was to be carried out by Anold van der Westhuizen, an ornithologist and proprietor of Arnwart Environ Watch which specialises on environmental monitoring. He was assisted by Professor L.G. Underhill of the Animal Demography Unit of the University of Cape Town.¹⁹⁹ Ronald Viney of Adra Festina was to conduct the cultural heritage assessment survey.²⁰⁰ The findings from these two basic assessments were to be merged and consolidated to come up with one single document, the environmental management report. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, it was this report that was presented to the interested and affected stakeholders during the four focused group meetings where among other things issues of environment and authenticity emerged. Here the environmental basic assessment and its findings will be discussed.

¹⁹⁸ 'RIBSQ Public Participation Report', p.20.

¹⁹⁹ See A. Westhuizen and L.G Underhill 'Proposed Reconstruction of the Dry Stone Wall an Bluestone quarry Robben Island, Avifaunal Assessment Report', RIM (Unpublished, 2014).

²⁰⁰ See Ron Viney 'Robben Island Bluestone Quarry Heritage Impact Assessment Summary Draft 3, RIM, (Unpublished, 2014).

The Avifauna Assessment Report and the Stone Wall Project on Bluestone Quarry

Westhuzen and Underhill, in their introductory section of the report, described the study area. They provided the binary status of Bluestone Quarry and therefore set a scene of how complicated the site and the project would be in terms of satisfying both the cultural and natural heritage of the site. They reported that ‘the entire proposed construction site is located within the Robben Island National Monument and Museum (declared 4 September 1996) and the Robben Island World Heritage Site (declared 1 December 1999), as well as the Robben Island National Historical Monument Important Bird Area (IBA) – a globally important bird area.’ They further went on to point the legal frameworks that should guide the project. They suggested that ‘the area under consideration should therefore be assessed in terms of the approved environmental management plan (RIEMP 2002), the World Heritage Convention Act No 44 of 1999, the Sea Birds and Seals Protection Act No 46 of 1973 and the draft Biodiversity Management Plan for *Spheniscus demersus* gazetted on 20 August 2012 (Gazette No 35607) in terms of National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act (NEM: BA) (Act 10 of 2004).’²⁰¹

According to the report, the avifauna research that was conducted was guided by the National Environmental Management Act which among other things demands and stipulates that ‘development must be socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable,’ and ‘disturbance of ecosystems and loss of biological diversity are avoided, or, where they cannot be altogether avoided, are minimised and remedied.’²⁰² The avifauna assessment engaged three methodological approaches: desk research, interviews and field surveys. A desktop assessment

²⁰¹ See A. Westhuzen and L.G Underhill ‘Proposed Reconstruction of the Dry Stone Wall an Bluestone quarry Robben Island, Avifaunal Assessment Report’, RIM (Unpublished, 2014), p.9.

²⁰² Westhuzen and Underhill, p.5.

was undertaken in order to establish which bird species had been recorded in the broader area surrounding the study site. This broader area being Robben Island as a whole and the immediate offshore waters to about 3 km offshore. Data was collected from the Animal Demography Unit (ADU), University of Cape Town and the booklet *Wildlife of Robben Island* by Bruce Dyer.²⁰³

Westhuizen and Underhill conducted the interviews and consultations with institutions and individuals that have specialisation in environmental issues. Among these were : Dr R.J.M. Crawford (Directorate: Oceans and Coasts – Department of Environmental Affairs) ; Mr B.M. Dyer (Directorate: Oceans and Coasts – Department of Environmental Affairs); Mr T.M. Leshoro (RIM); Dr R.B Sherley (Post-doctoral Fellow ADU); Professor Peter Barham (University of Bristol, Earthwatch); Professor P. Dee Boersma (University of Washington); K.J Robinson (PhD Researcher on African Penguins: Robben Island); E Rueda (MSc University of León – African Black Oystercatchers Robben Island/Storm Petrel species) and Mr G.H. le Roux (Landplan and Associates).²⁰⁴

To complement the desk research and the interviews, field surveys were conducted by doing ‘*in situ* observations.’ These surveys took place during the day. Observations of birds present at and around the quarry site and the dry Stone Wall were recorded. A night survey was carried out when the phase of the moon was optimal to establish if Leach's Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* were present on the island. These were conducted at the remnant walls at the quarry as

²⁰³ Westhuizen and Underhill, p.10.

²⁰⁴ Westhuizen and Underhill, p.11.

well as the nearby unused shooting range as these areas contained suitable habitat for this species to breed.²⁰⁵ It was observed that most of the birds nested in cavities in the old Stone Wall.

At the end of the research, a number of impacts that the project could pose and present to the biodiversity on the site were documented. In the report, the possible impacts that were anticipated included destruction of habitat, disturbance and displacement of species by construction and maintenance activities as well as an influx of tourists.²⁰⁶ The most affected species of birds were African Penguins, Swift Terns, Kulp Gulls and African Oystercatchers.

The report explained that disturbance would occur during the construction period, which should be limited to a period of six weeks. It further reported that the disturbance would consist of human movement and noise, movement of equipment and materials, vehicles and construction activities. Disturbance could also periodically occur thereafter when maintenance was carried out. The report outlined that disturbance of these species would most likely occur on the seaward side of the wall where these 'birds feed, roost and loaf during the day on the rocky shore and during construction on the quarry side where they come to loaf and roost on the "blue stone rocks"' at the waterside.²⁰⁷ The report noted that the re- construction of the Stone Wall would influence the access route for the birds, especially the penguins, to their breeding area, as the wall would form a barrier to movement for these species. The birds would have to adapt and habituate to the barrier and learn to use a new route to the breeding sites.²⁰⁸ If the penguins did not adapt they could be severely displaced during construction.

²⁰⁵ Westhuizen and Underhill, p.12.

²⁰⁶ See A. Westhuizen and L.G Underhill 'Proposed Reconstruction of the Dry Stone Wall an Bluestone quarry Robben Island, Avifaunal Assessment Report', RIM(Unpublished,2014), p.5.

²⁰⁷ Westhuizen and Underhill, p.41.

²⁰⁸ .Westhuizen and Underhill, p.42.



Fig 7. A Kelp Gull chick taking shelter from predation by adult Kelp Gulls between dislodged stones at the dry Stone Wall (Picture by Arnold van der Westhuizen, RIM-2013).

Disturbance might also happen after construction if penguins could not adapt to the new access route created by the ramp over the wall. Thus two of the alternative designs had a ramp to aid the movement of the penguins from the sea to the quarry side where they were nesting (See Figures 11 and 12 in chapter 4, thus for the designs). The report further emphasized that displacement could be permanent. Movement of vehicles was also pointed out as another source of impact. It was observed that in the area, vehicles could strike, kill penguins, and disturb movement of

birds. During construction, the vehicles might maim one of a breeding pair and cause a detrimental impact on caring for chicks or future breeding. The report warned that a maimed bird had a very slight likelihood of survival. The avifauna report did not only provide the impact of the project on the birds, but, it also suggested mitigation measures. The report suggested that a ‘penguin proof’ fence should be erected around the construction area to keep the penguins out of the area and to direct their movement away from the construction site. It also suggested that human noise and movement should be kept minimized. The report also recommended that water which had filled the quarry should not be drained but continue being used as a habitat for birds like the Kelp Gulls.



Fig. 8 Penguins at the flat seaward side of the breached Stone Wall (Picture by Arnold van der Westhuizen, RIM-2013).

The report concluded emphatically that ‘reconstruction of the dry Stone Wall at the Bluestone Quarry can be supported if the necessary measures will be taken to preserve the natural resources, minimise damage and remedy damage caused by proposed activities. These measures should be in place before, during and after construction.’²⁰⁹ The report thus suggested that project had to take care of the biodiversity on the site. Part of minimizing the impact entailed construction of features on the site that were not present during the ‘historical’ period. And some of these features like the penguin ramp would be permanent at the Stone Wall. Introduction of these new features on the historical site as a way of protecting the birds would be a compromise and distortion to the historical setting of the site. This situation brought cultural heritage and natural heritage on the site into a collision path and conflict during the restoration project. It is, against this background, that I argue that when a heritage site exhibits binaries of cultural and natural heritage there is always conflict in the conservation and management of heritage on such a site. As the next section will show, there were acrimonious debates and contestations when these findings were presented to the stakeholders during the focused group meetings.

At the end of the assessments, WSP consolidated the avifaunal report and the heritage report to produce the comprehensive environmental management report that was then presented to the stakeholders for consideration, further input and suggestions. As discussed in the preceding chapter, this was done in four focused group meetings that followed. The following section therefore explores some of the pertinent debates, arguments and counter arguments that framed the natural versus cultural conflict.

²⁰⁹ Westhuizen and Underhill, p.53.

The Environmental Report and Contestations on the Significance of Bluestone Quarry

A statement of significance establishes why a place is important and it examines all the heritage values of a place. According to different charters and conventions that guide conservation management of heritage resources it is the statement of significance that determines how conservation activities should proceed.²¹⁰ Thus, what is significant about a place should help determine how to look after it and what changes are appropriate.

The Burra Charter of Australia ICOMOS clearly defines what cultural significance is. The charter states that ‘cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for the past, present or future generations’.²¹¹ It further extends this definition by adding that cultural significance is the concept that helps in estimating the value of the places. A place may have a historic value because ‘it has influenced or has been influenced by a historic figure, event, phase, or activity.’²¹² It further stipulates that ‘the cultural and historical significance of a heritage resource is embodied in its fabric, its setting, its contents, in its use and in people’s memory and association with the place.’ On the other hand, natural significance means ‘the importance of ecosystems, biological diversity and geodiversity for their scientific, social, aesthetic and life support value.’²¹³ A place or site can be of either natural significance or cultural significance and in some cases a site can portray both significances and this often creates conflict when it comes to decide which significance should be prioritized. This was the case with the Bluestone Quarry. Establishing the significance of Bluestone Quarry was therefore one aspect in conservation of the site that was both divisive and intensely debated among the stakeholders. Those for the cultural

²¹⁰ The Burra Charter: Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 1999(2000), p12.

