

Heritage Transformation and the role of Museums in Post-Apartheid South Africa: The Case of the East London Museum



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RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Declaration

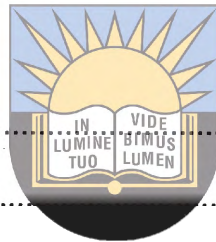
I declare that this dissertation is the product of my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Signed.....

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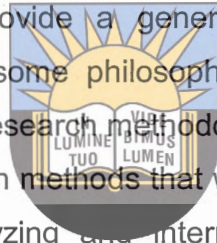
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STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The study will first introduce the background of the study and the main aims in chapter one. This shall be followed by a literature review in chapter two. In this chapter, a theoretical framework that pertains to museum displays will be discussed. In addition, an attempt will be made to present the different debates on the role of museums that have arisen over the years. This will be followed by the research methodology in chapter three. This chapter will first provide a general overview of qualitative research methodology, and then discuss some philosophical perspectives on the interpretive paradigm, which shall inform the research methodology that will be used in the research. A discussion of qualitative research methods that will be used as well as qualitative data techniques, and modes of analyzing and interpreting qualitative data will also be provided. Chapter four consists of data analysis. The primary aim of this chapter is to present the findings and to analyze and interpret them in order to determine the extent to which they answered the main research questions. This chapter is followed by chapter five which deals with a discussion of research findings, the conclusion and recommendations suggested by the researcher.

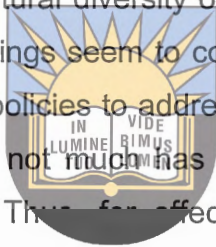


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ABSTRACT

The traditional understandings of museums and the heritage sector in general have been challenged in post apartheid South Africa. The main challenge has been how to transform meaning making, heritage construction, and knowledge production in these sectors from the colonial and apartheid past to represent the diversity of South Africans. Based on an in-depth study using unstructured interviews from a sample of museum staff, museum visitors and community members; this study investigated the extent to which permanent displays in the East London museum have transformed to depict cultural diversity and heritage of all South Africans, in particular the history of black South Africans.

The main argument is that despite the efforts made by government to transform the heritage sector since 1994, permanent displays in South African are still Eurocentric and do not sufficiently represent the cultural diversity of all South Africans, in particular the culture of the African majority. Findings seem to confirm the initial argument, that even though government has had good policies to address the transformation of the heritage sector and museums in particular, not much has been translated into real change of permanent displays in museums. Thus, for effective transformation to occur in the museum sector, the study strongly recommends that government should put in place properly skilled personnel and accountability structures to monitor and evaluate its transformation policies. Most importantly, a clear policy framework and a transformation charter to guide the transformation processes of museums and related displays need to be developed.



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ACRONYMS

Chief executive officer	CEO
Department of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology	DACST
National Heritage Council	NHC
National Cultural History Museum	NCHM
Outcomes Based Education syllabus	OBE
South African Heritage Resources Agency	SAHRA



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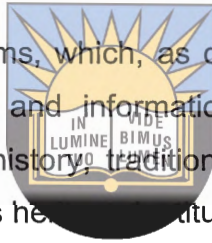
CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction and Context

“The museums, the ‘cabinet of curiosities’ is the storeroom of a nation’s treasures, providing a mirror in which are reflected the views and attitudes of the existing cultures” (Simpson, 1996: 1).

The focus of this study is on museums, which, as depicted in the above citation, are resource centres where knowledge and information about the country’s collective existence, cultural and bio-diversity history, traditions, and total inheritance is readily available (Foner, 2002). Museums, as heritage institutions, have a critical role to play in society in ensuring that the past is not elided, repressed or forgotten. They are responsible for building social cohesion and a nation which is neither forgetful of its past nor fearful of the future (ibid.). The preservation of heritage is particularly important for a country like South Africa that has experienced a somewhat brutal and fragmented past. It is especially important for educating future generations about the socio-political history of the country’s past, and in forging a collective national memory in the post-apartheid era. As the former president Thabo Mbeki eloquently explained:



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“Museums link the past to the future and speak to the interconnection between an empowering process of restoration and the consequences or the response to the acquisition of that newly restored power to create something new” (NHC, 2009:5).

Museum displays therefore, have a critical social responsibility of reflecting the heritage of all the people in line with the demographics of the people.

If South Africa is serious about heritage transformation, then South African museums should acknowledge the importance of its history and reflect its diverse cultural heritage by preserving the heritage of all South Africans through its various permanent collections

1.2 Statement of Problem

South Africa is a country with a rich history so much that the identity of South Africans should be engrained in its heritage. For many years this history was fundamentally flawed as a result of unfavourable laws of colonialism and apartheid that were used against the majority of South Africans (Bredenkamp, 2005). During most of the Apartheid years, the segregationist principles guiding South African society were reinforced culturally by encouraging each racial and ethnic group to develop its own set of traditions and identity. As a result of these segregation policies, black South Africans were denied the opportunity for formal entry into the mainstream museums. Consequently, the pre-1994 museums tended to reflect the interests and identity of the politically dominant white minority (Muller, 1991).



Before 1994, permanent displays of black South Africans were hardly present at national museums, thus creating boundaries amongst the South Africans population. There was a representation of a one-sided world-view in museums, that of a neo-colonial and imperialist archetype with virtually no realistic representation of the history of black South Africans. As clearly demonstrated by Davison (2003), the museum displays have historically celebrated individuals triumph over the colonized people; whether in technology, science, war, business or culture. In the process, black South Africans were denied a presence in administration and displays in museums. Consequently, their belonging and citizenship in South Africa was compromised.

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When the democratically elected government came into power in 1994, the post-apartheid government unfortunately inherited this colonial and apartheid legacy which reflected a mostly Eurocentric inclined museum sector. The democratic government was to align the past with the present and utilise the future as a powerful agent for cultural identity, reconciliation and nation building. Museums were therefore expected to “capitalise” on this new spirit by forging a new non-racist and non-sexist identity for the country. This was in consideration of the fact that museums are a resource centre where knowledge and information about the country’s collective existence, its history

and cultural diversity are readily available through its displays. Through its displays, post-1994 museums are now perceived as vehicles for the propagation of a cross-racial and cross-cultural identity, which encompasses all South Africans. This is in contrast to apartheid policies and practices which excluded the majority of South Africans with their enforced separation into opposing, legally unequal ethnic communities (Lowenthal, 1998). It therefore goes without saying that, for one to measure achievements and failures in the Eastern Cape Museums, one should do so against the background of the above mentioned roles and expectations of the post-apartheid ideals we live in today. Sadly though, this seems to have remained only a pipe dream as most of the provincial museums have virtually remained the same as before 1994 in terms of their displays.



However, despite the ushering in of a Government of National Unity in 1994, with its holistic approach to address this legacy, transformation of museum displays has been very slow. Preferential treatment in museums seems to have been mostly given to those museums that fall under the national flagship programmes. Unfortunately, black South Africans continue to be on the receiving end, as the permanent displays still reflect little of their past. What has become clear is that the transformation of museums' displays cannot be delayed any longer if museums are to remain as credible institutions. There is therefore a need to create space for the former marginalised members of South Africans in reclaiming their eroded heritage and history to be of equal importance in museum displays as those who had previously enjoyed these privileges. Sadly though, since the transition to democracy, this study will show that not much tangible improvements to equally represent displays has taken place in former exclusively white museums, especially those that do not fall under the national government supervision.

As will be noted below, there has been recognition, both at state-level and by historians, of the significance of transforming museum displays in South Africa. Attempts have been made through new legislations and building of new museums to address the inequalities of the past. Despite such attempts, these processes seem to have remained stagnant, in particular of those museums that do not form part of the flagship programme. These museums seem to continue to present a Eurocentric bias in their

displays. There is therefore a need to move with urgency in the transformation of museum displays in South Africa given its turbulent history and its cultural diversity. It is for this reason that a case study of the East London museum was conducted, to investigate the extent of the transformation of its permanent displays and the main constraints that contribute to the slow pace of its transformation.

1.3 Research Questions

Main Question:

To what extent have permanent displays in the East London museum, since 1994, been transformed to represent the cultural diversity of all South Africans, in particular the history of black South Africans?



Related questions:

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- How are the permanent displays in the East London museum perceived by the local people?
- What are the views of the local people on the management of pre-1994 museums, the East London museum in particular, and the kind of displays they exhibited?
- What challenges/factors contribute to the slow pace of transformation in museum displays in the East London museum?
- What needs to be improved in the East London museum to ensure effective transformation of its permanent displays?

1.4 Research objective

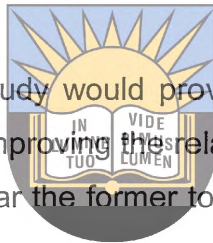
Based on the mandate of the National Heritage Council (NHC) to bring equity to heritage promotion and conservation (Mancotywa, 2008), the main objective of this dissertation is to investigate the role that museums have played in bringing equity in the museum sector and to transform museum displays so that they reflect the heritage of the people of the Eastern Cape Province. This is to be done by examining community views on the

transformation of permanent displays and management in the East London museum since 1994.

1.5 Significance of study

The recommendations made in the dissertation would have great significance in creating space for the heritage of the previously marginalised groups and cultures, in particular Black South Africans, within the nation building process. This would ensure that previously marginalised groups and cultures are given significant presence in realising their citizenship through museum displays.

Equally so, it is hoped that the study would provide enhanced knowledge of heritage transformation in South Africa by improving the relationship between the museum and its surrounding community, in particular the former township areas as they have previously been marginalised.



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It is further hoped that the findings would stimulate a robust debate within communities on heritage transformation in museums and the possible direction that could be taken in transforming permanent displays in museums.

On a personal level, it has been in the heart of the researcher to create an enhanced knowledge on the topic as well as creating a platform or opportunity for those voices that were often marginalised in the East London community, to be heard.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will first present a theoretical framework on which this study is based and then discuss different debates that have arisen over the years of transformation of museum displays. The literature review will focus on the dynamics of cultural heritage in South Africa as manifested in museum display discourse after 1994. For these purposes, the chapter will outline the different debates around the transformation of heritage as depicted by museums, the context within which museums operate, and describe the processes that South Africa has taken in addressing the nature of displays in South African museums. More importantly, the chapter will examine the process of dealing with the past in the current era, focusing on attempts to exhibit displays that represent a less distorted view of the country's collective memory that represents cultural diversity of all South Africans, in particular, the history of the previously marginalised groups.



2.2 Theoretical framework

The study uses the conflict perspective to explain why the transformation processes of museum displays in the East London museum are slow. It will argue that these processes are slow because they are particularly influenced by the structural dynamics which the country inherited from colonial and apartheid regimes. Conflict theorists believe that social arrangements will tend to benefit some groups in society at the expense of others. The conflict perspective has its roots in the ideas of Karl Marx (1818-1883) who viewed the structure of society in relation to its major classes and the power struggle between them as the engine of change in society. According to Marx, the society or organisation functions so that each individual participant and its groups struggle to maximize their benefits, which inevitably contributes to social change such as changes in politics and revolutions (Geuss, 1991).

In Marx's class theory, there are two major classes in society: the dominant class (who own the means of production) and the lower class (who own their labour and sell it for a wage) (Zeilig, 2002). Marx asserts that for social change to occur there has to be conflict between social classes. Thus class conflict, according to Marx, is determined by the contradiction between class interests as the classes struggle for the ownership of resources. Class is therefore a theoretical and formal relationship among individuals which is determined by distribution and consumption of goods, which itself ultimately reflects the production and power relations of classes (Ness, 2009).

According to Zeilig (2002:95), Marx describes the materialist view of history as the social production of existence, where men inevitably enter into definite relations that are independent of their will. These relations of production are appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which social consciousness arises. Throughout history, people experience false consciousness as they are largely unaware of the contradictions and conflicts of interests that beset their societies (Haralambos: 2000: 13). This is because their consciousness – their view of reality – is largely shaped by the social relationships involved in the process of production. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. As a result, they tend to accept their situation as normal, natural and proper. This produces a false class consciousness which helps to maintain the system.

