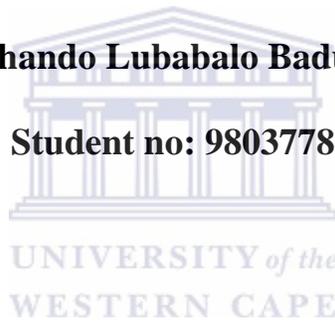


**Memory and documentation in exhibition-making: A case study of the
Protea Village exhibition, *A History of Paradise 1829 - 2002***

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**A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of M.A. in Public and Visual History, in the Department of
History, University of the Western Cape**

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Date Submitted: 15 November 2007

Declaration

I, Uthando Lubabalo Baduza declare that **‘Memory and documentation in exhibition-making: A case study of the Protea Village Exhibition, *A History of Paradise 1829 - 2002*’** is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Uthando Lubabalo Baduza

Date



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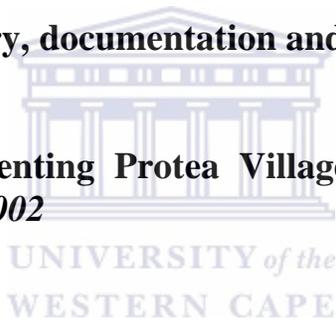
It's very hard to work on an M.A. whilst being employed full-time but my colleagues at the HSRC Press have put up with my many absences from the office. My thanks to you.

Finally I would like to thank my family and friends who have supported me through what has been the most challenging endeavour I have undertaken, and for enduring the endless conversations as I tried to formulate my ideas. I trust that I have been able to demonstrate the faith that you shown in me. Ndiyabulela.

I dedicate this work to the memory of my cousin, Simphiwe Mgojo-Ndoro (1976-2003). May your soul rest in peace.

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Introduction

This mini-thesis seeks to interrogate the interplay between memory and documentation in the process of exhibition-making by a looking at the preparation for and mounting of the exhibition, *A History of Paradise 1829-2002 – Protea Village* by the District Six Museum. This will be achieved by looking at the institutional methodologies employed by the Museum in dealing with ex-residents of District Six, their memories and artefacts in the heritage practice of a Museum as a forum. This practice was put into effect as the District Six Museum engaged ex-residents of other locations of removal.

A desire had been expressed by the Museum to narrate the broader stories of forced removal in the whole of Cape Town. The analysis of how the *Protea Village* exhibition was prepared and mounted, as well as how it was received by the actors involved, offers an opportunity not only to ask how the District Six Museum has been successful in its mission but also to ask how the interests of the different actors were represented and mediated in the final exhibition. This mini-thesis will also attempt to understand how the different stakeholders were implicated in the reconstruction of Protea Village and seek to chart how this reconstruction had a huge influence on the final exhibition. The prevailing question, then, is whether this reconstruction of a place and memory, cast within a revisionist history paradigm, has been successful in excavating ‘stories from below’.

Chapter One seeks to interrogate the ‘institutional methodologies’ of the museum in the attempt to highlight some of the strengths and challenges still faced by the Museum in excavating ‘histories from below’. In doing so, the chapter argues that the formation of the Hands Off District Six (HODS) committee in 1987, and the subsequent conference in 1988 heralded a unique moment in the longer history of District Six.¹ A symbol for all the devastating effects of the Group Areas Act legislation, the destruction of complex, dynamic, “vibrant” community which goes beyond its own physical boundaries and District Six, the place, became a potent symbol for inserting the history of forced removals in the narrative of post-apartheid history.²

Karp and Lavine have argued in 1998 that ‘every museum exhibition ...inevitably draws on the cultural assumptions and resources of the people who make it.’³ They argue that there are deliberate choices that are made by the curatorial teams who mount the exhibitions, which often highlight ‘some truths’ but submerge others. I will refer to what the Museum says about itself, its audiences and its approach to exhibition-making to interrogate how successful the Museum has been in its mission.

Chapter Two begins to suggest that the idea of Protea Village as a coherent community was in many ways a product of the land claim itself. When the community decided to institute a land claim in terms of the Land Restitution Act 22 of 1994, they had to satisfy

¹S Jeppie and C. Soudien, “Introduction”, in S Jeppie and C. Soudien (eds). *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present: A Project of the Hands Off District Six Committee* (Cape Town: Buchu Books, 1990), p 1.

² Ibid, p 3.

³I. Karp and S. D Lavine, “Introduction: Museums and Multiculturalism” in S.D. Lavine and I. Karp (eds), *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), p 1.

certain criteria in terms of Section 2 of the Act. This Act was the ‘first piece of transformative legislation to be passed by the newly democratically elected South African Government.’⁴ It sought to redress the gross imbalances in land ownership in South Africa, where 80% of the land ownership is in the hands of a 13% white minority. It sought to create a legislative instrument to accelerate land reform in South Africa and ensure that it is more equitably redistributed.