²¹¹ The Burra Charter, p.13.

²¹² The Burra Charter, p.13.

²¹³ The Australian Natural Heritage Charter (2001).

significance of the site, comprising of the ex-political prisoners and SAHRA argued for conservation of the cultural heritage of the site. The environmentalists led by the environmental management of RIM, the environmental section of WSP and other environmental bodies apparently argued for the conservation of the natural heritage of the site. What seemed to be the source of conflict was the fact that one side wanted and supported the protection of biodiversity by strictly adhering to the provisions in the avifaunal report. In contrast, the other side felt that the provisions in the report for protection of the birds relied among other things on introduction of new structures and features that would disturb the historical setting and authenticity of the site. According to this group, the mitigating measures in the avifauna report were ‘sanitising the site’.²¹⁴

The stakeholders who espoused the cultural significance drew their claim from the historical fact because the site was a place where the ex-prisoners toiled, laboured, and survived the humiliation and torture by the state machinery through the work of the prison warders. For them it was a site that symbolised ‘the triumph of human spirit over adversity’. It was also significant in the historical sense because the stones that were used to build the maximum security prison were dug, crushed and dressed by the political prisoners on this site. This therefore qualified the site to be a cultural and historical site. Consequently, all conservation activities had to be in the legal frame work of cultural conservation. At the core of these debates was the question whether the Bluestone Quarry is natural or cultural heritage site.²¹⁵

As explained in the previous chapter, on 23 August 2013 WSP Environment presented the environmental report at the ex-political prisoners’ forum. Among other issues on the agenda was

²¹⁴ See ‘Meeting Minutes Robben Island BSQ 25630’, 23 August 2013, RIM (Unpublished, 2013).

²¹⁵ Interview with Mr Sabelo, Environmental Heritage Management officer with RIM on 14 April, 2015 at Robben Island.

to discuss how the engineering designs would be modified in order to avoid or minimise the impacts that the report had outlined. As already pointed out in chapter two, the following were in attendance at that forum: Michael Limba (Reference Group Representative), Monde Mkunqwana (Reference Group Representative), Nolobabalo Tonga-Lewayo , (RIM), Thisibodi Madafambane (Reference Group Representative), (Reference Group Representative) Sabelo Madlala (RIM), Gcobani Sypoyo (SAHRA), Greg Ontong (SAHRA), Ronald Viney (Ad Astra Festina) Jorge Simoes (WSP), Jacqui Fincham (WSP), Surina Brink (WSP), J.F.D. de Kock ((DPW). When Jacqui Fincham presented the report, the forum opened for comments and suggestions.²¹⁶ The following discussion is drawn from this meeting of 23 August 2013.

The recommendation in the report that water which had filled the quarry should not be drained in order to continue providing a habitat for the birds residing at the quarry was challenged. Gcobani Sypoyo of (SAHRA) expressed his disagreement on this matter. He contended that water should not remain in the quarry because the main purpose of the project was the preservation of the quarry and without the quarry, the story of Robben Island would not be complete. He emphasized that the goal was authenticity and that was the reason why people visited the quarry in the first place. He further argued that the narrative of the quarry was the breakdown of the human spirit and not the birds. Nolubabalo Tonga, a senior heritage officer of RIM, questioned what would be the purpose of reinstating the wall if people would not be able to see where the work was actually done and how deep the quarry was. She also alerted the forum that the quarry could not tell a story if it was filled with water.²¹⁷

²¹⁶ See 'Meeting Minutes Robben Island BSQ 25630', 23 August 2013, RIM (Unpublished, 2013).

²¹⁷ See 'Meeting Minutes Robben Island BSQ 25630', 23 August 2013, RIM (Unpublished, 2013).

On the design of the wall and plight of the birds, Jacqui Fincham commented that health and safety should be taken into account when considering the design of the wall since the seagulls were aggressive. She argued that birds were an important component of the recent history of the quarry. Monde Mkunqwana, a Bluestone Quarry Reference Group member, protested this issue of protecting the birds. He recited one of his poems, which described that seagulls were present when they were working in the quarry. He explained that the spirit of the poem represented the spirit of the prisoners and what the quarry meant to them. He indicated that he spent ten years working in the quarry and therefore the heritage issue was more important in the project and should be the focus and the object of the design. He therefore requested that the design should not take into account the issue of birds since they hated the birds when they worked in the quarry. He further noted that they (the ex-prisoners) decimated the population of birds by eating the eggs of the birds. Only when the quarry closed in 1974 did the birds re-populate the quarry. He further argued that if the quarry could be drained, the birds would not die but would systematically adapt and not use the quarry.

Greg Ontong of SAHRA also made a contribution during the meeting. He argued that the ex-political prisoners (EPPs) are the main clients when it comes down to what the significance of the quarry is. He contended that, from the perspective of the ex-prisoners, the natural environment was secondary and that the cultural component was the most important aspect of the quarry. His conclusion on the matter was that the island is a World and National Heritage site and that the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) require that the cultural heritage component be central.²¹⁸

²¹⁸ See 'Meeting Minutes Robben Island BSQ 25630', 23 August 2013, RIM (Unpublished, 2013).

However, Sabelo Madlala, the Environmental Management officer with RIM, argued that the site was natural because it is a habitat to a wide range of biodiversity that includes rare species of penguins and other birds like African Black Oystercatcher, Caspian Tern among others and therefore conservation should be in respect to the natural heritage of the site. He cautioned all the stakeholders to the project to recognise the fact that if nothing was done for the natural environment there would be an adverse impact on the biodiversity.²¹⁹

Differences were also acute on the aspect of the provisional design of a walk way on the Stone Wall to ease the movement of the penguins from the sea to the quarry and other nesting sites as was evident in alternative design one and alternative design two.²²⁰ Jacqui Fincham contended that it should be acknowledged the penguins would be impacted and therefore pragmatic action was needed. Gcobani Sypoyo disagreed strongly and stated that the penguin walkway was “a non-issue” since the penguins could relocate and move elsewhere. The penguin walkway should therefore not be considered as part of the design.

Viney, attempted to adjudicate the debate by defining the significance of Bluestone Quarry. He argued that the natural and cultural significance could only be understood when the history of the site was properly researched and analysed. He asserted that there was need to reflect on deeper frameworks that guide conservation on a world heritage site. He pointed out that the island was enlisted as a world heritage site on the basis of its Outstanding Universal Value which is the cultural and historical significance of the site. The Outstanding Universal Value of the site was

²¹⁹ See ‘Meeting Minutes Robben Island BSQ 25630’, 23 August 2013, RIM (Unpublished, 2013).

²²⁰ For further discussion and illustration of alternative design one and alternative design two refer to next chapter that deals with resolutions of the project.

not negotiable and cannot be disputed. Therefore based on this framework one can ably answer that the Bluestone Quarry is a cultural heritage site.



Fig.9, Bluestone Quarry pit, a cultural heritage, filled with water and forms habitat for some birds (Picture by Arnold Van der Westhuizen, RIM-2013).

However, Viney went further by exploring and interrogating the environment of the site during the early times. For example, before the ex-prisoners worked on the site what was it like? From the testimonies of the ex-prisoners through the oral history research (with the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group) , he was able to demonstrate that the place was a beach and waves could come from the sea and wash it. The ex- prisoners also remembered birds on the site before the quarrying started. This was therefore natural environment. He then argued that history was then made later on the site when the ex- prisoners started quarrying and enduring the harsh

experiences of torture and that this history did not by any stretch of imagination erode the natural state of the site. This was the reason why the area was still rich in biodiversity even in the present day. He finally concluded that the Bluestone quarry was still a natural site but it got its significance and interpretation through the intangible cultural heritage of the site. However, because of the guiding legal frameworks of conservation based on the significance on which the island was initially nominated, the conservation of its cultural significance would always take precedence over the natural significance.²²¹

At least seven points were agreed as a way forward during the debates of this 23 August 2013 meeting. Two of them are relevant for the above discussions. It was agreed that water would be removed from the quarry but not entirely. It was also agreed that the covered walkway and penguin ramp on alternative design one and alternative design two should not be further considered. The minutes for these meetings do not state clearly why the covered walkway and the penguin ramp should not be considered. However, from close reading and analysis of the debates, I suggest it was because the penguin ramp and the walk way which would be new features posed problems to issues of authenticity of the Stone Wall. The natural versus cultural significance debate thus also had implications for debates about authenticity.

²²¹ See 'Meeting Minutes Robben Island BSQ 25630,' 23 August 2013, RIM (Unpublished, 2013).



Fig. 10, A section of the Stone Wall, a cultural heritage (Picture by Arnold Van der Westhuizen, RIM-2013)

During the second focus group meeting on 25 September 2013, to present the Bluestone Quarry project to RIM Executive and Management the issues in the environmental report were also raised. Members present at that meeting were Pascal Taruvinga (Chief Heritage Officer - RIM), Luyanda Mpahwla (Councillor: Heritage – RIM), Sibongiseni Mkhize (Chief Executive Officer – RIM), Thisibodi Madafambane (Bluestone Quarry Reference Group) Margaret Louw (Finance – RIM Management Accounts), Ronald Viney (Ad Astra Festina), Jacqui Fincham (WSP) and Michael Limba (Bluestone Quarry Reference Group).²²² As had always been the

²²² See ‘Meeting Minutes Robben Island BSQ 25630,’ 25 September 2013, RIM (Unpublished, 2013).

case in the previous meetings, after presentations of the designs and the report, debates followed. The following account is drawn from this meeting.