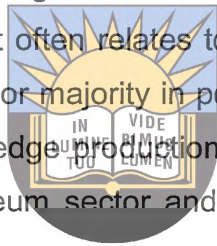
The conflict perspective is particularly useful for this study in that it offers an explanation for the slow pace of transformation of museum displays by linking the reasons behind this to issues of social power struggles amongst the different social classes. Power struggles between the social classes happens within the social economical and political sphere, where by the dominant group of elites are usually at the top making all the influential decisions, while the masses are at the bottom and are being decided upon. This ultimately results in a power struggle amongst the different social classes. Conflict theory argues that the distribution of this influence, for example is, determined by ownership of resources. According to Li Yi, ownership of resources confers influence,

which the bourgeois class uses to legitimize and protect their interests and consequent social relations (Li Yi, 2005). This cuts across all social institutions including South African museums, and suggests that those who find themselves marginalized within the museum discourse are mostly the poor members of society, who are often less influential and therefore play a minimal part in the museum display discourse.

Based on the conflict view, it will be argued that museums in South Africa were generally established to show case the achievements of the European settlers discovery of the “new world”. As it is commonly known, this “new world” represented the colonised land, which was most of the times forcefully taken away from its people. The consequence of this was the generation of different class interests leading to clashes and ‘class conflict’ where different classes competed for resources. The assumption here is that the dominant class that owns the means of production and resources often used the museum displays discourse for their own benefit, to pursue their own interests, thereby leaving the marginalised class in the periphery of museum discourse. If this view is accepted then the content and interpretation of displays become legitimate concerns. This also raises key important issues around institutional inclusiveness approach by museums to the larger community which considers South Africa’s past, as consisting of previously marginalized majority.

Furthermore, the conflict perspective is extremely important if we are to fully understand issues of transformation in general, especially in the context of South Africa where structural inequalities are still at play. Transformation of museum displays should deal with redressing such social injustices, as often represented by displays that portray a skewed and distorted view of the past. This view is based on the fact that the dominant group in society tends to get first preference in museum displays and interpretation. Hence, museum displays would often reflect the values of the dominant group as if other groups did not exist. These values, according to Marx, are part of the superstructure which is largely shaped by the infrastructure i.e., determined by economic factors (Haralambos, 2000: 11).

Foucault (1972:4) eloquently explains this as not merely about the “material spaces of the repositories of displays”, but more abstractly, “the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events”. This is particularly useful in understanding the history of museum displays in the context of South Africa. For Foucault (1972:5), stories of the past are always positioned within power relations and how museum displays reflect history. Thus, Marx viewed the exploitative economic arrangements of capitalism as the real foundation upon which the superstructure of social, political, and intellectual consciousness is built (Marx, 1971). Ideology and social institutions such as museums have in turn, continued to serve to reproduce and perpetuate the ideological class structure. This is particularly useful in contextualising transformation as it often relates to a range of underlying issues which relates to marginalisation of the poor majority in post-apartheid South Africa not only in economic terms but also in knowledge production. The next section gives an in-depth context of the history of the museum sector and what has transpired thus far in the sector after 1994.



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2.3 Historical Overview of South African museums

The history of the museum stretches back to *Alexandris* in Egypt founded by Ptolemy Soter, which spread to Europe in the 17th Century where it developed as an elite institution associated with wealth and royalty. Later on, museums developed into public institutions in the late 18th through the 19th century (Boylan, 1992). The first museum in South Africa, the South African museum (SAM), was established in Cape Town in 1825 and was limited to zoological material and a description of the museum at the time indicates that it was something of a cabinet of curiosities (Naudè and Brown, 1977).

Webb (1994:21) indicates that traditionally, South African museums depicted the triumph and progress of "white civilization" over the "the forces of barbarism". For example, the museum at Fort Schanskop, a military museum, propagated and promoted ideas about Afrikaner superiority at the expense of other ethnic groups. This museum

was reconstructed in the 1970s, at a time when Afrikaner nationalism was at its peak and is a tribute to "Afrikanerdom". Implicit in the messages portrayed in these displays were the justification of Afrikaner rights to land, and the prominence of Afrikaners as a dominant group in South Africa. This example is in many ways typical of the nationalism presented in several museums at that time, including, for example, the Voortrekker Museum and the Simonstown's Tempastorie museum (Webb 1994).

Often these museums avoided the history of previously marginalised South Africans as it did not fit the prevailing ideology. Webb (1994) accurately points to the fact that Black culture was dealt with only in ethnographic or anthropology museums (history museums were reserved for the dominant class only); the choice of which objects were exhibited and the way they were displayed reflected patronising and paternalistic attitudes (Webb, 1994: 34). Primitive aspects of African history at the expense of their evolving history were displayed, thereby reinforcing racial stereotypes both implicitly and explicitly. Ramphele (1996: 23) further argues that the marginalised majority were denied any active role in the heritage discourse. As she eloquently explains: "Nothing positive about what blacks did was displayed with any prominence in museums. It was as if such positive displays would reduce the impact of the reports on the oppression blacks suffered, blacks were depicted as the ultimate victims, completely lacking in agency" (Ramphele, 1996: 23).

The importance of having museum displays in a more holistic perspective of marginalised South Africans gained political momentum with the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s under the leadership of Steve Biko. As Ramphele recounts, Biko had identified this as vital to encouraging blacks to become agents of their own liberation: "One had to see history to know history" (Ramphele, 1996: 5). Museum displays and research amongst blacks were under-developed for a variety of reasons and, as with many oppressed or marginalised peoples, their histories often went unrecognised in mainline museum displays.

From the 1990s, the need to reconstruct an inclusive discourse in museum displays took centre stage and continues to this day. New museums and the overhaul of older museums across the country underscore the importance of a shared past in the renewal of nationhood. These changes came with the introduction of the concept of the “Rainbow Nation” which made inclusiveness a high priority. According to Coombes (2003), this museum development has triggered heated debates about historical revisionism, museum location and management, audience development, the material benefits for disadvantaged communities, and the extent to which museum exhibitions can reconcile class divisions.

After 1994, dramatic changes in the political landscape were made. State institutions (including museums) became eager to acknowledge their responsibility toward a more broadly conceived South African public discourse. Since then, many of the older museums, developed during the days of apartheid and before, added elements to their displays in their attempts to transform in accordance with the new political dispensation, to represent newer concerns and attract wider audiences. An example of this has been in East London museums where they have adopted nearby township schools as part of their outreach programme. These schools have in turn, been encouraged to submit their projects for displays. However, as will be discussed, this noble idea as with the case with East London museum is not enough, since the findings of this study indicate that the museum has not had any permanent display after 1994.

For the purpose of this research, these changes in older museums and the flourishing of memorial museums may be seen as an almost compulsive “museumizing” (Enwezor, 1997:89) that has taken place in post-apartheid South Africa. Indeed, given the priorities of post-apartheid South Africa of job creation, health, housing and education. The museum sector has barely been given the support that it deserves, hence many museum practitioners continually complained about the lack of funds to develop displays, maintain collections and run educational programmes. Yet even within these limited budgets, it would not be inaccurate to assert that the museum sector has not played enough on its own part in the transformation of its displays (Davison, 2003:19).



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2.4 Transformation of museum displays in post-apartheid era:

An understanding of the South African discourse on the transformation of museum displays presupposes a discussion of the basic official government policy documents like the White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, which preceded the passing of a series of heritage-related Acts of Parliament towards the end of the 1990s. The White Paper, tabled by the Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology of 1997, acknowledged that giving “attention to museum displays is of paramount importance for the reconstruction and development process in South Africa” and that “means must be found to enable song, dance, story-telling and oral history to be permanently recorded and conserved in the formal museum display structure” (DAC, 2007:39).

As noted in the previous section, the new Government of National Unity was particularly instrumental in fostering change within the museum sector. From the nation's highest level of governance came commissions, incentives programmes, and mandates to transform the cultural heritage discourse of the country. For example, it was on 4 November 1994 that the then Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, Dr. Ben Ngubane, appointed an Arts and Culture Task Group to draft the first major report on the transformation of the heritage sector which was completed in June 1995 (Ngubane,1995). Then, in 1996, the South African Department of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology (DACST) released a draft report, entitled “White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, All Our Legacies, All Our Futures”. The report identified key underlying values: that the participation in, and enjoyment of the arts, and cultural expression, as well as the preservation of one's heritage are basic human rights; they are not luxuries, nor are they privileges as we have generally been led to believe (DACST, 1997). This then became the starting block in readdressing the imbalances of the past, including the transformation of museum displays.

Furthermore, the Bill of Rights of the Constitution states that, “Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes artistic creativity.... [and] everyone has the right to use the language and to participate in the cultural life of their choice” (DACST, 1997:

95). As noted in the Department of Arts, Culture, Science, and Technology (DACST) draft report, "it is the role of government to facilitate the optimum conditions in which these rights may be enjoyed and practiced...Arts and culture may play a healing role through promoting reconciliation" (DACST 1997: 98).

In the opening section of the White Paper on Arts and Culture, Dr. Ben Ngubane had this to say:

"The arts, culture and heritage cannot be an exception in this transformation process, since they too were overtly affected by the misdistribution of skills, resources and infrastructure during the apartheid era. In fact, given that the arts are premised on freedom of expression and critical thought, transformation in this area is crucial to empowering creative voices throughout the country, and is thus integral to the success of the democratic project" (DAC, 2007:39).



What was critically important though about the report was that it further recognized the potential of those museums classified as Declared Cultural Institutions since 1969 (these are the former exclusively white/Eurocentric museums) and the vital role they could play in museum displays. Thus, it suggested that the Declared Institutions be evaluated according to agreed criteria of what constitutes "national" and, in the absence of a coherent national museums policy, this called "for transformation through a systematic process of restructuring and rationalization" (DAC, 2007:39). Hence, the establishment of *inter alia* the Southern Flagship in Cape Town and the Northern Flagship Museums Institution in Pretoria. The Northern Flagship consists of the National Cultural History Museum (NCHM) and its former satellite museums (Kruger House, Tswaing Meteorite Crater, Willem Prinsloo Agricultural Museum, Pioneer Museum, Sammy Marks Museum and the Coert Steynberg Museum), the Transvaal Museum and the South African National Museum of Military History in Johannesburg (Baines,2002).

The Iziko museums of Cape Town currently oversees fifteen amalgamated museums and sites, also known as the Southern Flagship Institution, consist of the South African Museum, South African Cultural History Museum and its satellite museums, the South

African National Gallery, the William Fehr Collection and the Michaelis Collection (Davison,2003). In terms of the Cultural Institutions Act (1998), the declared museums in other provinces continue to operate as before.

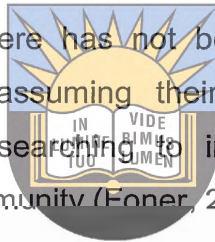
Recently, in 2008, the National Heritage Council released the draft Heritage Transformation Charter, which amongst other things, is meant to be a blueprint that redresses the imbalances of the past in the heritage sector, including museums. The Charter, which was adopted by practitioners in the heritage sector ranging from Traditional Healers to academics, was aimed at unlocking the economic potential by addressing the imbalances as well as positioning heritage to contribute in building a national identity (NHC, 2009). In one of its sections, the Charter presents guiding policies that deal directly with redressing the imbalances of the past within the museum sector.



The Charter points out that the major challenge for government policies on museums transformation in South Africa has been, the fact that the South African government has continued to focus mostly on the Southern Flagship museum in Cape Town and the Northern Flagship Museums Institution in Pretoria, thereby neglecting those museums that fall under the provincial governments. This has resulted in having toothless museum policies that are good on paper, but are not backed by proper monitoring of policy implementation. Equally so, the under-funding of provincial museums in implementing these policies has resulted in the brain drain to the flagship museums as they are better funded and have a proper oversight on them than those under the provincial departments, such as the East London museum.