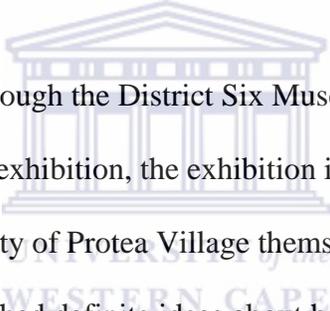
As part of the criteria for your claim to be considered to be legitimate for consideration, claimants were required to write a brief historical background of the area where the claimant community had previously settled before they were forcibly moved. There were range of actors who took it upon themselves to resurrect the memory of Protea. The Land Restitution Act provided the framework for the resurrection of that memory. This chapter seeks to examine the different sites of memory and the genealogy of that memory.

My direct involvement in the research and mounting of the exhibition, presents one with interesting opportunity simultaneously to offer an insider account of the curatorial process as well as to critically assess how the processes of exhibition-making unfolded. I agree with Kratz, when she argues that ‘with most exhibitions how they are initially conceptualised, differs greatly to the eventual final product.’⁵ There is often robust debate within curatorial teams about how the exhibitions should be mounted and often practical considerations – budgets, space, lack of materials, time, and human resources – can have

⁴ C. Walker, “Delivery and disarray: the multiple meanings of land restitution” in S Buhlungu, J Daniel, R Southall and J Lutchman (eds) *State of the Nation: South Africa 2005-2006* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2006), p 69.

⁵ C. Kratz, *The Ones that are Wanted: Communication and the Politics of Representation in a Photographic Exhibition* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002), p 99.

a huge impact on how the exhibition eventually turns out. Kratz further argues that it's not only important 'to understand exhibitions and what people do through them' but how they also 'unfold in time - ...how they are situated in broader historical, social and political terms.'⁶ This is critical when one is discussing a museum like the District Six Museum as I think that the fact that the museum centres around the story of District Six – and its attempt to insert other narratives of forced removal areas into its own narrative – requires one to look more closely at how the Museum conducts its work. Also how does it mediate the telling of other stories? The obvious question becomes how successful has it been in doing this?

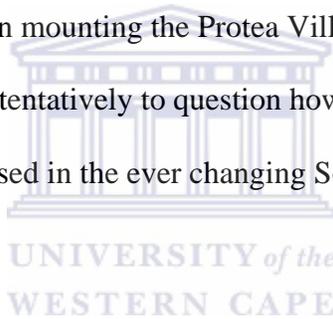


I argue in chapter three that although the District Six Museum was instrumental in the mounting of the Protea Village exhibition, the exhibition itself was a moment in the longer struggle by the community of Protea Village themselves to re-insert themselves onto the urban landscape. They had definite ideas about how this re-insertion should be narrated. In this chapter I look at the research strategies that were employed in mounting the exhibition in order to further unpack how these various stakeholders shaped the final exhibition. An analysis of the methodological approach, employed by the Museum, of encouraging its ex-residents and visitors to constantly engage and shape the representations and meanings depicted in the museum through series of workshops becomes a key feature of this chapter. This is done through looking at how the materials for the exhibition were collected and asking questions such as, 'What drove or informed the research process, which ex-residents were interviewed, how was the process of engagement with the community documented?' As it's clear that museums are not

⁶ *Ibid*, p 91.

unmediated places because there are various processes at work in relation to collected material that are taken out of one context and put into another.

Chapter Four on the other hand, examines the exhibits of the Protea Village exhibition, *A History of Paradise 1829-2002*. In looking at the displays that formed part of the exhibition more closely, I will attempt to examine how the representations within the exhibits have supported the interests of the different stakeholders which were invested in the exhibition. It also attempts to weave together how the institutional contexts and methodologies of the District Six Museum have shaped the telling of a broader story of forced removal in Cape Town in mounting the Protea Village exhibition. As the concluding chapter, it attempts tentatively to question how the history of forced removals has been and will be memorialised in the ever changing South African heritage landscape.



Chapter One

District Six Museum: Digging Deeper and Wider

This chapter begins by charting a brief history of the evolution of the District Six Museum Foundation and its motivations in telling the histories of forced removals in Cape Town. It seeks to interrogate the ‘institutional methodologies’ of the museum in the attempt to highlight some of the strengths and challenges still faced by the Museum in excavating ‘histories from below’. In doing so, the chapter argues that the formation of the Hands Off District Six (HODS) committee in 1987, and the subsequent conference in 1988 heralded a unique moment in the longer history of District Six.⁷ A symbol for all the devastating effects of the Group Areas Act legislation, the destruction of complex, dynamic, “vibrant” community which goes beyond its own physical boundaries and District Six, the place, became a potent symbol for inserting the history of forced removals in the narrative of post-apartheid history. The formation of the HODS was driven by the desire of a cross section of civil society (activists, organisations of District Six, etc) that unified in an attempt to resist development of the District by a multinational corporation without consulting the ex-residents of District Six. Its affiliation with the broader structures of the liberation movement signified the deep connection that the people of District Six had with the national liberation struggle for freedom and justice.⁸

⁷ S. Jeppie and C. Soudien, “Introduction”, in S. Jeppie and C. Soudien (eds). *The Struggle for District Six: Past and Present: A Project of the Hands Off District Six Committee* (Buchu Books: Cape Town, 1990), p 1.

⁸ Ibid, p 3.