Pascal Taruvinga noted that the Bluestone Quarry represented a ‘cultural landscape’ that had an ongoing natural habitat on the site and that fact could not be disregarded. However, there was need to present a scheme in terms of justification for the height of the wall, the proposed construction sequence and future strength of the wall. He further stressed that it was significant to focus on developing options that were informed by compliance with national law in order to balance restoration of the wall, ecology and heritage matters.

As part of his contribution to these debates, Luyanda Mpahwala (from RIM’s Heritage Department) advised that RIM needed to manage the relationship between the significance of the quarry from the ex-political prisoners’ point of view versus the habitat that has been created on the site over time in order to get a win-win situation. RIM would therefore need to find a way to deal with the ex-political prisoners without them feeling that the cultural heritage value of the site was being ‘watered down’. He cautioned that RIM should prioritise, in terms of heritage, what was relevant for the project. He also suggested that the design team needed to look into alternative ways to deal with the penguins without resulting in a significant change to the character of the wall from a physical and experience point of view.²²³ At least two issues were agreed during this meeting. It was agreed that the Stone Wall must be reinstated. However, unlike in the previous meeting of 23 August, it was agreed that the penguin walk way had to be considered in the design. For this change in decision to reconsider the penguin ramps and walk

²²³ ‘Meeting Minutes Robben Island BSQ 25630’, p.4.

way the minutes again are not clear. However one could speculate that, clearly, the environmental impact of the project could not be ignored.

In an interview that I conducted with Mr Sabelo, the Environmental Manager of RIM, he intimated that there was need to understand that cultural heritage which constitutes the built fabric on the site ‘does not hang in the sky but on mother nature and it should be managed as such.’ He argued in emphatic terms that both natural and cultural heritage are intertwined and, in fact, natural environment is cultural heritage. On this paradox he alluded to the ex-political prisoners recalling how they interacted with the birds on the site by supplementing the diet during the times of hard labour on the quarry and thus what is natural becomes part of the narrative of the cultural and hence the need to conserve both aspects of the heritage on the site. He also cited the importance of the Burra Charter specifically article 5 section 5.1 which stipulates that ‘conservation of a place should identify and take into consideration all aspects of cultural and natural significance without unwarranted emphasis on any one value at the expense of the other.’²²⁴ From his comments it is easy to understand that while the cultural significance was being asserted, the environmental factors were far from being ignored during the project. It also illuminates how what is cultural and what is natural can be arbitrary notions or constructs.

I have taken great pains in this section to elaborate these debates, contestations and ‘conservation frictions’ in order to demonstrate the extent of the conflict of interests between those who called for the conservation of cultural heritage and those who felt that natural heritage was part of the story of Bluestone Quarry and therefore needed to be conserved as well by mitigating the

²²⁴ Interview with Mr Sabelo , Environmental Heritage Management officer with RIM on 14 April, 2015 at Robben Island.

impacts that the project might bring. It is clear in this chapter that although Robben Island, and by extension Bluestone Quarry, was declared a world heritage site because of its history, the site itself is habitat to a variety of animal life. This in a way resonates well with critical literature against world heritage convention which among other issues argues that in most instances declaration of heritage sites is a political and arbitrary process. Thus what could be cultural heritage for some could also be natural heritage for others. It is because of the mixed heritage that Bluestone Quarry embodies which brought different and conflicting views and perspectives on what heritage should be prioritised. It is this situation therefore that informs and frames my argument that when heritage sites exhibit characteristics of being natural and cultural, conflicts abound and are inevitable during the conservation management of such sites.

The next chapter attempts to discuss how different issues challenging the project were finally resolved.

CHAPTER 4

RESOLVING THE HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION ISSUES OF THE STONE WALL PROJECT

INTRODUCTION:

As has been indicated in the previous chapters, the project for the reinstatement of the Stone Wall at Bluestone Quarry commenced in 2002 and its consultations and contestations only got resolved in 2014. According to Nolubabalo Tango, the senior heritage officer with RIM, there was no documented official reason for this long duration. However, she suggested that this might be attributed to the complex nature of the project. This complexity was the consequence of two crucial factors. First, it might have been because of the imperative need to arrive at the best conservation method that would consider balancing the tangible and intangible heritage. A corollary of this factor was the need to devise the best approach to arbitrate and balance the environmental and heritage challenges. She also further attributed the protracted time frame of the project to changes in RIM management and changes in institutional priorities as well as budgetary implications.²²⁵

The complicated nature of the project, with its diverse interest groups and stakeholders, meant that it was not easy to arrive at the middle ground that could satisfy the demands of each. As discussed earlier, the major and outstanding problems rocking the project were the issues of authenticity of the Stone Wall in relation to the suggested engineering designs, the conservation

²²⁵ Interview with Nolubabalo Tango, Senior Heritage Officer, Robben Island Museum, Nelson Mandela Gateway, on 28 April, 2015.

of the environment and its protection from the impacts of the project and the conflict that emerged between the natural heritage and cultural heritage of the site. In order for the project to progress there was need to resolve these issues. Then how were these heritage issues that were dragging the project back and forth finally resolved? This chapter therefore attempts to provide answers to this key question by exploring some of the crucial decisions that were made. The chapter does not merely provide the decisions but discusses the approaches, methodologies and legal instruments in conservation practice that were engaged to inform such decisions.

Central to this chapter is an argument that the restoration project of the Stone Wall much as it was a cultural heritage project in its scope it was also a natural heritage project in practice. This is because in heritage management of sites it is the significance on which the site is nominated that guides its conservation practice. In the case of the Bluestone Quarry, it is its cultural heritage status that was supposed to determine what heritage should be conserved and what heritage should be disregarded. However, as it turned out during the decisions for the project, the concerns of natural heritage on the site were not entirely thrown out but were accommodated in the implementation of the project. Thus much as the decisions were made and implemented in order to realize the cultural heritage gain, the project at the same time sought to minimize where possible the impact on the biodiversity on the site. Following logically from this assertion, I would like to further argue that the case of the Bluestone Quarry project is a model on how best conflicts of natural and cultural heritage on a site can be reconciled in management of heritage sites that exhibit mixed heritage. This was best demonstrated in how the decisions on the main issues of the project were made in such a way to accommodate the needs of the two sides of the heritage on the site.

The chapter therefore discusses how contestations on significance of the site were resolved, how issues on the appropriate design of the Stone Wall were settled and how environmental concerns were addressed.

Use of Legal Instruments and Conventions to Evaluate the Suitable Proposed Design

In chapter two it has been clearly shown that the proposed engineering designs were not adequate to meet the test of authenticity as argued by the ex-political prisoners and SAHRA. While in chapter three it has also been demonstrated that the same proposed designs posed an environmental impact to the biodiversity on the site and raised debates on significance of the site. These were the outstanding challenges that had to be resolved if the project was to progress. A number of heritage conventions and legal instruments guiding conservation of heritage resources, particularly cultural heritage sites, were therefore referred to and consulted. The conventions as stipulated by the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), and most importantly the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter of 1999, were used. The Burra Charter as it is commonly known sets a standard of practice for those who provide advice and manage heritage sites.²²⁶

Important articles in the Burra Charter that were invoked to guide some of the decisions and methodologies to the project included article 3 section 3.1 which stipulates that ‘conservation is based on respect for existing fabric, use, associations and meanings . It requires a cautious approach of changing as much as necessary but as little as possible.’²²⁷ This had implications on how much should be added during the reconstruction so as not to compromise the authenticity

²²⁶ See The Burra Charter: Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 1999(2000), p.1.

²²⁷ The Burra Charter, p.3.

and significance of the site. Article 3 section 3.2 was also crucial. It specifies that ‘changes to a place should not distort the physical or other evidence it provides, nor be based on conjecture.’²²⁸ This had implications for how the reconstruction should proceed. The important phrase ‘nor be based on conjecture’ entailed that the restoration must be guided by appropriate knowledge of the place and skills. Thus the memory of the ex-political prisoners was crucial in informing how the structure and the entire fabric were during the time of imprisonment. This had resonance with article 4.1 which emphasizes on making use of all the knowledge, skills and disciplines which can contribute to the study and care of the place.²²⁹ The oral history reference group thus played a significant role in providing information but also in emphasizing the site as a place of considerable meaning to which memories were attached. In addition, many experts were consulted.

Articles 8 and 15 had a profound influence on the designs that were to be accepted by the heritage authorities like SAHRA and the primary stakeholders, the ex-political prisoners. According to article 15 ‘change may be necessary to retain cultural significance, but is undesirable where it reduces cultural significance. The amount of change to a place should be guided by the cultural significance of the place and its appropriate interpretation.’ Article 8 was emphatic. It provided that ‘conservation requires the retention of an appropriate visual setting and other relationships that contribute to the cultural significance of the place. New construction, demolition, intrusions or other changes which would adversely affect the setting or relationships are not appropriate.’²³⁰ By following some of these guidelines as provided by the Burra Charter and other conventions, the stakeholders ably evaluated the various important issues to the project

²²⁸ The Burra Charter, p.3.

²²⁹ The Burra Charter, p.3.

²³⁰ See The Burra Charter: Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 1999(2000), p.4.

such as the significance of Bluestone Quarry site and the appropriate design required for the project.

Cultural Significance as the Overarching Significance of the Bluestone Quarry

As discussed in chapter three, one of the contentious issues in the implementation of the project was the determination of the significance of Bluestone Quarry site. It was during the meeting of all the stakeholders on 19 September 2013 that the question of the significance of Bluestone Quarry seemed to have finally been brought to rest. This was when Viney presented the case based on history of Robben Island and the legal instruments and conventions that govern world heritage sites, to demonstrate that cultural significance and not natural significance was the overarching significance of the site.