2.5 The role of museums in society

2.5.1 Heritage promotion: South Africa is a complex and diverse society that has come from a deep divided past. As noted above, museums were used as a mouthpiece for the apartheid government's interpretation of history and culture, while excluding history and culture of the vast majority of South Africans. Since 1994, the transformation of museum displays became critical in the promotion of heritage diversity, thus urging a constant review of programmes and activities in museums. Museums are now increasingly being recognized as an important institution that promotes social cohesion and cultural tolerance. There is therefore a need for transformation of displays to meet the ideals of an inclusive nation. However, there has not been much happening in terms of a paradigm shift from museums assuming their traditional role of being primarily institutions for collecting and researching to institutions of public interaction and engagement with the broader community (Euner, 2002).



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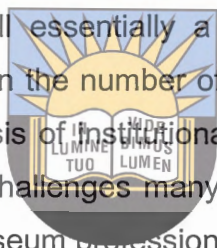
2.5.2 South African museum displays as portraying colonial conquest: The pre-1994 museums still resemble a one-sided view in their displays and are in need of change to portray an inclusive discourse. Cormack's (1976) explains this as follows:

"It has been the institution of the Museum that collected works in accordance with the ideas that reinforced the West's own view of the world that it colonised and dominated through the use of historical capital. Although this institution of the Museum was located in the metropolises of the West, its replicas were installed across the colonial world" (Cormack, 1976: 14).

Using Cormack's (1976) notion of 'historical capital' to describe the confluence of social and cultural capital in the visual and discursive representations of national narratives, one could say that Afrikaner nationalism was an ethnic nationalism that placed great importance on myth, memory, and a shared sense of the past (Cormack, 1976). Afrikaner nationalism propagated this myth of nation through monuments, museums, and curriculum. This is a useful way to think about the relationship between history and representation through museum displays. The logic of apartheid was on full display at

the nation's most prominent museums. These museums focused on Afrikaner and British history, denying the idea of the marginalized lives, pasts and belonged in history museums. With little historical capital, marginalized communities and their allies had little recourse to correct the historical record.

In his paper titled "Professionals and Museums", Tomislav Sola (1990:28) argues that museums "were used and manipulated, they obey their bosses and because they are, for the most part, like them: being concerned with power, profit and conquest". Ondendaal (1995:17) takes this argument further and argues that "despite being disguised in its modern buildings of heaps of modern technology, the predominant contemporary museum model is still essentially a nineteenth-century one". Hence, despite the near exponential growth in the number of museums since 1994, there is at the philosophical level "a serious crisis of institutional identity and a crisis of concept" (Ondendaal, 1995:18). Ondendaal challenges many of the most precious and central assumptions of the contemporary museum profession.



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Furthermore, Sola (1990) questions the prevailing curatorial and conservation ethic in museum displays that refuses to let any "dying" object in the museum finally die, saying that many museums already look like hospital intensive care departments that resist transformation in accommodating those who were previously marginalised. However, the prevailing tendency has been to build new museums and leave the Eurocentric museums untouched, and allow similar works – with South African themes – to flourish within these new museums. Nelson Mandela Museum in Qunu and the Red Location Museum in New Brighton, Port Elizabeth are two examples.

While this produced new important insights and re-invented historical scholarship, it was not directly replicated in transforming museums. Researchers have not paid enough attention to the gap between the academic and public face of museums. Coombes (2003) noted a similar disconnects between the academic and public presentations of anthropology in her investigation into the way images of Africa were created at the British museum in the late 19th and early 20th century. She argues that these images are

not purely or even primarily driven by advancements in anthropological scholarship, but rather by political and institutional politics. Coombes' (2003) focus on colonial public representations of 'Africa' as a product of imperialist logics and institutional realities offers an important insight into how cultural knowledge is produced for public consumption at museums. However, contemporary museums, especially in post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa, are indeed operating within a global repositioning of cultural and historical museums as social agents, as reflected in the swelling area of museology. At museums, this historical recovery has entailed a reconfiguring of the very notion of museums.

2.5.3 Museums as Representing History: Dubin, has suggested that museums and historic sites of South Africa are a highly significant and revealing source of evidence for investigating how the country's various communities have come to terms with their complex history and have chosen to project it publicly (Dubin, 2006: 3). This suggests then that museums should be a reflection of the society they come from and are therefore an important institution in defining the society that has gained since the first democratic dispensation, in particular for those who were previously marginalised by this historically exclusive institution. South African museums have inherited a past that has been mostly Eurocentric in its outlook and form, because of museum's historical legacy of marginalization, lower class was mostly excluded from the museum discourse.

For Dubin, South African museums have been perceived by the vast majority of the population as a mouthpiece for the apartheid government's interpretation of history and culture, as a result South African museums have faced a significant challenge to establish and justify their role in the democratic era (Dubin, 2006: 5). Dubin's analysis is useful in reflecting on the progress of museums as an institution over the last 16 years, both those with lengthy histories who have adapted themselves to the post-apartheid era and those established since 1994. Museums are therefore valuable in the sense that their displays reflect both curators' ideas and also attempt to reflect society at large, although they also have the power to shape social memory and public understanding (Ondendaal, 1995:17).



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2.5.4 Museums and National Pride: Museums play a critical role in reflecting Community and National pride. According to the Department of Arts and Culture, is to position and market themselves so that they become “part of a strategy of branding the Country as a sought-after tourism destination” (Baines, 2002:98). According to a study that was commissioned by the Wellington Museums Trust to determine the role of museums in society, it was found that Museums foster culture and identity in a variety of ways (WMT, 2008). What was critical in their study was that they found, that displays and their interpretations foster new ways of remembering, discovering and imagining which leads to social identity and cohesion (WMT, 2008). This means that what people notice in turn affects how people think, and this effect in turn defines how people relate to one another as members of communities. Museum through displays can therefore foster social cohesion and social pride. These findings from the Wellington Museums Trust are important in South Africa as well. Indeed, identity and belonging play an important role and can be a psychological booster in any community.



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2.5.5 Reducing social exclusion and fostering inclusiveness: Museums have got an important role to play in forging an inclusive society. A community’s heritage can provide a patriotic and moral compass for communities in forging an inclusive society. This is confirmed in a study that was done by the Wellington Museums Trust, which found that museums can reduce social exclusion and foster inclusiveness. These findings indicate that, social exclusion should focus more on specific groups at risk of isolation – and reducing the risk of negative social capital. Equally so, the Trust found that museums can foster social inclusion and reduce exclusion by ensuring exhibits are accessible to all and that collections are relevant to (and reflect the aspirations and needs of) the community (WMT, 2008). This seems to be an important part that has been mostly neglected by South African Museums, which represents the museum’s role in the preservation of historical context that are important to the greater local community.

Foner found that museums often receive offers from communities to retaining their collections of arts, crafts, and antiquities that may be of importance to them; however museums have often struggled to have an effective process to manage these offers in

ways that reflect their significance importance to the greater community (Foner, 2002). For Dudin, museum displays are an important community asset, as collection and preservation of artefacts allows for future and current generations to better understand their history (Dudin, 2006).

2.5.6 Museums as potential sites for social change: Coombes (2003) raises a number of questions regarding the role of museums as potential sites for social change. In her study of District Six Museum, the museum commemorates the forced removal and displacement of 55,000-65,000 people from the centre of Cape Town to the barren area known as the Cape Flats starting in 1966 (Zeilig, 2002). Coombes indicates that, the museum world and the domain of visual and performance culture were, for decades, dominated by Afrikanerdom and censorship (Coombes, 2003). This complex relationship that South Africans have with memory and history was manipulated throughout the apartheid era; in particular through written texts and displays, museums were used by the dominant class for its benefit whilst at the same time distorting the memory and history of the marginalized majority. Concurring with Coombes, Dubin (2006) suggests that the question of who has the right to represent culture has been interrogated in many ways. For Dubin prior to 1994, South Africa's previously disadvantaged communities had been presented for decades in museums as objects of anthropological curiosity; ownership of representation has therefore been a highly contentious issue where communities seek to reclaim control of their cultural identities (Dudin, 2006:19).

2.5.7 Culture and museum displays: It is critically important to note that museum displays have played a critical role in projecting a particular cultural discourse as tools of engagement with cultural heritage. There is therefore a need to first define museum displays within the South African "cultural" context. There are three principal ways in which the word "culture" is commonly used in South Africa. Of these, two are identified usefully by Wallerstein (1991): firstly to refer to culture as the difference between two or more social groups (the specific characteristics of one group against another), which may encompass character traits, behaviour, beliefs, values, customs, etc. Secondly,



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Wallerstein uses culture to specify the distribution of certain characteristics within groups. Wallerstein (1991) calls this 'hierarchical view of culture'. In interpreting this in the South African context; museums have been used in the past as a vehicle of enforcing certain cultural ideals (such as cultural values and standards of dominant groups) on the rest of South Africans. Cultural analyses according to Wallerstein are critically important if one is to understand museum displays in context. Richards (1996) eloquently explains this:

Initially public museums tended to display culture both hierarchically and in the form of products or artefacts. Art galleries, for example, functioned as a means of making out the "superior" creative artworks and products from the rest, the ones that did not qualify for admission were excluded. Exhibitions in museums have tended to display culture in terms of products rather than processes (Richard, 1996:89).



The sentiments expressed by Richards (1996) are particularly useful. In South Africa, for example, museums and the introduction of museum displays were introduced at the same time with the imposition and consolidation of colonial rule and therefore as an institution museums developed along the colonial and apartheid political structures and was used and largely seen as part of the dominant class of the time. With this came the limiting of participation for the majority of South Africans in museum discourse.

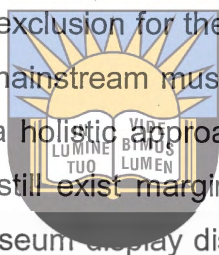
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2.6 Conclusion

Museums after Apartheid explored ways in which various constituencies of the South African public (especially in the years of transition) engaged and continue to engage their common and different pasts in the process of coming to terms with its meaning and forging a common identity. However as eluded before, museums should play a meaningful role in reconstructing an unbiased identity one that is based on inclusion of all. As (Foner, 2002) indicates, this is especially crucial, given the always present tensions pushing such history toward fragmentation into its class constituents on the one hand of the idea and ideal of the Nation.

Inevitably, therefore, museums will have to grapple more broadly with the nature of historical memory. But in, the South African context, such a memory is inadequate with the previously marginalized majority. Enwezor (1997:67) suggests that, “unless museums engages in almost equal terms with both public memory (often institutionalised) produced at sites such as the museum and with the private, individualized memories of its variegated citizenry. The production of such a history, not to mention its representation beyond the historical text is, one hardly needs mention, to make such a history, would provide the beginning of an evaluation for many of our mainstream museums” (Enwezor, 1997:67).

As indicated above, the legacy of exclusion for the vast majority in permanent displays, unfortunately, still exists in many mainstream museums especially those that are under provincial auspices. Since 1994, a holistic approach by museums on their permanent displays has been lacking, there still exist marginalization for many of the previously disadvantaged communities in museum display discourse. Available literature indicates that the Department of Arts and Culture has initiated policies, which are strong and speak of political will and commitment in transforming our museum, yet government itself has lacked in implementing its oversight role as a key stakeholder in the sector.



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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology and the research paradigm that will be used to gather data in the study. The chapter first provides a general overview of qualitative research methodology, and then discusses the interpretive paradigm as a philosophical perspective that informs the research methodology used in this research. Finally, a discussion of qualitative research methods that were used as well as qualitative data techniques, and modes of analyzing and interpreting qualitative data are provided.



3.2 Research Methodology

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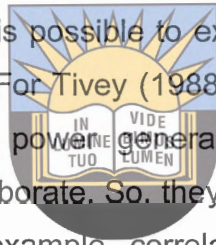
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Qualitative research methodology was deemed relevant for this study in the light of the research's main goals. According to Van Manson (1998: 520), qualitative research is “an “umbrella” phase covering an array of interpretive techniques that seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning of naturally occurring phenomena in the social world”. The strength of qualitative research is its ability to provide complex descriptions of how people experience reality. Hence qualitative research is effective in exploring intangible factors, such as social norms and socio-economic issues (Babbie & Mouton, 2000).

Qualitative research was useful in this research as it is linked with the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm assumes that reality as we know it is constructed inter-subjectively through the meanings and understandings developed socially and experientially (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999). This analysis was relevant in this research in the sense that it helped in bringing a deeper understanding of the different perspectives about transformation in museum displays held by the respondents.

Interpretive researchers frequently undertake analyses of small groups, social situations, and organizations using face-to-face techniques of participant observation. Intensive interviewing is also used by the interpretive researcher to uncover the subject's orientations or his or her "life world" (Aho, 1998). Interpretive theory also believes that there lies a shared assumption that we cannot understand human affairs properly unless we grasp the relevant meanings (Tivey, 1988).

An interpretive approach follows from two premises. The first straightforward premise is that people act on their beliefs and preferences. People associate with certain actions because they believe those actions are what represents their values. Because people act on beliefs and preferences, it is possible to explain their actions by referring to the relevant beliefs and preferences. For Tivey (1988:63), many social scientists complain that such explanation lacks the power of general applicability, and that beliefs and preference are impossible to corroborate. So, they seek to bypass beliefs by correlating actions with objective facts, for example, correlating human actions on the basis of rationality.



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People act on their beliefs and preference but we do not have external evidence of those beliefs. However, interpretive approach can still explain social action: interpretive approach can do so by pointing to the conditional and volitional links between beliefs, desires, intentions and actions (Weber, 1978). Thus, what we know is always negotiated within cultural beliefs, social settings, and relationship with other people. Hence the interpretation of museum displays should be analysed in its totality not just on the statistical rise and fall on the number of permanent displays in post-1994 era, but on the contextual beliefs and preferences of those being studied and those in authority within the museum sector as well as the class interests that are at play. Interpretive approach often begin from the insight that to understand actions, practices and institutions, we need to grasp the meanings, beliefs and preferences, of the people involved (White, 1987:79). Museums would certainly be a reflection of what society is saying to us in the post-apartheid era and the class dynamics that are at play. The above approach of beliefs and preferences has helped the research in better conducting its research.

All interpretations are based in a particular moment, that is, they are located in a particular context or situation and time. They are therefore open to re-interpretation by other researchers and in different contexts. The dialogue that the researcher created with the respondents was sensitive to the context on which the respondents were located. This means the researcher attempted to understand beliefs and preferences of respondents in order to get a more in-depth analysis of the research questions.

3.3 Research design

In this study, the researcher used qualitative methods to obtain data. The researcher triangulated between the following qualitative research methods:

- in-depth interviews,
- focus group discussions and
- direct observation



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3.3.1 In-depth interviews: An unstructured interview schedule was used to collect data from individual respondents in the form of non-scheduled structured interviews. Unstructured interviews are defined by Bless & Achola (2000:105), as “a non-scheduled structured interview, which is meant to aid the formulation of accurate and precise questions followed by a representative or even exhaustive, set of possible answers”. Although interviews were unstructured, a list of issues for investigation were drawn up before the interview, the interviewer had an in-depth interaction with respondents. The research conducted an in-depth interview on 5 museum staff, 12 respondents from Duncan Village, 8 museum visitors and 1 government officials within the museum directorate.

3.3.2 Focus Group Discussions: The research also used focus group discussion to interview museum visitors. Group discussions with the museum visitors were particularly important in the sense that they produced data and insight that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group setting, which includes stimulating memories,

ideas, and experiences in participants (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Through the permission of the museum management, the researcher requested the first 8 museum visitors for an interview. The researcher used participants who were strangers to each other to reduce sharing in ways that acquaintances might expect and to increase anonymity for the sake of honest responding.

The group discussion was in the form of unstructured interviews and consisted of the museum visitors. The interviews were guided by conversations with broad questions that were asked, which did not constrain the conversation. This allowed for new questions which were raised as a result of the discussion. The process of conducting unstructured interviews involved the interviewer presenting the context of the study and its objectives to the interview group.



3.3.3 Direct Observation: The above methods were used in conjunction with direct observation made by the researcher to understand the kind of displays exhibited in the East London museum. Direct observation is a research technique that requires an observer to sit passively and records as accurately as possible what is going on” (Babbie and Mouton, 2000:69). An advantage of the technique is that a number of people interacting with each other and the same piece of equipment can be observed.

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3.4 Data collection instruments

A basic decision going into the interview process was how to collect and record interview data. An interview schedule was constructed as a form of guide or “schedule” with a list of questions or general themes that the interviewer explored during each interview. Emanating from these themes, further questions were generated and were asked from respondents through the process of probing. For exact questions that were asked, see transcribed data on page 90. Thus, the following themes were used as a guide for the semi-structured interview that was used.

- How were museum displays in East London museum before 1994?
- How are displays now in East London museums in the post 1994 era?

- What kind of transformation of museum displays has taken place in East London museum after 1994?
- What needs to be improved on the displays of East London museum?

For the purposes of recording data, a note book and a tape recorder were used as the main data collection instruments. This was in line with the views of Patton that a tape recorder is “indispensable” (1990:348), while Bless and Achola “do not recommend recording except for unusual reasons” (2000: 241). Bless and Achola base their recommendation on the intrusiveness of recording devices and the possibility of technical failure. However, recordings have the advantage of capturing data more faithfully than hurriedly written notes might, and can make it easier for the researcher to focus on the interview. It is for this reason that, in addition to field notes, the researcher used audiotapes as a means of accurately capturing the interviews.



3.5 Units of analysis and sampling

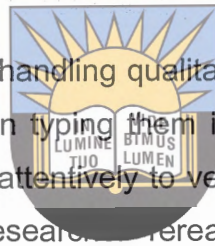
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The unit of analysis consisted of 5 museum staff, 12 respondents from Duncan Village, 8 museum visitors and 1 government official within the museum directorate. Non-probability purposive sampling, with the museum staff, museum visitors and community members was used, the reason for using purposive sampling is that the respondents in question were a specific type, which needed specification for one to find. According to Manson (1998:34), purposive sampling targets a particular group of people when the desired population for the study is very rare, very difficult to find or to recruit. With the government officials, the researcher used snowball sampling as they were specialised and also rare to find. This method helped as it allowed the researcher to be specific on the type of sample units required.

3.6 Data Analysis

The researcher made use of the grounded theory approach to analyse data. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990:23), a grounded theory approach is one that is inductively

derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. Grounded theory begins by researching and developing a hypothesis, the first step is data collection, through a variety of methods. From the data collected, the key points are marked with a series of codes, which are extracted from the text (Van Maanen, 1983). The codes are then grouped into similar concepts in order to make them more workable. This was done to discover common important patterns, themes, and interrelationships that emerged out of the data. Bogdan and Biklen define qualitative data analysis as "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (1982:145).



The mechanism that was used in handling qualitative data included the physical sorting and storing written notes and then typing them into a computer. On transcription, the researcher listened to recordings attentively to verify the correctness of the transcribed interview. Once satisfied, the researcher reread the transcription a few times to familiarize himself with the data and to identify themes that will be identified. With the identification of the themes emerging from the raw data, a process sometimes referred to as "open coding" (Patton, 1990:50) was followed. During this open coding, identification and naming the conceptual categories into which the phenomena observed was grouped. The goal was to create descriptive, multi-dimensional categories that would form a preliminary framework for analysis. Words and phrases that appeared to be similar were grouped into the same category. These categories were then gradually modified or replaced during the subsequent stages of analysis that followed. Ideally, it is hoped that the research report will be a rich, tightly woven account that "closely approximates the reality it represents" (Patton, 1990: 57).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The researcher conducted the research in line with the ethics of gathering scientific knowledge so as to protect the rights of those being studied, namely museum staff,

museum manager, government officials and museum visitor. The researcher ensured the following:

- **Confidentiality, anonymity, and protection of human dignity:** The researcher had direct contact with all participants and they were assured that the information given would be treated with confidentiality. Individual privacy of respondents was guaranteed through conducting the interviews separately from other respondents in a consultation room, anonymity and confidentiality was guaranteed through giving the respondents synonyms this was partly done through the giving of respondent numbers instead of their real names. The research tried to balance the understanding of social life as well as the protection of human dignity.
- **Gaining Access:** For the purposes of gaining access to the East London Museum and establish a rapport with respondents, a declaration letter was given to the museum manager and all the participants prior to the interviews. All the respondents were requested to sign a consent form to show that they grant permission to participate in the study (see page 78).



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CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this chapter is to present the data that was gathered at the research site and to analyze and interpret it to determine the extent to which it answers the main research questions. The chapter begins by presenting the researcher's direct observations of the displays in the East London museum. This is followed by the presentation of in-depth interviews from individual respondents and focus group discussions.



4.2 Direct Observations

From the very moment that the researcher entered the museum, he was immediately made aware of the fact that permanent displays in the museum have not changed much since 1994. He observed many German settler displays and cannons that were brought by the English when East London was still Port Rex. There were also settler shipwreck, clothes that the settlers wore, and letters that were written about the “new world” by the Germans as well as some Xhosa garments that were designed by the Germans. None of this reflected the heritage of the majority black population in the province.

Permanent displays are particularly important in the image of a museum. Permanent displays indicate the direction and the audience that a museum intends to target. In the case of South Africa, the brutal and unequal past that this country has come from should be well documented in museums. Therefore, South African museums should not only play an educational role in society but also form part of an important institution that brings about social cohesion within communities through their shared history. The observation of permanent displays in the East London museum seemed to oppose this view, as the displays appeared to be still largely Eurocentric. There seemed to be hardly any permanent displays that depicted the culture and history of the previously

marginalised South Africans in particular even long after the advent of democracy. To crudely put this, East London museum's permanent displays do not as yet reflect a holistic and inclusive heritage of the region.

To put this picture in context, as one takes a closer look at the displays, one notices that most of the permanent displays are still mostly of European settlers. This is no politicising as some people would believe. It has got everything to do with redressing imbalances of the past; so that those who were systematically excluded in the past would be made to feel part of the new dispensation, not only in words but in deeds as well. These observations have been the motivating factors that prompted the undertaking of further research.

4.3 Individual Interviews



Below are the research findings arranged in important themes and patterns as noted in the Methodology Chapter. The respondents were divided into four categories, namely, museum staff, museum visitors, community members and government official. For full transcription of the scripts please turn to Appendix C on page 81.

4.4.1 Displays in East London museums before 1994

Respondents were asked to indicate how they perceived the East London museum and its management before 1994. Of particular importance was for them to indicate whether the museum displays and management reflected equity and inclusivity of all cultures and groups in the region before the democratic dispensation. Almost all respondents indicated that they perceived the East London museum as a White concept, in line with how all the other pre-1994 museums were perceived by other previously disadvantaged groups. They however mentioned that it was only the black bourgeoisie class that participated in museums as they seemed to identify better with the ruling class. Although they would visit the museum on occasions where they would take their children on school excursions, they used to feel that they had no place in museums. They were of

the opinion that museum displays before 1994, mainly projected a one-sided view, which was mostly a Eurocentric perspective of history. They said this was one of the reasons why the majority of black Africans did not identify with the museum displays. The consequence of this was the development of a lack of interest in museums by the majority of Africans who became less concerned with whether the museums depicted their history or not. Equally so, almost all the respondents indicated that the African majority, blacks in particular, were sidelined in the management of mainstream museums. These views were partly influenced by the segregation and discriminatory policies of apartheid, which legitimised a one-sided perception of museum displays and depicted a narrow view of African history. As indicated by respondents 2, 6 and 8:

Respondent 2² : Staff member

“Before 1994 museums were predominately white, there were hardly any black professionals in museum management”



**Respondent 6³: Department of Sport and Culture
University of Fort Hare**

“On a personal level, one did not see the representation of all races before '94 in terms of colour; there were no fair representation of the demographics of this country in museum management”.

Respondent 8⁴: Duncan Village community member

“As far as I'm aware museums before 1994 were very colonial, at the same time previously disadvantaged people had little benefit on the goings of the museum.”

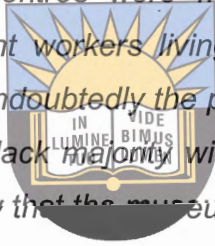
² This respondent is a staff member from East London Museum, interviewed on the 15th of April 2008. He indicated these sentiments while he was showing me the displays at the East London museum.

³ Respondent 6 was interviewed on the 18th of April 2008. He is a former museum employee and now works at the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture. He believes that black skilled people need to be promoted from the museum ranks as they are the people who understand this field better than those who have come in through the affirmative action ticket.