As in the previous meetings, Viney first traced the history of nomination of Robben Island as a world heritage site and the reasons for its nomination. Thus Robben Island was inscribed on the World Heritage List of Cultural Properties in 1999 under criterion (iii) and (vi) of the 1972 World Heritage Convention.²³¹ The justification for the inscription under these criteria was that ‘the buildings of Robben Island bear eloquent witness to its somber history’ and ‘Robben Island and its prison buildings symbolize the triumph of the human spirit, of freedom and of democracy over oppression.’²³² ‘The Bluestone Quarry’, he argued, ‘was seminal to understanding the Outstanding Universal Value of the Island because the maximum security prison was built with the stones from it. Without the intangible element of memory, skills, workmanship etc. the intangible aspects would have reduced significance. It was therefore the

²³¹ See World Heritage Nomination Documentation File 916, in File 9/2/018004, SAHRA Archives, Cape Town (Unpublished, 2000).

²³² See ‘25630 Robben Island Bluestone Quarry, Draft Basic Assessment Review’, RIM(Unpublished ,2014), p.17.

intangible memory of the prisoners that imbued the quarry with its significance hence the restoration of the wall was essential to ensure the authenticity and integrity of the intangible.²³³

Viney noted and acknowledged that the presence of a breeding penguin colony within the Bluestone Quarry and its surroundings had presented a sensitive ecological challenge to the proposed restoration project. However, it was also instructive to understand that the site had just seen the relative recent encroachment of African penguins that were not part of the historic cultural landscape. He further argued that due to the unforeseen delays in the restoration of the Bluestone Quarry wall, the site had developed a stronger natural or biodiversity importance than that which was present when the island was inscribed as a heritage site. He emphasized that it was crucial to note that the Island, and by extension the Bluestone Quarry, was nominated and inscribed based on the human impact experienced and not the natural values of the site. As such, ‘the predicted impact on the biodiversity, particularly the African penguins, should be balanced against the history and the banishment aspects of the site. Any efforts therefore to protect the environment had to take cognizance of the real consequences or outcomes of that protection.’²³⁴

He further argued that ‘to not implement the proposed restoration of the Stone Wall , on the grounds of environmental protection would result in a significant loss of history as well as the value of the site which is internationally recognized as the site that symbolises the triumph of the human spirit, of freedom and democracy over oppression.’²³⁵ Ron Viney also asserted that the African penguins were found across the island and the Bluestone Quarry was not the only site the birds occupied.

²³³ See ‘25630 Robben Island Bluestone Quarry, Draft Basic Assessment Review’, RIM(Unpublished ,2014), p.51.

²³⁴ ‘25630 Robben Island Bluestone Quarry’, p.51.

²³⁵ ‘25630 Robben Island Bluestone Quarry’, p.52.

The conventions as stipulated by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) were also invoked to justify the cultural significance of the site over its natural significance. He argued that ICOMOS had agreed that the determination of the Outstanding Universal Value of a heritage site was not negotiable. Therefore, any potential impacts on the natural landscape would need to be mitigated within the confines of that Outstanding Universal Value. Furthermore, due to the status of the island as a world heritage site, 'the most logical defensible order of assigning precedence would be to consider the international listing as a priority factor and therefore prioritise the protection of the site's Outstanding Universal Value.'²³⁶

The final verdict on this case was that since the justification for the Outstanding Universal Value stemmed from the site's cultural significance and not from the natural environment, it was recommended that the project be authorized in respect to the cultural heritage aspects on the site. However, '... should the project be authorized, the potential, permanent displacement and impact on the biodiversity on the Bluestone Quarry site should be seen and recognized as potential and acceptable ecological loss as the result of cultural heritage gain.'²³⁷ Thus the overarching significance of the site was cultural significance and all the activities of the project had to be made in respect to that significance. At this stage, it was clear to everyone that the Bluestone Quarry's significance lay in its role as cultural heritage site.

However, even though it was understood as a cultural heritage site, the following discussions show that the environmental concerns were not totally disregarded. Hence I argue that the

²³⁶ '25630 Robben Island Bluestone Quarry', p.55.

²³⁷ See '25630 Robben Island Bluestone Quarry, Draft Basic Assessment Review', RIM(Unpublished ,2014), p.56.

restoration project of the Stone Wall much as it was a cultural heritage project in its scope it was also a natural heritage project in practice

The Accepted Design for the Reconstruction of the Stone Wall

The designs for the reconstruction, as discussed in the previous chapters, were presented to the Bluestone Quarry Reference Group in 2003, the SAHRA ad hoc Council Permit Committee in 2004, 2005, 2009 and at the important meetings with all the stakeholders in 2013 and 2014. It was only at the focused group meetings on 25 February 2014, with all stakeholders present, that issues of the appropriate design for the project were finalized.²³⁸ The following discussion therefore draws from the group meeting of 25 February 2014.

Alternative one of the design (See Figure11) involved the reinstatement of the original Stone Wall with internal reinforcement which would be aesthetically integrated into the existing sections of the wall. In addition to restoring the integrity of the Stone Wall this option was meant to extend the life span of the wall as well as fulfilling the heritage requirements by visually integrating the existing sections of the wall.²³⁹

²³⁸ See RIBSQ Public Participation Report, RIM(Unpublished 2014)

²³⁹ RIBSQ Public Participation Report, p.7.

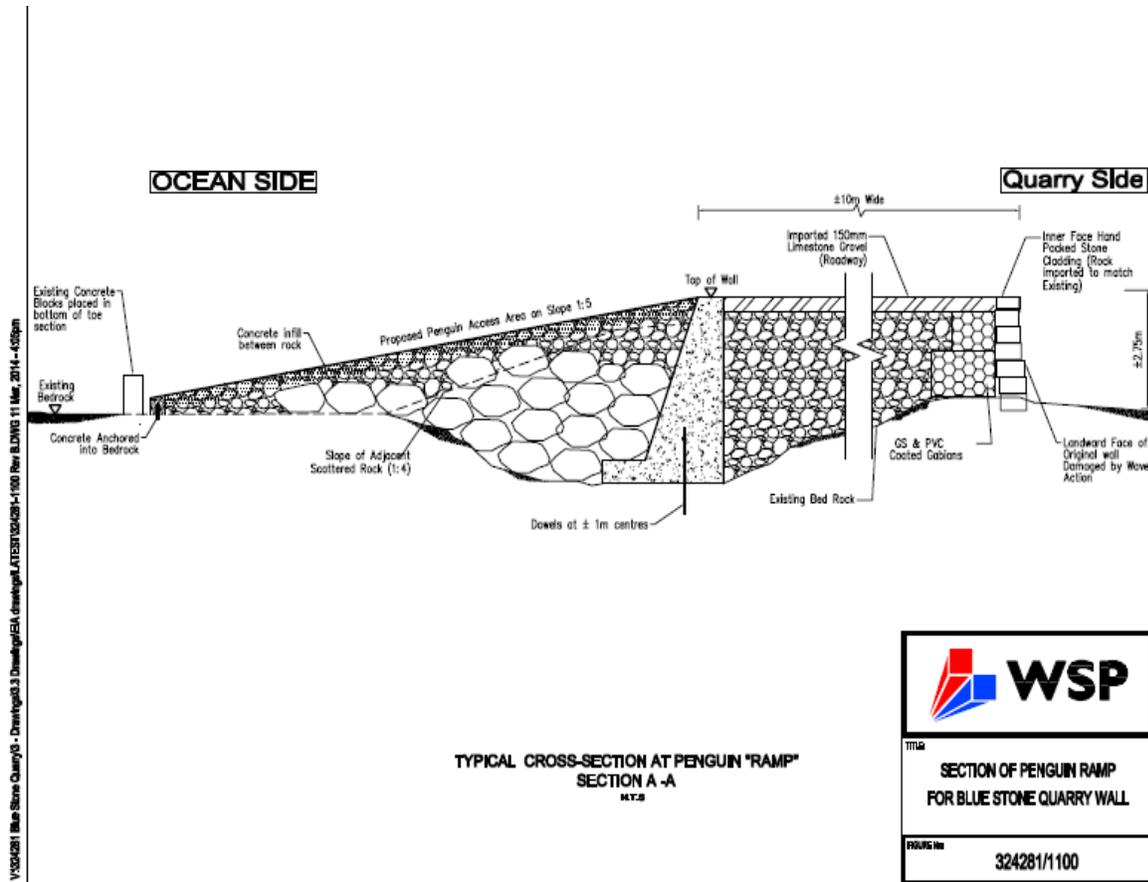


Fig.11 Alternative One, showing a slope as Penguin Ramp (Picture by WSP -2014).

There were a number of advantages for this alternative. The wall would be returned to its near original state and would aesthetically add to the heritage value of the site. Reinforcements were designed to maximize its life span. The design would not affect the long term movement of the African penguin which was one of the concerns for the project, as discussed in chapter three. The penguin walk way was to be a subtle gradient. Of significance, the surface treatment to the wall on the seaward side would not be on the quarry side, thereby not disturbing the setting. This design held only two disadvantages. The loose rock and boulders on the seaward side of the wall could over time or from a stormy event, expose the mass concrete reinforcement and

internal structure of the wall. However that would not affect the aesthetic value of the site from the quarry side and it could easily be repaired and maintained. A second disadvantage was that movement of rocks for the rehabilitation of the wall could have an effect on the avifauna which used the stockpile of scattered rocks as their nesting site.²⁴⁰

Alternative two (See Figure 12) also involved the reinstatement of the original Stone Wall with internal reinforcement that would be aesthetically integrated into the existing sections of the wall. However, to the south of the reinstated wall a penguin ramp was proposed as an additional physical structure that would facilitate movement of the endangered penguins from the seaward side down to the quarry water. This was aimed to maintain the current movement patterns of the penguins. Unlike in alternative one where the penguin ramp was just a subtle gradient, in this alternative two the ramp was a full physical structure that was clearly visible and seen as a new feature on the site. Like alternative one this option was envisaged to restore the integrity of the Bluestone quarry wall and extend the life span of the wall. In addition it was to fulfill the heritage requirements by visually integrating with the existing sections of the wall.