⁴ Duncan Village community was chosen as part of understanding their view on East London museum displays since 1994 from a community's point of view; the community members indicated that as neighbours to East London museum they often visit the museum with their children for recreational purposes.

An interesting aspect was the fact that respondent 1, who was also the museum manager, confirmed these views by explaining how this European perception of museums was related to their location. He indicated that before 1994, almost all of the major museums were on the western side of the Eastern Cape, which was mostly urban and not in the rural areas such as in the former homelands. He gave examples of urban museums which were located in white areas such as the Port Elizabeth Museum, the East London Museum, King Williams Town Museum and Albany Museum in Grahamstown. As he continued to recall, he added that:

“In the pre-1994 era urban centres were mostly occupied by white South Africans, with the black migrant workers living on the fringes of these urban centres. The rural areas were undoubtedly the poorest and continue to be so and were occupied mostly by the black majority with almost no recreational centres such as museums, this is legacy that the museum has inherited.”



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This confirms the view that the pre-1994 museums reflected the values and culture of the dominant class, who had a legal right to stay in the cities and hence were allowed make use of the museum facilities.

4.4.2 Current displays in East London museum.

After the respondents were asked how they perceived museums before 1994, it was therefore logical to determine if they perceived any improvements in the museum displays since 1994. The responses given were both insightful and informative. The respondents reflected the view that although some changes have been made since 1994, the East London museum has not adequately transformed its displays. As alluded by respondent 2:

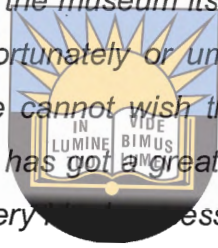
“...but after 1994 with the new dispensation, museums were challenged to accommodate previously disadvantaged professionals. After 1994, there has

been some change with regards to professional staff, even though there are not enough previously disadvantaged professional, but it's not easy even now. "

The respondents maintained that the displays, in particular the permanent displays, are still mainly Eurocentric. In agreement with this view, Respondent 1 partly justified why most of the museum displays are still Eurocentric. He however elaborated that this should not be an excuse why museums should not be transforming in terms of their displays. He emphasised that:

Respondent 1⁵: Museum manager

I must be honest with you; the museum itself is a European concept. There is no question about that, but fortunately or unfortunately museums happen to exist amongst us. Therefore we cannot wish them away and say it's something for white people. South Africa has got a great history and because of its diversity, it makes museums to be a very interesting space where we can showcase this very rich and diverse history that this country has to offer. Hence our museums are one of our most important assets. But we need to do more.



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As a museum manager, he acknowledged that the country is however trying to rearrange the imbalances of the past. He went further to point out at a number of initiatives that the East London museum has embarked on in addressing this critical aspect. He mentioned that over the years, the museum has embarked on display programmes that includes displaying the original copy of the Freedom Charter on a temporary basis as well as displaying the belts of the first world champions in boxing that come from the region, namely Welcome Ncita and Vuyani Bungu.

In addition, the museum staff indicated that these temporary displays have been limited in the sense that they get displayed for a period of not more than six months when they need to be dismantled again. They pointed to an interesting fact that the museum has

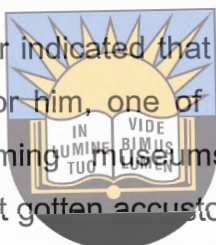
⁵ Mr Mcebisi Magadla indicated that his name could be disclosed in the findings; Mr Magadla is the manager of East London Museum. He was the first black manger of the museum when he was appointed in 2007.

not had any permanent displays since 1994 but only temporal displays. Some of the expectations that respondents indicated about East London museums were:

Respondent 2: Staff member

“What I have observed is that those artefacts that are able to be collected are always on a temporary exhibition and not permanent, therefore communities need to also donate some artefacts because museums are dependent on these donated artefacts. Equally so the museum scientists need to go to communities and find these artefacts!!”

Because of this, the museum manager indicated that museums displays needed to be looked at in a holistic perspective. For him, one of the major factors that have also created the slowness in transforming museums displays is that previously disadvantaged South Africans have not gotten accustomed to donating their artefacts to museums for display purposes. He said it is still white South Africans who continue to donate their artefacts to museums and this explains why there continues to be temporal displays that come from previously disadvantaged communities, especially black Africans. These sentiments were also highlighted by respondent 6:



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“One reason is that African culture relies heavily on oral tradition and that part of history cannot be demonstrated or cannot be visible. We as Africans are not people who like to preserve things of generation gone by. We not people known to keep things of value”.

Other respondents however, such as those interviewed in the focus group, Duncan Village community members and museum visitors thought that much more needs to be done in addressing transformation of displays.

4.4.3 Lack of Funding: The museum manager was asked to explain why almost all the displays that the museum has had since 1994 were on a temporary basis. The museum manager indicated that this was as a result of lack of funding on infrastructure

for new and relevant displays. In addition, the other respondents, in particular the staff members confirmed that the East London museum has been mandated to be managed by the respective provinces and local authority. However, they all felt that government has not been doing enough in terms of funding of museums. Hence, there is a decline in museum infrastructural investment in taking transformation forward.

Another point that was raised by the museum staff was the fact that the country policies are very good and admired in many parts of the world. However, they argued that policies cannot be good without proper funding. They indicated that currently the East London Museum receives budget of R500 000 annually. This, they indicated is not enough if issues of transformation of displays would be taken into account as there needs to be the building of more galleries for permanent displays as well as having proper equipments such as temperature controllers that would ensure that artefacts are kept in good conditions. Below are the things they raised that needed to take place:

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Respondent 3: Museum Staff *Together in Excellence*

I think there is a gap between community and the museum, I think the reason is that we have lack of funding (to display what the community requests) look at our budget for example, the province gave us R 500 000 for our budget. We must see to it that we do some fundraising, at the moment we don't have a public relations person that could head this, so you see now how understaffed we are.

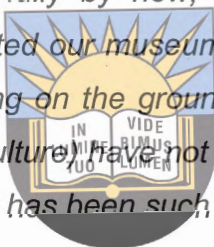
According to Respondent No.1, there is a need to acquire new collections from the previously disadvantaged groups in the East London museum as well as generating new space for such displays. He said:

All these things have been in a strategic plan for a long time, but because of lack of funding we have not been in a position to implement them; the challenge therefore has been lack of resources. This you could see when government allocates the budget to the different departments, the museum sector would be

the one that gets the least in terms of budget allocation, and yet our role is so important.

4.4.4 Lack of political Will: Respondents also felt that lack of transformation in museum displays was as a result of lack of political will from those in government. This, they argued, often results in a huge neglect of the historically disadvantaged groups in the transformation of museum displays.

“All this I would say lies in the political will of our leaders, because if (politicians) they had prioritised museums as an important institution many of our museums could have been transformed fully by now, some of these decision making politicians have never even visited our museums, how then can we expect them to understand what is happening on the ground, I feel that the members of the portfolio committee (Arts and Culture) have not fully grasped and understood the museum sector that’s why there has been such a lack of funding”.



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The respondents pointed out that the danger of lack of political will is that in all under resourced museums those museums that are better resourced and funded, such as Iziko Museum in Cape Town, would usually attract more qualified researchers and significant and historically important displays on its permanent spaces. They gave an example of the 2007/2008 budget which indicates that Iziko Museum received 52 million from government grant for its capital expenses (iziko.org). The Nelson Mandela Museum in Mthatha, for example received 10 million from government grant. On the contrary East London Museum received a mere R500 000 from government. This cannot be left to continue where there is an unequal allocation of resources to museums if transformation of displays is to continue across the board.

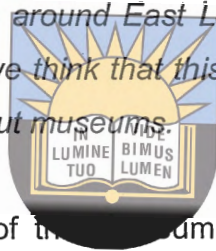
4.4.5 Transformation of museum displays in East London museum after 1994

Having acknowledged that the museum through its temporal displays was an attempt to bring balance to the history of the region, the museum staff was asked about the steps that were taken in addressing the imbalances of the East London museum. They advocated for the appointment of more previously disadvantaged South Africans in key

strategic positions that they were previously excluded from. The staff also alluded to fact that as part of their transformation agenda, the museum has adopted certain schools within the East London, with special attention to rural schools.

Respondent 2: Museum staff

We have seen an interest now from previously disadvantaged communities. Teachers are now interested in helping learners get more information on their OBE (Outcomes Based Education) syllabus on what we do. We also give them handbooks that assist them in getting more information. We have therefore adopted about 12 schools around East London where we go to them and teach them about what we do, we think that this would create an interest amongst the learners to learn more about museums.



It is clear from the responses of the museum staff that internally the East London museum has taken steps in addressing issue of transformation. The museum manager and museum staff indicated that this was partly to encourage more youth, especially from a disadvantaged background, to develop greater interest in the museums sector as well to bring the museums closure to the people, especially in those communities who could have otherwise not have had the opportunity of travelling to museums as a result transport costs to the museums.

A concern though in this initiative was the fact that the museum has not been capitalising on this great initiative, through engagement with the community on a meaningful role. Personally, the schools adopted would add value if the museum could develop questionnaires that specifically deal with asking those outreach schools what they hope to see in an inclusive museum display. This would hopefully influence what they would eventually put in their museum displays through the suggestions that they might get from these school children. This great initiative by East London museum needs to be applauded as it brings museum life closer to the ordinary people of South Africa. This is addressed below.

4.4.6. Community involvement and Outreach programmes: Respondents indicated that it has been difficult to persuade or excite a new generation of museum visitors to emerge from previously disadvantaged communities because museum displays are often old fashioned or overly-academic, predominantly in English, and costly. As a respondent indicated, there is a need for museums to be brought closer to the people through outreach programme. This, they believe, would stimulate interest among the youngsters...

Respondent 2: Staff member

“The problem is that most of these children have not been exposed on the functions of museums, what they know is that museums are a place where there are animals, but what they don't know is that behind the displays consist of people who work tirelessly for them to have the kind of information they see.”



Respondents 5: Community member

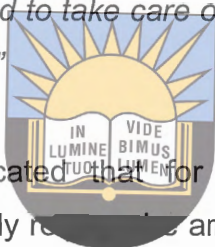
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This respondent was also of the view that museums should go in black communities more often than at present: *“I think museums were generally isolated to the black community and so people grew up not seeing its significance. I think if museums were able to create some sort of a link with the community maybe that could be some improvement, whereby the museum could have some sort of a revolving museum were it could come to the community and some of its displays.”*

Respondents highlighted the need for the improvement of the relationship between the surrounding community and the museum. They pointed to the need for more involvement in the affairs of how their museums are managed as well as the direction they needed to take. So they suggested that the museum authorities ought to be going out into communities and encourage a better public participation with the museum. This would encourage better transparency and corporation between the two as most museums are community entities. Respondents therefore indicated that it was important that museums should use their collections to enrich the general community and

integrate our cultures as a form of a social cohesion, particularly on its permanent displays. As indicated by one community member:

“Local government and provincial government has got funds, but I think the community needs to stand up and start to do proposal to these departments in terms of how the museums could be better equipped and have our displays there, this is all in the hands of the community. There’s even no pride now amongst the community in terms of taking pride of their heritage, look at our heroes grave they are full of grass and need to be cleaned, before we can be interested on museums displays we need to take care of our own back yard, communities need to also stop to shift blame.”



Another respondent indicated that for transformation to accelerate in the museums, it would squarely require the amount of participation of the community as, according to him:

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Respondent 9

“The local committees at the branch level should be the ones who engage with the museum, because if there is no structure that co-ordinate this then we could never see any progress on this matter.”

They however acknowledged that although the East London museum has made some efforts in taking the museum closer to former disadvantaged communities, through its outreach programmes, much more still needs to be done. According to respondent 4:

“Over the past two years two educational officers have been employed by the museum, the good thing is that they go to schools and communities and talk about what the museums has to offer, but what is disappointing is that after the learners have the interest in the museums all they see are mostly European settlers that cannot be good for us because it does not show a holistic history.”

The displays need to be relevant with the area that the museum is located in; I also think that these distorted displays of us as Africans need to be removed too.”