The approach offered by alternative two was advantageous on four counts. The wall would be returned to its near original state, with the exception of the penguin ramp which would be visible from the island side of the quarry. Secondly, the wall would be reinforced and designed to maximize its life span. The assessment also revealed that the design would maintain the current movement patterns of the African penguins. Finally, the penguin ramp itself would further provide protection to the wall against the sea.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ RIBSQ Public Participation Report, p.8.

²⁴¹ RIBSQ Public Participation Report, p. 8.

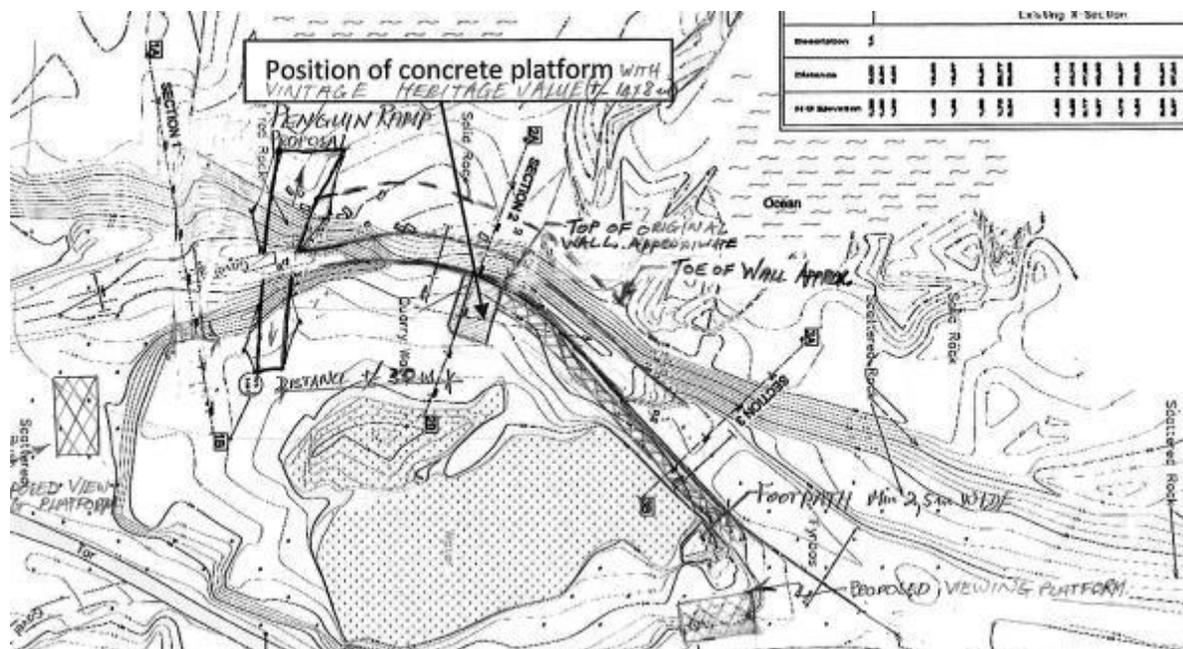


Fig. 12, Showing Alternative Two with full structural Penguin Ramp (Picture by WSP- 2014).

However, the introduction of the new fabric, the full structural penguin ramp, to the site, was viewed to be in conflict with the heritage value of the site as stipulated in the Burra charter, specifically article 8, and other heritage conventions. It was also against the wishes and memories of the ex-political prisoners to maintain the site as it was at the time of the mining activities, as discussed in chapter one.²⁴² Thus it was argued that no additional structural features like the penguin ramp should be considered as that would detract from the heritage value of the site. This would affect authenticity of the site.

Alternative three²⁴³ was quite different from the two discussed options. It was proposed as a mass concrete wall erected on the breached side but not aesthetically integrated with the existing sections of the Stone Wall. The aim of the reinstatement of the wall was to restore the heritage

²⁴² RIBSQ Public Participation Report, p.8.
²⁴³ The picture for alternative three was not available in the documents.

value attached to the wall as well as restore the integrity and original character of the wall.²⁴⁴

Although restoring the integrity of the wall, this option did not fulfill the heritage requirements and as such was no longer considered.

With alternative four (See Figure 13), the design was a freestanding concrete wall positioned on the seaward side of the existing wall and not reinstating the Stone Wall. The option entailed that the constructed freestanding wall on the seaward side of Stone Wall would absorb the energy of the waves before reaching the existing wall. This approach had a couple of advantages. It was agreed that the free standing wall would serve to protect the existing wall in its current condition and the quarry environment from further deterioration. It was also viewed to be very effective in reducing wave action. It was cost effective over a long period because of its low maintenance and the structure could last in excess of fifty years.²⁴⁵ In addition to this, it had a very short construction period of approximately two to three months.

In spite of these advantages that alternative four provided it was its shortfalls that were more critically examined. It was argued by ex-political prisoners and Viney that the construction of the freestanding wall would adversely impact on the integrity and visual characteristics of the Bluestone Quarry and the Stone Wall. In fact the introduction of the new feature, the freestanding wall, would be in contradiction to article 8 of the Burra Charter already discussed at

²⁴⁴ RIBSQ Public Participation Report, p.9.

²⁴⁵ RIBSQ Public Participation Report, p. 9.

the beginning of this chapter.

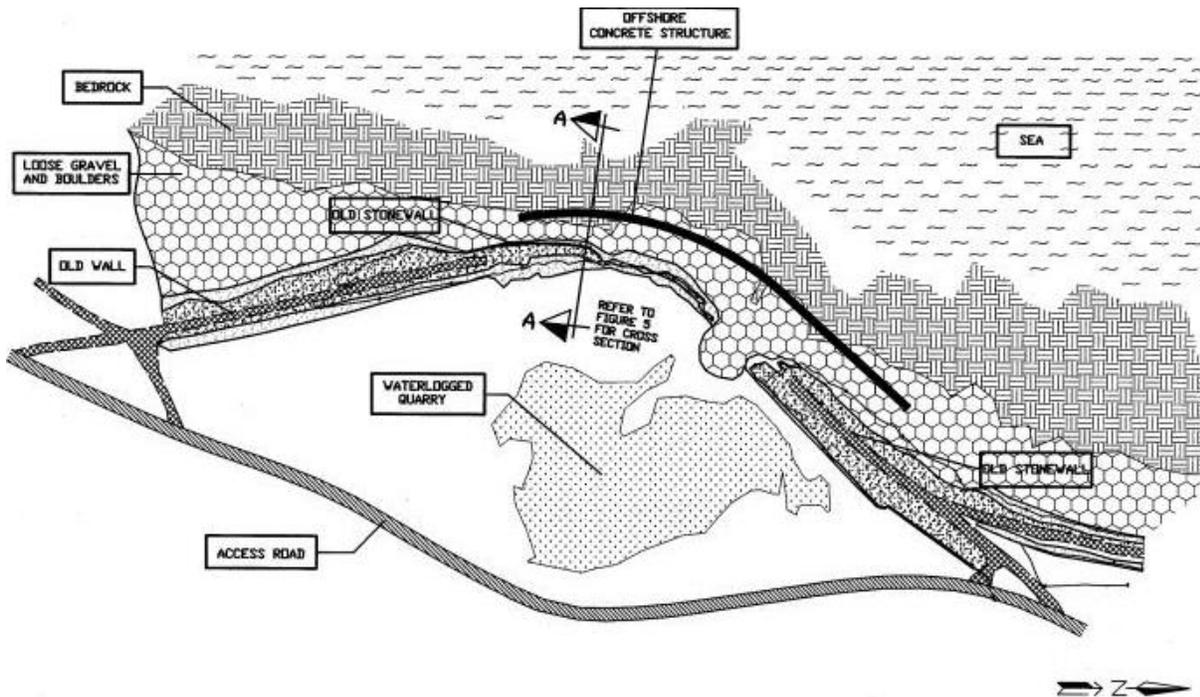


Fig.13, Layout (Alternative four) showing proposed concrete freestanding wall (Picture by WSP 2014).

Thus ‘conservation requires the retention of an appropriate visual setting and other relationships that contribute to the cultural significance of the place. New construction, demolition, intrusions or other changes which would adversely affect the setting or relationships are not appropriate.’²⁴⁶

The approach was also not going to reinstate the quarry environment to a similar state as when the quarry was mined by the political prisoners. Thus authenticity would be hugely compromised. Arnold van der Westhuizen and Sabelo Madlala also pointed out that the marine community would be impacted by the freestanding wall. Additionally, ‘the freestanding wall

²⁴⁶ See The Burra Charter: Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance 1999 (2000).

might have an impact on the wave dynamics and potentially have an irreversible knock-off effect on the ecosystem and ecological interactions that occur within this site.²⁴⁷ Aesthetically the freestanding wall was not seen as pleasing and could not meet and satisfy the heritage values of the site. It was also extraordinarily expensive. This alternative was therefore not seen as a viable environmental, heritage or financial option and as such was no longer considered.

The last option, alternative five (See Figure 4 in chapter 2), was similar to option four in almost all respects. This was the construction of an offshore Dolosse Structure. The option was about the deposition of the wave breaking dolosse²⁴⁸ into the ocean thereby creating the barrier between the Stone Wall and the ocean waves. This was to reduce the energy of the waves. This option had the same merits and demerits like its counterpart option four. It was therefore not accepted because it was deemed not viable in respect to environment, heritage value and financial wise.

At the end, alternative one was accepted by all the stakeholders because of its viability in meeting the environmental needs, heritage needs as well as the minimum financial costs. It is, however, important to stress that the role of the ex-political prisoners and their memories had a significant influence in the choice of the appropriate design, in this case alternative one, during the project. In my interview with Tongo, she acknowledged the influence of the ex-political prisoners for the choice of the appropriate design for the project.

Nolubabalo Tongo noted:

²⁴⁷ See 'Robben Island Bluestone Quarry Assessment of Construction Alternatives Addendum Report', RIM(Unpublished, 2014).

²⁴⁸ Dolloses are large concrete solid structures of irregular shape usually placed along the shores to break the sea waves.

Without their memories otherwise none of us could have come up with the best conservation technique. We could have gone with the popular issues of putting up some dollosse or kind of heavy engineering stuff and by having that heavy engineering stuff we could have lost authenticity. But because it's a world heritage site we did not want to go the route of the engineers where the engineers could come and actually design the wall full of everything and heavy structure and fix the wall.²⁴⁹

Because of this role that the ex-political prisoners had in influencing the engineers, by providing information and also emphasising the site as a place of considerable meaning to which their memories were attached, I consider as the main argument of this thesis that oral history and memory work had a significant role during the restoration project. Yet, as has been shown, the ex-political prisoners were just one of the stakeholders, and as discussions went forward the representations of others also began to hold sway and influenced the design of the project.

It is apparent at this stage that the decision to arrive at alternative one as the suitable design of the wall rested on two significant considerations. Firstly, the design satisfied the needs of authenticity (at this point I am referring to ahistorical or progressive authenticity as argued in chapter 2). Secondly, the alternative one was environmentally friendly as it accommodated the easy passage of the penguins through the subtle gradient as a penguin ramp. From these decisions and assessment one could see that the project was swinging to both natural and cultural heritage. For the project which had initially begun as a cultural heritage project in its objectives, in the course of time it had developed into a natural heritage project. It is against this background

²⁴⁹ Interview with Nolubabalo Tongo, Senior Heritage Officer ,Robben Island Museum , Nelson Mandela Gateway, on 28 April, 2015.

that I formulate the argument of this chapter, that the Stone Wall project was not essentially a cultural heritage project but also intrinsically a natural heritage project. By extension I also argue that it was a project in which tradeoffs, compromises were made between those advocating the natural or cultural heritage of the site.

Accepted Construction Period and Specialists Assessments

However, settling on the appropriate construction design of the wall did not end the challenges. There was need to agree on the correct timing of construction so that the life circle of the biodiversity on the site was not adversely affected and to consider Arnold van der Westhuizen's earlier proposal to restrict the construction period to a six week period. He had argued that the six week period would not affect much of the life circle, especially breeding patterns of some of the endangered and near threatened birds on the site.²⁵⁰

However, the engineers felt it would not be technically possible to complete the construction of the Stone Wall within a single six week period. Therefore, although the six week period was suitable in environmental terms it was not feasible in construction terms.²⁵¹ As a result, the engineers of DPW/WSP were tasked with devising two feasible construction periods for the accepted design. Thus DPW/WSP proposed two options or methodologies in terms of the period of construction that would respect and consider both the environmental concerns and heritage concerns of the site. These were presented in a team meeting to van der Westhuizen and Viney on 25 June 2014 at RIM's Nelson Mandela Gateway. These were further technically assessed by

²⁵⁰ See A. Westhuizen and L.G Underhill 'Proposed Reconstruction of the Dry Stone Wall an Bluestone quarry Robben Island, Avifaunal Assessment Report', RIM (Unpublished, 2014).

²⁵¹ See 'Robben Island Bluestone Quarry Assessment of Construction Alternatives Addendum Report', RIM (Unpublished, 2014), p.8.

both van der Westhuizen and Viney to evaluate their applicability and feasibility and whether they would address both the environmental and cultural heritage concerns such as authenticity and integrity of the site. Thus environmental considerations still had a role to play in the project's execution as well as the site's cultural heritage.

Option one was to reconstruct the Stone Wall over a single six month construction period.

Option two proposed the reconstruction over a single six week construction period per year for three consecutive years. Van der Westhuizen and Underhill assessed these proposals in relation to the needs of the biodiversity on the site. After scrutinizing the two options, they concluded that due to the nature of the site, the avifauna present at the site were not habituated to 'anthropogenic presence' i.e. presence of people on the site. Therefore exposing them to human presence once off would have a less detrimental effect than three consecutive seasons of anthropogenic presence. The higher post-mitigation impact for option two was due to the increased risk of disturbance to the avifauna of the site resulting from consecutive seasons of disturbance. It was therefore their professional view that 'anthropogenic disturbance' that would occur in small intervals over consecutive years or seasons, was far greater than a single disturbance of slightly longer period of time i.e. six months. Furthermore, the repeated disturbance might bring about the permanent displacement of the African penguins from the site and therefore loss of the breeding area.²⁵² They therefore recommended option one for having the least impact on bird life on the site.

Ron Viney also examined these two options and proffered his suggestions and recommendations. Based on his technical and professional evaluation, he contended that option

²⁵² See 'Robben Island Bluestone Quarry Assessment of Construction Alternatives Addendum Report', RIM(Unpublished, 2014), p.16.

two would have a much higher negative impact on the Outstanding Universal Value, integrity and authenticity of the wall because it would last over three years. Option two, would also require more inappropriate materials to be stored on site for incorporation into the wall. Furthermore, the mass concrete wall and other construction features such as the gabions would be unsightly upon completion of the first year of construction. Additionally, he argued that the site would also have to be rehabilitated to similar state after each construction phase. That would entail that rehabilitation would have to be done three times rather than once. Consequently, each disturbance and subsequent rehabilitation might see deviations in the state of the site's authenticity and integrity. His professional view was that option two was the least favourable.²⁵³ In his opinion, option one would have a much lower and temporary impact provided the appropriate mitigation measures were put in place. There were concerns about the impact on authenticity and integrity though. He suggested three ways to mitigate this. Two of these three suggestions were important as they underlined the role of oral history and memory work in conservation practice, which is the central focus of this thesis.

He suggested that the construction of the concrete wall and reconstruction of the Stone Wall should be an act of memorialization. And to achieve a 'longer term less maintenance option' it was important to secure a tangible form from the memories of the ex-political prisoners. He suggested that 'the reconstruction should follow closely the vernacular design, materials and workmanships of the extant walling' i.e. the original remaining wall. The stones that would be used for the construction of the wall should be sourced from existing loose stones that are present in the quarry and from the existing stockpiles of rocks that are located close to the site

²⁵³ Robben Island Bluestone Quarry Assessment, p.17.

He recommended this to be corroborated by historic and oral evidence. Thus again memory was crucial to achieve the right reconstruction that would ensure retention of authenticity and integrity of the site at least in a number of respects. Like his counterparts, the avifaunal specialists, he was of the professional view that option one was the best and preferred. This was because from a cultural heritage perspective it would be the best methodology to safe guard the outstanding universal value/significance, integrity and authenticity of the site.

Again it is quite clear and evident that even though the Bluestone Quarry officially is recognized as a cultural heritage site, the decisions that were made to resolve the differences in the project did not ignore environmental considerations. This lends credence to my argument that the Stone Wall project was not essentially a cultural heritage project but also intrinsically a natural heritage project. I extend this argument further by arguing that the Bluestone Quarry project stands as a model for how best conflicts of natural and cultural heritage on a site can be reconciled in management of heritage on site that exhibits mixed heritage.

After long protracted debates, consultations, and contestations on the challenges of the project since its inception in 2002 everything was resolved as discussed above in 2014. The certificate to authorize the implementation of the project was also issued that year. The remaining project phases are now the construction phase and the operation phase.²⁵⁴ The construction phase involves all construction activities to restore the Stone Wall while the operational phase would include all the maintenance activities once the Stone Wall is complete. The project does not have the decommissioning phase because ‘the nature of this project dictates that the reinstated wall

²⁵⁴ Interview with Mr Pascal Taruvunga, Chief Heritage Manager of Robben Island, on 28 April 2015, at Nelson Mandela Gateway.

must be maintained for future generations and therefore the development has not been designated a lifespan.²⁵⁵

In conclusion, the chapter has explored how contestations on significance of the site were resolved, how the different designs of the Stone Wall were evaluated to arrive at an alternative that satisfied both the natural and cultural heritage sides of the site and, finally, how the suitable duration and period for construction was decided in order to meet the demands of both the engineers, the avifaunal specialists and the cultural heritage specialist. The chapter has also argued that the restoration project of the Stone Wall much as it was the cultural heritage project in its scope it was also a natural heritage project. This is because in heritage management of sites it is the significance on which the site is nominated that guides its conservation practice. In the case of the Bluestone Quarry it is its cultural heritage status that was supposed to determine what heritage should be conserved and what heritage should be disregarded. However, as it turned out during the decisions for the project the concerns of natural heritage on the site were not entirely thrown out but were accommodated in the implementation of the project. Thus much as the decisions were made and implemented in order to realize the cultural heritage gain, the project at the same time sought to minimize where possible the impact on the biodiversity on the site.

²⁵⁵ See 'Reinstatement of the Blue Stone Quarry Wall and Limestone Road Way, Robben Island: Draft Environmental Management Programme,' Reference number 14/12/16/3/3/1/747 (2014,RIM (Unpublished,2014),

CONCLUSION

In summary, the main goal of this thesis was to investigate and explore how the project of the Stone Wall came to be highly contested and how it was finally resolved. The thesis also aimed to address the research question about the role of oral history and memory work during the project. To respond to these goals and aims the thesis has provided a full account of the Stone Wall project, discussed and examined the role of memory and oral history during the project, explored the various debates and contestations among the interested parties in the project and finally, it has presented the discussion on how the contested issues were resolved.

In the introduction, I have provided a brief historical background of the Bluestone Quarry site and the context of the project. I have shown that the Bluestone Quarry site is part of the cultural landscape on Robben Island and among the twenty quarries on the island. I have also discussed how the political prisoners through hard labour built the dyke or Stone Wall and how later in 2001 the wall was washed away by storms of the sea. The need to restore this breached wall gave emergence to the Stone Wall project.