It was apparent that the respondents wanted a stronger relationship between museums and community. They saw this as a critical component of the lifeblood of any public museum in addressing the above mentioned issues. It became clear that the people interviewed wanted to call upon museums in the new South Africa to create methods and strategies for interacting with its surrounding communities. They thought this could be achieved by creating innovative programmes that would involve the community at large. However, they thought that the community would itself need to take an interest in issues of museums. The museum manager, for example, indicated that since displays in general are largely dependent on donations from communities, there could be no real change in the displays if this was not done. This emphasised that re-education would need to be done extensively with the community



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4.4.7 Current needs to improve on the displays of East London Museum

Respondents highlighted a number of issues which they thought would be of help in improving pre-1994 museums as follows:

i) Capacity building: The museum manager, for example, indicated that looking at transformation in a narrow view would not be assisting if the museum sector is to move forward. For him capacitating of management in understanding transformation is what is needed. This means that capacity building and skills transfer is needed not only for management, but for the entire staff. The museum staff were of the same view. They indicated that a workable management structure is needed to properly manage the museum. They expressed their sentiment regarding transformation that there is a need to speedily capacitate museum management as they are the ones who provide a long-term vision that ultimately address the critical issues such as museum displays. They argued that while there are policies that have been formulated to address the issue of

management within museum by government, there has however been difficulty in setting up a workable structure.

They acknowledged that government has to some extent transformed the managerial structure of many of its public entities through the appointment of more previously disadvantaged people and women. However, they pointed out that transformation does not only entail appointing previously disadvantaged personnel only, but should also include the appointment of qualified personnel. Respondents indicated therefore that museum transformation is therefore not about numbers but is about on the lasting legacy that it brings.



Respondents 6: Department of Sport and Culture

According to Respondents 6, *“Most of these managers are not experts on this field and are only politically motivated. I should hasten to say they are not informed of their duties because the Department has been taking these managers on short courses to get more knowledge on museum and heritage, but I should say that this is not enough. What is needed are people who have come through the ranks.”*

Respondent 1: Museum manager

One should also note that transformation is not only about displays, but it's also about skills development, one cannot only put black faces on management of museums and do nothing after that, it is important that transformation should be accompanied by skills development so they can have managerial skills. This would help black professionals understand the whole concept of museums than just putting them there (museum managerial posts), so you do not want to put black people who will not do the job.

ii) Skills transfer: Although the respondents indicated that there have been some improvements within the museum sector since 1994; however, the shortage of previously disadvantaged staff in scarce skills and technical positions remained a

challenge. They said that the museum is not producing enough museum professionals, let alone attracting more young people to come into this profession.

“We cannot talk about issue of transformation of museum displays without addressing the issues of skilled professions such as anthropologist, historians, researchers etc,” one of them said.

Although they acknowledged that they do not expect to see radical transformation of museums displays, they said that the government needs to invest more in these skills with scholarships and bursaries that could be targeted mostly at children from disadvantaged background so as to have professionals that reflect the demographics of South Africa. Hence, according to respondents, this has had a great impact in why transformation of museum displays was slow in the East London museum.



Respondent 2: Staff member

“Take for instance here at the East London Museum; there is only one historian from the previously disadvantaged background, therefore your view as this one person will not be heard, because your thinking brings a different perspective, in which some are not interested in knowing what your view is based on, so those are some of the problem we are facing. Most of the people who come from previously disadvantaged background are mostly assistant staff such as administrators, cleaners etc and therefore don’t take critical decisions.”

Furthermore he indicated that: *“I can say that because when I came here in 2003 as a historian I was told that the post had been vacant for the past 5 years. Why the post was vacant for so long is still a mystery to me. Even me as the black historian in the museum I am under a lot of pressure from people of my township, they request that I do some exhibition of their area; they say I should also fight their cause of having permanent exhibitions that talk about their history.”*

iii) Promote inclusive heritage: Respondents showed their awareness that museums should help protect and maintain the heritage of all South Africans through their

displays, particularly for the fact that museums play an important role in social cohesion. Regarding the respondents' views on what should be done to transform museum displays, the respondents characterised museums as an important assert of preserving history. Furthermore, respondents were very passionate about the importance that museums could play in promoting an inclusive heritage of the region through displays. Respondents indicated that displays don't only showcase history but that displays also form part of a social identity. An example of that came up often has been the fact the region offers a great sporting history such as boxing (for which the region is famous), respondents highlighted that this has not been capitalised by many of the museums in the region.



Respondent 1: Museum manager

Let me tell you, in 2001 we had an exhibited the history of boxing of the border region, as you might know this area is known as the area of boxing amongst the black people. We even exhibited the belts of Welcome Ncita and Vuyani Bungu (the first world champions in boxing to have come from this area), we also had the original freedom chatter in 2005, which covered the defiance campaign, these were important milestones that I could have loved to see remain in our permanent displays, but because of lack of space and funding we could not retain these displays to be permanent. There are many other important events such as the Duncan Village massacre of 1985 that could have had a permanent space in this museum, but unfortunately this has not been the case because of lack of funding.

According to respondent 5, who is a community member of Duncan Village and was equally involved in the Duncan Village uprising against apartheid in 1985:

“ I think the heroes and heroines of Duncan Village need to be displayed in our museums, especially considering that it's in close proximity to the museum, there should also be displays that coincide with our national days like the June 16 Soweto uprising, we too contributed to the uprising here during that day why don't they show it in that museum.”

Respondent 8 was also involved in the anti-apartheid movement in Duncan Village. In fact according to him, he was the first person to be shot by the apartheid police in the 1985 uprising. In that process he lost his left leg, according to him:

"I think people should never forget of their past, this can also create some appreciation of the contribution that was done by our people I'm sure a sense of pride and appreciation could rise amongst our people, I'm sure that even crime could come down because of this."

Characterising museums as an important asset for preserving South African history and fostering inclusive heritage was emphasised by the respondents. They indicated that museums could play a critical role in this regard and East London museum has an important role in protecting and maintain their heritage through displays. Looking at transformation of museum displays from holistic perspective, respondents highlighted that the transformation of personnel has been slow. Hence, the lack of vision and willingness to address the transformation of museum displays.



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Respondent 2: Museum staff

"I think museums need to have their own transformation charter. This could work as a guideline of where museums should be heading to, equally so I believe that there is a silent war that is happening within this field. But we can see that there are some things that are changing but they are dragging, I can see a tide of change that is coming but its taking very long."

iv) Democratise historical records: Respondents made it clear that very little if anything has been done to integrate the history of the former marginalised groups of South Africa in permanent displays in mainly pre-1994 built museums. They highlighted the need for museums to ensure that a localised and relevant history is reflected in museum displays in order to bring balance to the displays. As respondents 2 and 4 indicated:

“Even if these events could be taught in our schools so that our children know where this region has come from to be where it is, I think that this could make these children more appreciative of the contribution that Duncan Village and the region has played in bringing us where we are. I also think that visual photo’s need to be put in the museum because children learn better when they see these things. I’m sure that many young people don’t know that the funeral of Griffith Mxenge sparked the uprising in 1985 for the people of Duncan Village. If these events could be shown at the museum I’m sure that they could raise some sense of pride and revival amongst the people of this area. Look at the picture of Hector Peterson in Soweto the positive impact it brings to the people of Soweto, we too have our pictures that tell the story of the area and that needs to be shown.”



Although many respondents acknowledged recent attempts by the new dispensation to document history in a more realistic manner, building new museums; pre-1994 museums such as the East London museum have not been given the necessary support and attention when it comes to transformation of museum displays. Of particular concern, those museums that fall under the jurisdiction of the provincial department. Clearly this cannot go on unabated by government and members of the communities concerned. Partnership between relevant stakeholders such as government, community members and museums need to be strengthened in order to address these issues collectively. However, previously disadvantaged communities need to also be educated on the importance of donating their artefacts to the museum.

4.4.8 Need to review board structures in museum

The museum staffs were very concerned with the representation of the museum board. For them, the board had consisted mainly of white retired professionals. They thought that there in order to address issues of transformation of museum displays, members from previously disadvantaged community would need to form part of the board. They thought that these people would add value and a new dimension within the museum sector in general. Also, they thought that the nomination process needs to be relooked in many museums as the current nomination process of the board is done through the print

media. They therefore recommended outreach programmes where road shows in former disadvantaged community could be conducted in informing the community of the nomination process. This according to them would ensure that even those members of the community who do not have access to the print media would be given an equal opportunity to participate in the nomination process.

Respondents also highlighted a concern that the structure of the board members needed to be reviewed. They felt also that the board needed to be geared to the times and also the board members needed to be a reflection of the demographics of the country. They an example that the East London museum currently has 11 board members and only 1 is from a previously disadvantaged background (black African). Based on this, the respondents felt that this needed to be addressed if a speedy transformation of board members was needed.



When asked why some members of the community, especially members from the previously disadvantaged community, were not nominated in the board of trustees; respondent 6 indicated that the reason was the fact that nominations were usually done through the print media. Hence, there is a need to adopt other strategies as well that are used by other communities such as having a general meeting at community halls were communities would be made aware of the nominations. He said:

“The board of trustees are nominated through the media; there has been a huge loophole in this regard, many of our people simply are not yet exposed to make nominations through the media. Also interest in museum on the African people is still not that big. Therefore there needs to be some education exposure for black people on museums being informed on why they need to take interest in the happenings of the museum. An example of this is that the board is made up of few previously disadvantaged people who are appointed by government to represent them, no previously disadvantaged person is in that board because they been nominated by the community and yet the board is a very important institute that takes critical decisions on our behalf.”

As highlighted in the literature review, the White Paper on Arts Culture and Heritage declares that "access to, participation in, and enjoyment of the arts, cultural expression and the preservation of one's heritage are basic human rights; they are not luxuries, nor are they privileges as we have generally been led to believe" (1996:15). This position reflects not only an awareness of the prevailing elitist and exclusive character of heritage in South Africa, but also a commitment to broaden the base and widen the access to heritage preservation. Respondents indicated that museums needed to actively contribute to the transformation of the museum sector.

4.4.9 Conclusion



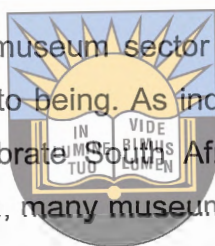
The above findings have highlighted a number of issues that would be of assistance in taking forward the transformation agenda of museum displays, bearing in mind that indeed this would not be an easy task as it needs the collaboration of all interest group partners. The study found that the transformation of museum displays is more varied and complex than usually perceived. The participants understand the need to transform displays, but a co-ordinated effort has not been forthcoming from relevant stakeholders, particular government. Equally so, there seems to be a gap between policy and implementation.

Respondents indicated that transformation of displays needs serious attention if we are to address the issue of transformation holistically, in particular the issue of funding and proper monitoring by government. This came out as the most critical aspect that needs serious attention. Likewise, skills development and skills transfer to those members who were previously disadvantaged within the museum staff was another critical issue that was raised by respondents. Museum visitors and community members of Duncan Village in particular raised sharply the issue of community engagement in important issues, in particular on museum displays as this was a critical and a thorny issue especially to those members of the community who were previously excluded in the museum display discourse. However, on the positive side, museum visitors were very complementary of the hospitality and assistance that they had received from the

museum staff. This could be one advantageous point that East London Museum could capitalise on in moving forward.

The above findings therefore reflect a mix pool of views from the respondents who were interviewed. The majority of respondents indicated that indeed transformation of museum displays in East London Museum needed to be taken with the seriousness that it deserves from both government and within the museum sector as most permanent displays are still mainly Eurocentric in nature. This has created a narrow cultural perspective.

It is clear from the findings that the museum sector has come a long way since the government of National Unity came into being. As indicated earlier, these included the building of more museums that celebrate South African national icons and events. However, as a result of this expansion, many museums such as East London Museum were neglected by government in terms of funding and proper mentorship, resulting in lack of proper monitoring and funding for transformation programmes of displays that reflect the society we are living in. With the current museum structure, it is clear that those who are in authority both from government and from museum authorities. Have clearly not committed themselves enough in deeds, but have committed themselves in words when it comes to the transformation of displays in these museums, thereby creating a façade of transformation of museum displays. As research findings indicate, there has clearly been no permanent displays at most mainstream museums since 1994, particularly those under the Eastern Cape Government supervision. The prevailing tendency is either to accept what is given recognition and promoted in and by our Eurocentric museums, and allow similar works – with South African themes – to flourish within South Africa separately from pre-1994 built museums. This creates a fragmented museum sector than a united one of “us” (pre-1994 museums) and “them” (post-1994 built museums). As a result, the community is the one that suffers and gets deprived in celebrating the rich and diverse history that the country has to offer to the rest of us and the world.



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The above findings have addressed the research question. It has been made clear that the history and cultural diversity of South Africans, in particular the history of black South Africans, have not been sufficiently showcased in the pre-1994 museums' permanent displays even after the post-apartheid era. It should be noted then that because museums play an important role in any society, there is a need to balance the representation of displays in all South African museums. However, as indicated in the findings, much more still needs to be done in meeting these ideals by both the museum sector and the South African government.



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CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

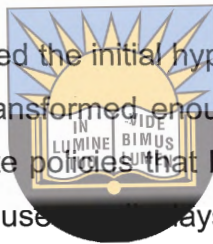
5.1 Introduction

This last chapter will discuss the main findings of the dissertation. This will be followed by presenting the conclusions of the study and recommendations.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

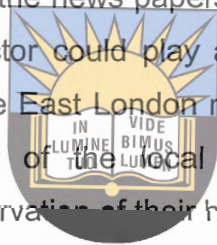
The findings of this study have confirmed the initial hypothesis of the study that the East London museum displays have not transformed enough in representing the history of indigenous people of the region despite policies that have been in place to ensure the transformation of heritage and of museum displays in particular. This study also confirmed that there has not been much difference between the pre-1994 and post-1994 museum displays, in so far as they reflect the history and heritage of South Africans. It transpired from interviews that some of the reasons for the continued failure of museums to represent the diversity of all South Africans have been limited finances and resources, staff shortages, lack of a coherent vision from the provincial department, lack of community participation especially outreach programmes, etc experienced by museums. These findings clearly indicate that the East London museum was and is still one of the museums that marginalised and continue to marginalise the previously disadvantaged communities in both its management and museum displays.

Although the respondents acknowledged that there have been some changes in the museum since 1994, they pointed out that such changes have been limited. It seems that where transformation has occurred, it has been slow, patchy and limited to temporal displays and in putting a very few Africans in management structures. An interesting finding was the observation that post-1994 museums in the Eastern Cape have tended to celebrate individual leaders who were previously disadvantaged but who now form part of the dominant class. Such individuals include the Nelson Mandela Museum in



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Qunu which celebrates the life and times of Nelson Mandela and the Red Location Museum in New Brighton which mostly features Raymond Mhlaba who was the first premiere of the Eastern Cape and Govan Mbeki, the father of the former State President. There are hardly any permanent displays that include the previously marginalised majority in museum displays. These would include Clements Kadalie who was born in what is now known as West Bank in East London, Kadalie was the first black trade unionist leader in South Africa, and he died in 1965. Steve Bantu Biko, the leader and the founder of the black conscious movement in South Africa, his writings to Daily Dispatch the regional news paper, using the disguised name of Frank Talk to write his Colum's, are still available to the news papers archives, yet the greater public is not aware of this. The museum sector could play a significant role in highlighting these unsung heroes. It seems that the East London museum continues to ignore its role to equitable represent the history of the local community, in particular historically marginalised groups, in the preservation of their historical collections.



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These findings seem to indicate that although South Africa as a country has undergone fundamental changes in the political front since the early 1990's, structural inequalities between the dominant class and the previously marginalised class have virtually widened. According to Schwabe, "The Gini coefficient for the previously disadvantaged population has risen from 0.62 in 1991 to 0.72 in 2001; this level of inequality is comparable with the most unequal societies in the world" (Schwabe, 2004:4). South Africa, being an unequal society with two economies: the first world economy and the third world economy seem to have similar experiences as the other unequal societies in the world.

These findings concur with the conflict perspective in explaining the kind of management and museum displays that exist in the East London museum. From a conflict perspective, structural inequalities are obvious in the museum sector, which also represents the dominant superstructure. Although there have been attempts in South Africa to transform the heritage sector in general and the museum displays in particular, the museum sector continues to reflect the manner in which the pre-1994 museums

were used by the ruling class in the past. As previously indicated, in South Africa, the segregationist principles guiding South African society were reinforced culturally by encouraging each racial and ethnic group to develop its own set of traditions. This resulted in certain groups being denied the opportunity for formal entry into the mainstream museums (Muller, 1981). This illustrates that museums were used particularly by the ruling class to “showcase” their progressive achievements and ideology. This also suggests that museums in the past were used to legitimise power relations between classes, where the interests of the dominant class were served by government at the expense of the interests of the majority (Davison, 2003). Since the dominant ideology was legalised by the apartheid system, its values were portrayed in museum management and displays as well. This explains why the museum displays were predominantly Eurocentric. Consequently, a ‘false consciousness’ from the marginalised classes was developed, as they tended to accept the status quo as just. This explains their general disinterest in museums and museum displays. This was partly because of the apartheid system that spearheaded an exclusive and patriarchal ideology. As Davidson indicates, museums retained a colonialist and apartheid mastery of the so-called “lesser races of humankind” in its displays (Davison, 2003). This was mostly the perception that almost all the respondents (about 85%) had of how the pre-1994 museums including the East London Museum.



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This concurs with Ramphele, who argues that “the way that collective memory is displayed in museums is not simply a technical formulation but one that bears directly on the legitimisation of power relations and what that means, the question of control [of the displays] is a crucial political issue” (Ramphele, 1996:65). This explains why most of the existing pre-1994 museum interpretations and representations of history have struggled to shake-off this legacy and have mainly remained Eurocentric. If the East London museum continues to be Eurocentric in its displays, this implies that the museum reflects the existing power relations in society by serving the interests of the ruling class. It should be borne in mind that members of the ruling class need not occupy positions within the state, but the existence of the capitalist system is sufficient to ensure that the state functions to benefit the ruling class (Haralambos: 2000, 612). If

the East London museum is portraying a selective past in its displays, the museum could be mitigating an ideology of this privileged group whose values are similar to those that were held in the past. In this regard, the museum could be continuing to legitimise the present social order through shared memory of the past. This is not a good reflection of a shared heritage, as it tends to treat certain layers of history as more important than others and thereby disregard the authenticity and integrity of the history of the majority of the population.

It then becomes clear that after 1994 the dominant class, have continued to confer their influence, which the bourgeois class uses to legitimise and protect their interests and consequent social relations (Li Yi, 2005). This influence by the dominant class has included social institutions such education institutions, museums, and therefore suggests that those who find themselves excluded within the museum discourse are the poor and marginalised members of the majority. These marginalised people, usually the majority, are often less influential and have thus continued to play a minimal part in the museum display discourse. This is further exacerbated by lack of political will by government officials, both at National and Provincial levels, who have not fully invested resources in the museum sector. They have not given museums the importance and significance they deserve. This includes doing their oversight role in gauging the processes that have been achieved since 1994 in having an inclusive display by the museum sector.

The above illustrates that class stratification has continued to be the dominant factor within museums even after 1994. It seems that the “haves” have continued to marginalise the “have nots” within the museum discourse. Conflict of interest between groups will continue to happen in society so long as the dominant class continue to benefit at the expense of the lower class. In this regard, the majority of respondents were of the view that the current status of the displays in East London Museum has not been reflective of the history and cultural heritage of the previously disadvantaged members of the area, such as the leaders mentioned above. The danger of this is that it will inevitably lead to class conflict as currently seen in South Africa where the poor

majority throughout South Africa have marched to the streets in protest against poor service delivery and corruption. Museums should therefore play a critical role in heading this call before the marginalised majority decide to take to the streets.

It seems then that the museum landscape of South Africa still reveals an absolute dominance of colonial and apartheid legacy where a Eurocentric legacy is still presented as the dominant history (Lowenthal, 1998). Many provincial museums need to change from pre-1994 engineered displays that still represent the past injustices, to displays that give voice to the previously marginalised South Africans while at the same time acknowledging the collective past of all South Africans. There is still little recognition given by many museums in recognising the history and contributions made by the majority of South Africans, in particular those of black South Africans, in shaping South Africa to be what it is today. Although museums have mostly popularised certain leaders of the black community in their displays, this seem to have created an elitist history that still marginalises the rest of the people. It therefore goes without saying that after sixteen years of democracy, the museum sector has been very slow in its part in transforming its permanent displays to meet the ideals of National Unity.




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In the context of transformation, there is a need to transform the consciousness of the African majority so that they 'renew' their place in museums. As once indicated by Dr Ben Ngubane, the then Minister of Arts, Culture and Technology in his opening address at the South African Museums Association (SAMA) Annual Conference, held at the Robben Island Museum on 30 May 1995: museums are 'unique placed to help develop and promote' a new consciousness and thereby contribute meaningfully to the rebirth and renewal of South African society. He further argued that the development of a new consciousness was 'founded upon a deep understanding of history' that issues related to heritage, culture and identity were 'deeply emotional' (Ngubane, 1995). After all, the issues raised by Dr Ngubane are at the very core of the fundamental transformation agenda in South Africa. The history of a people, different as it may be, should unite a nation more than anything. South Africans need to understand that they are united in their diversity. It is then very important that reconciliation should be followed by tangible

results. So, museum displays should play a critical role in uniting South Africans by ensuring that there is equity in museums. At the present moment, the findings of this study indicate that East London museum has not transformed as yet as there is still no equity in management and the museum's permanent displays since 1994, let alone displays that address the history of the majority in the province.

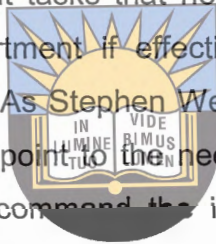
Based on the above discussion, the following conclusions and recommendations are made:

5.3 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 
- **Transforming Displays:** As previously indicated, not much history of previously disadvantaged people of the region has been displayed in East London Museum, much more needs to be done to represent the cultural diversity of this region, in particular through permanent displays. The perception from Duncan Village community members seem to indicate that East London museum is currently seeking to design a past that fixes the identity of the past from a Eurocentric perspective. Therefore, if relations between community and the museums are to be improved, these concerns ought to be addressed immediately. There is therefore a need to find new commonality or forms of permanent displays that are a representation of all South Africans that would cut across all old boundaries of class and ethnicity.
 - **Inclusive displays:** One way of transforming displays is to ensure that they foster inclusiveness. Although museums in post-1994 era have tried hard to achieve inclusiveness in their displays and management, this has occurred only in those museums that are under the national auspices. Even in the East London museum, inclusiveness has occurred only to a very limited extent. As recommended in the findings of the Wellington Trust, the East London museum should foster social inclusion and reduce exclusion by ensuring that its exhibits are accessible to all and that collections are relevant to (and reflect the aspirations and needs of) the

community (WMT, 2008). This seems to be an important part that has been mostly neglected by this museum.

- **Capacity Building:** As noted above, the past segregationist principles guiding South African society were reinforced culturally by encouraging each racial and ethnic group to develop its own set of traditions. This resulted in certain groups being denied the opportunity for formal entry into the mainstream museums (Muller, 1981). Transforming museum displays would not help in the long-term if the component of staff capacitating is not addressed as they are the ones who are the vision bearers of any institution. These are important tasks that need to be dealt with urgently and decisively by the provincial department if effective monitoring of transformation museum displays is to take place. As Stephen Weil indicates, "I feel that what you describe as conditions for change point to the need for African nations to develop their own ability to manage and command the interpretations and recordings of achievements, management and control are actions that do not often align with the general thinking about visual display" (Weil, 1990:4)



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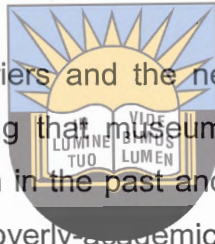
In order for this capacitating to be effective, there is a need to address two fundamental issues that would transform museums, i.e., skills development and resource allocation to museums by government. Affirmative action needs to be effectively implemented in South African museums through the proper appointment of capable and skilled people. Furthermore, there needs to be transfer of skills to previously disadvantaged professionals; especially at the operational level as this is where there's a chronic shortage of previously disadvantaged professionals. Maybe the suggestion that was raised by one respondent that more disadvantaged professionals must "come from the ranks" within the museum sector needs to be looked at by bureaucrats. This would hopefully lead to more progressive museums than is currently the case.