I have demonstrated through the thesis that the Stone Wall project was a complex project with contested heritage issues that provided a challenge to its progress. I have also identified different stakeholders that were involved in the project and their concerns and arguments. Of particular interest has been the ex-political prisoners who were the primary stakeholders. I have argued in the thesis that reliance on their memory through the oral history approach in the project was crucial for the project.

While there have been criticisms levelled on the functional use of memory and oral history as research methodology, its use during the Stone Wall project was crucial and effective. The Bluestone Quarry Reference Group proved to be an essential resource for research and memorial processes within the Bluestone Quarry precinct. I have demonstrated how ex-political prisoner's memories contributed to understanding and interpretation of the tangible and intangible cultural heritage on the site and in the long run helped the entire institution to make informed interventions on the site. Thus it has been evident in the thesis that, even though the project drew stakeholders with different perspectives, the ex-political prisoners through oral history interviews and their concurrent memories in the focused group meetings, shaped the decisions of the project particularly in ensuring that the restoration designs as suggested by the engineers of DPW/WSP and other activities should respect the notions of authenticity, integrity, and cultural significance of the site. Thus through memory work, the ex-political prisoners were able to provide an insight of how the original building techniques, materials and setting of the site was. This had a positive impact in modifying both the designs and type of materials to be used in reconstructing the Stone Wall so that authenticity in design, material and setting could be retained there by providing also a nuanced interpretation of the site and the Stone Wall. It is on this premise that I make my overarching argument that the use of oral history and memory work during the restoration project was influential and had a significant impact on the intangible interpretation of the Bluestone Quarry site.

In the thesis, the role of the specialists or experts is very much conspicuous. This is more evident when the role of Arnold Van der Westhuezien, the bird specialist, and Ron Viney, the Cultural heritage specialist, and even that of DPW/WSP, the construction engineers are

considered. Their role could have overshadowed that of the ex-political prisoners and their memories yet the ex-political prisoners asserted their own role as ‘experts’ for they were the ones who built the wall. It is also evident that Ron Viney played a significant role in ensuring that the memories of the ex-political prisoners did not take a back seat either. SAHRA’s role was also crucial as far as respect of memories of the ex-political prisoners was concerned.

The thesis has also identified and explored deeply and widely the conceptual heritage issues that the project presented and how these were hotly and strongly debated by various stakeholders in the project. I have shown that issues of authenticity, integrity and the conflict between the natural and cultural heritage on the site were the predominant challenges to contend with during the project. Thus in chapter two I have attempted to present a thorough discussion on the discourse of authenticity and integrity. I have argued in this chapter that in restoration projects of cultural heritage resources it is difficult and sometimes impossible to fully meet the demands of authenticity of the fabric during the project. As a result, it is the ahistorical authenticity as opposed to absolute/objective/historical authenticity that is always achieved. Thus the quest for returning to the original historical form of the fabric during restoration projects is an illusion. In advancing this argument, I have managed to substantiate it by relating it to the debates that erupted on this issue in relation to the proposed designs of the Stone Wall. Thus it is evident that the final design that was accepted, while respecting some historical aspects, it also reflected the concerns of nature.

The thesis has discussed the circumstances that made the Stone Wall project to be a source of

conflict about the significance of the natural heritage versus cultural heritage of the site. I have argued that when a heritage site embodies and exhibits mixed aspects of heritage, cultural and natural heritage, it is inevitable that conflicts emerge and surface between these two ‘heritages’ in the course of conservation of the site. I have demonstrated in chapter three the difficulties and challenges that emerge when interpreting a site that exhibits both aspects of cultural and natural significance. Thus the chapter addressed the challenging question in conservation management: which aspect of significance should be prioritized and therefore override the other and on what grounds? It has further discussed some of the environmental concerns that the project engendered. It has also shown the importance of undertaking an environmental impact assessment in order to identify the possible impacts that a heritage project may bring.

The question of how the contestations in the project were finally resolved has been answered in the final chapter, chapter four. I have shown how use of legal instruments and heritage conventions that govern conservation of heritage resources were crucial in resolving some of the important challenges that faced the project. Because of the way the decisions were made to resolve challenges in the project, I have argued that the restoration project of the Stone Wall much as it was the cultural heritage project in its scope it was also a natural heritage project in practice. The environmental lobby groups thus had some impact and influence. Several stakeholders had, however, on both sides to move from rigid uncompromising positions.

The thesis has also shown how the restoration project at the Bluestone Quarry reflected the works and arguments by some scholars in the heritage field. These are Laurajane Smith and her notion of Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD), Kodzo Gavua on contestations related to

conservation of sites and monuments and also Peter Meusburger and Michael Hefferman on how use of memory of the communities help inform the conservation and restoration of sites.

Laurajane Smith argued that ‘there is rather a hegemonic discourse about heritage, which acts to constitute the way we think, talk, and write about heritage.’ According to her ‘what this Authorized Heritage Discourse does is to universalize the notion of heritage, seen from the perspective of the experts who are either historians, archeologists, museum curators or architects, and undermine alternative and subaltern ideas about heritage.’ She also identified the subaltern discourse of heritage that works in competition with Authorised Heritage Discourse when it comes to ‘negotiation, interpretation and regulation of range of cultural and social values of meanings.’²⁵⁶ Thus the ex-political prisoners through their memory work in the project presented the competing discourse of negotiation, and interpretation of heritage, in this case the Bluestone Quarry site and the Stone Wall, and challenged the ‘institutionalised’ and ‘essentialised’ meaning of heritage by the ‘experts’.

Kodzo Gavua argued that in ‘addition to performing their orthodox functions, sites and monuments actively feature in contestations and negotiations of power between and within groups, and this is key to designations, constructions, maintenance and conservation of monuments.’²⁵⁷ I understand this in relation to the contestations surrounding the conservation of Stone Wall, which is a monument before the eyes of the ex-prisoners during the conservation project. Peter Meusburger and Michael Hefferman, have shown how use of memory of the communities help inform conservation and restoration of sites but also how this use of memory

²⁵⁶ Smith, *The Uses of Heritage*, p.28.

²⁵⁷ Gavua, K. ‘Monuments and Negotiation of Power in Ghana’ in Petersen, D., Gavua, K. and Rassool, C. (eds.), *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economics, Histories and Infrastructures* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.97-112.

informs proper use of some of the cultural heritage resources in Swahili coast of Kenya.²⁵⁸ This bears synergy with the role of oral history and memory work in influencing some of the decisions during the conservation project. Finally the thesis has shown how the Bluestone Quarry and Stone Wall became sites on which memory ‘crystallized’ itself during the project. This reflects the work of Pierre Nora and Sean Field who have both argued that memory resides in certain spaces and sites, and these space become sites of memory.²⁵⁹ In agreement with Steven Hoelscher and Derek Alderman who have argued that there is an ‘ inextricable link between memory and place and that certain spaces are markers of history and memory,’²⁶⁰ the thesis has shown how memory was related to the Bluestone Quarry site and how the Bluestone Quarry is the marker of history and memory.

In closing, this thesis has not only contributed to the understanding of heritage and its management on Bluestone Quarry but through the Bluestone Quarry the thesis has provided an insight into conservation practice and management of heritage sites .Perhaps significantly it has also contributed to our understanding that conservation projects of heritage are complex undertakings that are often contestable and that it is through decision making, compliance with heritage conventions and participation of different stakeholders that management of heritage becomes possible. In the end heritage and its construction becomes a product of a process rather than mere inheritance.

²⁵⁸ Meusburger and Hefferman, ‘Oral history and Conservation Of Immovable Heritage’, pp.330-55.

²⁵⁹ Field, *Oral history, Community and Displacement*, p.103; P. Nora, ‘Between Memory’, p.7.

²⁶⁰ Hoelscher and Alderman, ‘Memory and Place’, pp.347-55.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

- Abrams, L., *Oral history theory* (London: Routledge, 2010).
- Alexander, N., *Robben Island Prison Dossier 1964-1974: Report to the International Community* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1994).
- Babenia, N., *Memoirs of a Saboteur* (Bellville: Mayibuye Books, 1995).
- Bozzoli, B., (ed.) *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist Penetration and Popular Response*. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983).
- Buntman, F., *Robben Island and Prisoner Resistance to Apartheid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- Daniels, E., *There and Back: Robben Island 1964-1979* (Bellville: Mayibuye Books, University of the Western Cape, 1998).
- Deacon, H., (ed.), *The Island: A History of Robben Island: 1488-1990* (Cape Town: David Philip Press, 1996).
- Deacon, H., Penn, N., and Alexander, N., *Robben Island: The Politics of Rock and Sand* (University of Cape Town, Department of Adult Education and Extramural Studies, 1993).
- Dlamini, M., *Hell-Hole, Robben Island* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1984).
- Feilden, B and Jokilehto, J., *Management Guidelines for World Cultural Heritage Sites* (Rome: ICCROM, 1998).
- Field, S., *Oral history, Community and Displacement: Memories in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).
- Fleminger, D., *World Heritage Sites of South Africa, Robben Island* (Johannesburg: South Publishers Ltd, 2006).
- Foucault, M., *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London, Penguin, 1991).
- Karp, I., et al. *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).
- Kathrada, A., *Memoirs* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2004).

- Kathrada, A., *Letters from Robben Island: A Selection of Ahmed Kathrada's Prison Correspondence, 1964-1989* (Rivonia: Zebra Press, 2000).
- Mandela, N., *Long Walk to Freedom* (Randburg: McDonald Purnel Ltd, 1994).
- Murray, N and Witz, L., *Hostels, Homes, Museum: Memorialising Migrant Labour Pasts in Lwandle, South Africa* (Claremont: UCT Press, 2014).
- Naidoo, A., *Island in Chains: Prisoner 885/63* (London: Penguin Group, 2003).
- Perks, R. and Thomson, A., *The Oral history Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998),
- Portelli, A., *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).
- Smith, C., *Robben Island* (Cape Town: Struik Publishers Ltd, 1997).
- Sisulu, E., *Walter and Albertina Sisulu: In Our Life Time* (Claremont: David Philip Publishers, 2002).
- Sisulu, W., *I Will Go Singing* (Ndabeni: Rubic Press, 2001).
- The Burra Charter: *The Australian ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, 1999 (Burwood : Australia ICOMOS Inc, 2000).
- The Australian Natural Heritage Charter* (Burwood : Australia ICOMOS Inc, 2001).
- Thompson, P., *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.).

ARTICLES AND CHAPTERS IN BOOKS

- Brempong, O., 'The African American Factor in the Commodification of Ghana's Slave Castles', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, No.6(2002), pp.115-135.
- Deacon, H., 'Intangible Heritage in Conservation Management Planning; The Case of Robben Island', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 10, 3(2004), pp. 1-9.
- Dhupelia-Mesthrie, U., 'Dispossession and Memory: The Black River Community of Cape Town', *Oral History* (2000), pp.35-43.
- Field, S., 'Sites of Memory in Langa' in S. Field, R. Meyer and F. Swanson (eds.) *Imagining the City: Memories and Cultures in Cape Town* (Cape Town: HSPC Press, 2007).

- Gavua, K. 'Monuments and Negotiation of Power in Ghana' in Petersen, D., Gavua, K. and Rassool, C. (eds.), *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economics, Histories and Infrastructures* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
- Harvey, D. and Riley M., 'Landscape Archeology, Heritage and the Community in Devon: An Oral History Approach', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* Vol.54, 242, pp. 217-242.
- Herb, S., 'Effective Use of Authenticity and Integrity As World Heritage Qualifying Condition', *City and Time*, 2(3), pp.123-145.
- Hefferman, M and Mesusburger, P., 'Oral history and Conservation Of Immovable Heritage in Swahili Coast', *African Archaeology Today*, Vol 27(16) (2008), pp.330-55.
- Hoelscher, S., and Alderman, D., 'Memory and Place: Geographies of Critical Relationship', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 5, 3(2004), pp.347-55.
- Howarth, K., 'Oral history', *Junta Statutes of South Africa*, Vol 12, 2003-2004, pp.367-378.
- Jones, S. and Yarrow, T., 'Crafting Authenticity, An Ethnography of Conservation Practice', *Material Culture*, Vol.8(1), pp.17.
- McGregor, J., and Schumacher, L., 'Heritage in Southern Africa: Imagining and marketing Public Culture and History', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 32, 4(2006), pp.274-85.
- Minkley, G and Rasool, C., 'Orality, Memory and Social History in South Africa', in S Nuttall and C Coetzee (eds.) in *Negotiating the Past: The Making Of Memory In South Africa*, (Cape town, OUP, 1998).
- Nora, P., 'Between Memory and History', *Representations*, 26, 2 (1989), pp.7-24.
- O'Farrell, P., 'Oral History: Facts and Fiction,' *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, No.5 (1982-83):3-9.
- Phaswana-Mafuya, N., and Haydam, N., 'Tourists' Expectations and Perceptions of the Robben Island Museum-World Heritage Site', *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 20, 2(2005), pp.149-169.
- Scott, W., 'Experience' in Judith Butler and Joan W Scot (eds.), *Feminists Theorise the Political* (London, Routledge:1998).
- Shackly, M., 'Potential Futures for Robben Island: Shrine, Museum or Theme Park?', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 7, 4(2001), pp.355-363.
- Strange, C., and Kempa, M., 'Shades of Dark Tourism: Alcatraz and Robben Island', *Annals of*

Tourism Research, 30,2(2003), pp.386-405.

Tongo,N., 'The Use of Ex-Political Prisoners Reference Group as a Research Method for Conserving the Intangible and Tangible Significance of the Robben Island Maximum Security Prison: A Case Study.' *Historic Environment*, Vol.19,2(2006),pp.38-45.

Thompson, A., 'Four Paradigm Transformation in Oral History'. *Oral History Review*, No.6 (2004), pp 123-144.

UNPUBLISHED PAPERS

Buntman, F., 'Politics and Secrets of Political History', Biennial Conference of the South African History Society, Not Telling: Secrecy, Lies and History, UWC (1999).

Chapman et al, ' Robben Island: A Baseline Terrestrial Ecology Study and Recommendations for Vegetation Rehabilitation' (Unpublished,2000).

Deacon, H., 'Memory and History', A Paper presented at Memory and History Conference at University of the Western Cape (Unpublished,2000).

THESES

Rassool ,C. S., 'The Individual, Auto/biography and History in South Africa' (PhD Thesis, UWC, 2004).

Solani,N., 'Memory and Representation: Robben Island 1997-1999.'(MA Thesis UWC,2000).

Rionfol, V., 'The Making of a New Past for a New South Africa: The Commemoration of Robben Island' (MA Thesis, UCT, 1999).

RIM PAPERS

Environmental Authorisation Process for the Proposed reinstatement of the Bluestone Quarry Stone Wall and Limestone roadway at Robben Island, Cape Town(Unpublished,2012),

Meeting Minutes Robben Island BSQ 25630, 23 August 2013,RIM (Unpublished 2013).

Meeting Minutes Robben Island BSQ 25630, 25 September 2013,RIM(Unpublished,2013).

Meeting Minutes Robben Island BSQ 25630, RIM(Unpublished,2014).

National Environmental Management Act(NEMA) sections 23 and 24.

Reinstatement of the Blue Stone Quarry Wall and Limestone Road Way, Robben Island: Draft Environmental Management Programme, Reference number 14/12/16/3/3/1/747, RIM (Unpublished, 2014).

RIBSQ Public Participation Report, RIM (Unpublished 2014).

Robben Island Bluestone Quarry Assessment of Construction Alternatives Addendum Report, 18 September 2014, RIM(unpublished,2014),

Robben Island Museum Intergrated Conservation Management Plan 2013-2018, RIM(Unpublished,2013).

Robben Island Museum Preservation Plan: The Restoration of WW2 Structures, Del Waal Battery, Ordinance BL9.2 inch MK VII and MKX Coast Defence Guns.(Unpublished).

The Quarries and R.Sobukwe Final Document. (Report, 2008).

Viney, R.,Robben Island Bluestone quarry Heritage Impact Assessment Summary Draft 3,RIM,(Unpublished,2014).

Westhuizen, A and Underhill, L.G., ‘Proposed Reconstruction of the Dry Stone Wall an Bluestone quarry Robben Island,Avifaunal Assesment Report’,RIM(Unpublished,2014).

25630 Robben Island Bluestone Quarry, Draft Basic Assessment Review, 22 September2014, RIM(Unpublished,2014).

SAHRA PAPERS

Letter entitled ‘Bluestone Quarry; Application Permit’, ref 9/2/018/0004, File 13, 18 January 2006,SAHRA Archives, Cape Town (Unpublished).

Letter entitled, ‘Bluestone Quarry; Application Permit’, ref 9/2/018/0005, File 13, 12 May, 2009,SAHRA Archives, CapeTown (Unpublished).

Letter entitled ‘ Proposals for the Conservation of Dry Stone Wall at the Bluestone Quarry’, ref. 9/2/018/4, File 8 ,18 January 2006, SAHRA Archives(unpublished).

Matenga, E.,‘ Proposals for the Conservation of a Dry Stone Wall at the Blue Stone Quarry on Robben Island’, File 9/2/018/0004, SAHRA Archives , Cape Town(Unpublished Report, 2004).

Riley, Robben Island Conservation Survey, File 9/2/018/0004, SAHRA Archives, Cape Town (Unpublished1993).

Viney ,R. ,RIM Quarries and Robert Sobokwe Complex Final Report, File 9/2/018/0004, SAHRA Archives, Cape Town (Unpublished 2011).

World Heritage Nomination Documentation File 916, in File 9/2/018004, SAHRA Archives, Cape Town(Unpublished 2000).

WSP & Ad Astra Festina, RIM Bluestone Quarry Identification and Assessment of Previous Studies and SAHRA Decisions, File 9/2/018/0004, SAHRA Archives,Cape Town(Unpublished Report, 2013

INTERVIEWS AND COMMUNICATIONS UNDERTAKEN BY CANDIDATE

Interview with Mr Sabelo , Environmental Heritage Management officer with RIM on 14 April 2015 at Robben Island.

Interview with Nolubabalo Tongo, Senior Heritage Officer ,Robben Island Museum, on 28 April, 2015 at Nelson Mandela Gateway.

Interview with Mr Pascal Taruvinga, Chief Heritage Manager of Robben Island, on 28 April 2015, at Nelson Mandela Gateway.

Conversation with Ron Viney at Nelson Mandela Gateway, 2013.

RECORDED INTERVIEWS BY RIM (MAYIBUYE ARCHIVES, UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE, CAPETOWN)

BL stone quarry No1c 11-05-02 PF 044(VHS TAPE) .

Stone Quarry Reference Group 0456, Tape 2A,09/10/2003.

Stone Quarry Reference Group 0456, Tape 2B,09/10/2003.

Stone Quarry Reference Group 0457, Tape 2C,10/05/2003.

Stone Quarry 2, 12.10.2003 Tape 14c RF 0842 .

Stone Quarry Reference Group. 0807, 09/10/2003

Stone Quarry Reference Group. 0808, 09/10/2003.

Stone Quarry Reference Group. 0809, 09/10/2003.

Stone Quarry Reference Group. 0810, 09/10/2003.

Stone Quarry Reference Group. 0813, 10/10/2003.

Stone Quarry Reference Group. 0827, 09/10/2003.

AUDIO – VISUAL DVDs (RIM)

The Bluestone Quarry 1, A Robben Island Museum Kassified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

The Bluestone Quarry 2, A Robben Island Museum Kassified Production House, DVD, 2013, RIM.