- **Review of the funding model:** Transformation of museum displays would only be a dream if a proper funding model is not in place. Therefore, a co-ordinated effort has to be forthcoming from relevant stakeholders, particularly government in this regard.

Transformation of museum displays without a clear funding model would ultimately mean that it would remain a wish list to develop an inclusivity display in museums, especially in museums which are under the provincial auspices. It is clear that these museums, like the East London museum, are being underfunded by government; hence there is a huge gap in terms of funding of the flagships programme museums as compared to the funding of provincial museums. Clearly, there needs to be a revision of a funding model as it would ultimately hamper the end product.

- **Resource allocation:** Since 1994, a lot of attention and resources have been focused on those museums that are under national government, namely the flagship museums. Perhaps it is time for a review of this model, whereby a single government agency, which solely focuses on museums, is established. This could happen through the setting up of a government agency that could distribute government grants to all government museums. This would hopefully level the distribution of resources to all museums. The danger of not doing this would be that those museums that are under provincial departments will naturally lag behind those that are funded by national government. This also goes when they attract skills.
- **Accessibility:** Issues of accessibility by the majority of South Africans still remain a thorny issue within the museum sector. Most museums in the Eastern Cape continue to be in the urban centres, which is out of reach for ordinary people. This means that the majority of the people still have to travel long distances to museums in order to view displays. This makes it difficult for them to visit as a result of cost implications. This undoubtedly leaves them at a disadvantaged position and excluded from the sector. This adds to the difficulty of persuading a new generation of museum visitors and professionals from these communities. There is therefore a need to bring museums closer to where the majority of people live. In the case of East London, the museum could have a revolving exhibition that could target these displaced communities. This could bridge the gap between museums and poorer communities.

- **Democratising historical records:** There should be an attempt to give voice to the experience of previously marginal groups in museum displays. The documentation of their past should seek to democratise historical records, documentation and displays in museums. Museums, such as East London Museum, should be serving as windows that open onto the world beyond a narrow horizon that currently persists in displays. Like other museums in the world, the East London museum should portray a powerful but highly challenging role as interpreters of a nation's historical capital. In forging better ties between community and the museum, authorities ought to be going out more in communities and encouraging them to improve their dialogue with the museum.



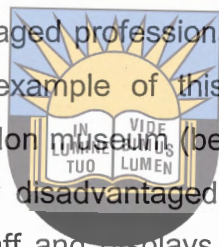
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- **Language barrier:** Language barriers and the need to be relevant to a younger audience has also been something that museums have been struggling with. It transpired from interviews that both in the past and currently, museums continue to be perceived as old fashioned or overly academic, and predominantly Eurocentric. This has resulted in young people staying away from visiting museums. As a result, they visit museums on mandatory school tours. One way of mitigating this issue would be through youth programmes whereby young people would be involved in designing displays. This would bring new life into museums. This can also hopefully alleviate the shortage of young professionals in the sector as it would stimulate more interest among young people, as well as restoring confidence and rebranding of the sector to a new audience that was previously excluded from the sector.

- **Capacity Building and empowerment:** The noble idea that government has taken in the East London museum is in appointing more previously disadvantaged staff on managerial positions. This is a course in the right direction. However as the respondents indicated, because this sector was a very closed one in terms of allowing the majority of South Africans to be part of it, the previously disadvantaged majority were never part of occupying key strategic positions within the museum sector. As a result in sixteen years of democracy, there is still a shortage of previously disadvantaged professionals within the sector in redressing the skills

imbalances that the museum sector had inherited. Therefore in addressing this challenge, government needs to equip some previously disadvantaged staff, especially those it already has within the museum sector, with the required skills that would enable them to play more meaningful roles and take critical decisions rather than just to have more black staff as mere tokens of transformation. This would ultimately equip the staff to be able to address some of the challenges that pertain to museum displays.

Training within the museum sector should be tailor-made to address the key requirement for more community sensitive museum. An analysis of the shortage of qualified previously disadvantaged professionals could be seen in the personnel of East London museum. An example of this is the fact that of the existing 5 professional staff in East London museum (beside the museum manager), only one historian is from a previously disadvantaged background. This indeed cannot be good if we to ensure that staff and displays are a reflection of the region and its people. Therefore in mitigating this crisis, besides the training of internal staff, a recruitment drive should be initiated to target more previously disadvantaged students to study for the critical careers that exist in the museum sector such as anthropology and other scarce skills. In this way, the lack of previously disadvantaged professionals could be addressed.



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- **Role of communities:** Museum displays are supposed fundamentally to represent the cultural capital of a nation's past - a non-renewable capital that should not be squandered; it is the role of museums and other relevant institutions to protect the significance of that heritage (Boylan, 1992). As the respondents indicated, displays in East London museum are still distorting reality in terms of their displays. Presently, East London museum's collections, while valuable to science and to society in general, still needs to expend on their scope of displays by also having more of displays that talks to the socio-economic history of the region as well in more broad terms. Clearly, heritage cannot be adequately understood as the product of museum professionals only.

Museums in South Africa should realise that in order to proceed into the future, they must prove to be relevant to all communities living in their surroundings, as this would create a healthy museum community that is based on inclusiveness. The benefit of greater community involvement within the museum is that it becomes relevant to the needs of the community, in terms of historical interpretation of its displays. If communities are involved, one would see a greater enthusiasm and ownership not only in outreach programmes as is currently the case with East London museum, but also engaging communities on key strategic issues that the museum would be embarking on. As a result, museums are now being constantly challenged actively to confront past iniquities and conduct research programmes that are closely related to educational programmes as well as the general needs of its surrounding community. Unfortunately, museums would not achieve the necessary support that they greatly need if they continue to neglect their most important stakeholder, which is their surrounding community. There is therefore an urgent need on the part of museum authorities in addressing this challenge.



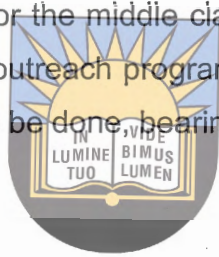
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- **Outreach programmes:** outreach programmes should be encouraged as a means to bring museums closer to the people. One issue that East London museum should be commended for is its outreach programme whereby rural and township schools have been adopted as friends of the museums. However, there still needs proper definition and vision around this. One way of doing this would be through outreach programmes that focus on public participation programmes where the community would have a say on issues of museum displays. It transpired from interviews that the majority of respondents felt isolated and at distance from the museum discourse, especially members from the previously disadvantaged communities. It would, therefore, be prudent for both government and museum official to close this gap as museums play an important role in establishing a country's social cohesion. Therefore, more outreach programmes that are community driven are needed, where members of the community would be involved in contributing to the direction that would need to be taken by museums in its inclusivity of displays. Further research would therefore be needed in formulating a comprehensive approach with

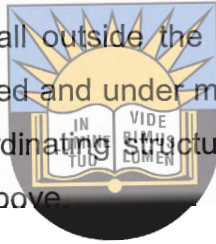
regards to community outreach programmes with the intention to address inclusiveness in museum displays.

These outreach programmes could form part of the searching for more of the history of the previously disadvantaged majority through this oral history when they do their outreach programmes. Serious attention is therefore needed in tapping into the rich history of indigenous knowledge of oral history. As indicated by young audiences in this study, in order to ensure that the museums meet the people's needs, museums ought to be youth friendly and appealing to ordinary people. These respondents thought that museums were for the middle class and not for the ordinary person on the street. If we are to make outreach programmes a success a bit of creativity and thinking out of the box need to be done, bearing in mind the needs and aspirations of the targeted audience.



- **Public participation** For effective community engagement in museum sector, public participation should be encouraged. The methodology that can be used in doing outreach programmes. According to Creighton and Creighton, public participation is the process by which an organization consults with interested or affected individuals, organizations, and government entities before making a decision (2008). Of late, this concept has been the buzz word used by most government departments to interact with the public. Amongst other ideas that could be pursued in these programmes would be travelling exhibitions, educational kits, publications, partnerships with museums and other heritage institutions that would work together with the community. Unfortunately, to date, public participation through outreach programmes for communities in many museums including East London museum, have not been used. Public participation usually has a public participation officer that regularly visits community stakeholders to understand if they are still on track in terms of their work. This has been proven to be effective in bringing communities closer to what institutions do. Museum institutions could do the same in closing the gap between community and them.

- Government involvement:** Political transformation after 1994 brought to the fore the debate about who South Africans are and what constitute their heritage as well as what should be reflected in museum displays. If the heritage sector and museums in particular are to maintain their value as keepers of our cultural capital, government has to be more involved by playing a more fundamental role in this regard. Unfortunately, as found in this study, government has been lacking political will to ensure that museums engage in the debate of displays in both at a policy level and at a community level. As previously discussed, the problem has been the fact that the national government has continued to focus mainly on the two flagship institutions, namely northern flagship and southern flagship, while other museums (like East London museum) that fall outside the mandate of national government have been sadly left under-resourced and under monitored. Even at provincial, level there has not been a proper co-ordinating structure to address these fundamental issues that have been mentioned above.

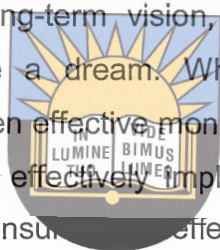


In archiving these issues in the present South Africa, there is an urgent need for those in authority to understand that as a fundamental human right that those who were previously denied agency in museum displays, ought to be given full participation in the documenting of their lives, in constructing what might be termed as post-colonial/apartheid of museum displays. Museums need stronger national policy and co-ordinating framework, with a strong research base in fast tracking inclusive displays in particular in museums that fall outside the two national flagships. As important national institutions, it is important that museums be responsive to the imbalances of the past in its displays. It is important, therefore, that government explores the role of marginalisation in the construction of museum displays.

Furthermore, government should make sure that museums address challenges that face the country, in addressing South Africa's national challenges, such as moral regeneration; the scourge of HIV/Aids, illiteracy, crime and unemployment. The museum sector would play a critical role in addressing these issues through informative permanent displays. Increasing the number of researchers in museums

should also be a primary aim of government, as museums are also primarily research focused institutions. This will ensure that museums strive to meet best practices in terms of collections management and research that promotes the understanding of our rich natural and cultural history yet at the same time producing informative displays.

- **Improve monitoring tools:** The official plan for transformation in the museum and heritage sector in general up to date has focused on increasing the proportion of previously disadvantaged people and women employees. While this is laudable, however, without effective long-term vision, transformation of museum displays would certainly only just be a dream. What seem to have been lacking in government's strategy has been effective monitoring tools that would make sure that the objectives of policies are effectively implemented. Monitoring of the museum sector is therefore crucial in ensuring effective transformation of the sector and the effective implementation of its policies.



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- **Museum agency:** If we are to improve on the transformation of museums in general and on museum displays in particular, we need to address the fundamental issues that still hinder on the overall agenda of transformation of the sector. This could happen through the setting up of a government agency that could distribute government grants to all government museums. This would hopefully equalize the level of distribution of resources to all museums. The danger of not doing this would be that those museums that are under provincial departments will naturally lag behind those that are funded by national government.
- **Museum Policy framework:** In archiving an inclusive display in the present South Africa, there is an urgent need for those in authority to understand that as a fundamental human right that those who were previously denied agency in museum displays, ought to be given full participation in the documenting of their lives. In constructing what might be termed a post-colonial/apartheid museum, museums need stronger national policy and co-ordinating framework. This framework should

have a strong research base in fast tracking inclusive displays in particular on those museums that fall outside the two national flagships.

Although there have been policies that were developed to address issues of transformation of heritage in general; such as the National Heritage Act, 1999 and National Heritage Resources Act, 1999, a separate museum policy framework has not yet been developed in South Africa. This indicates a significant short fall on current policies. There should be a speedy development of the museum policy. As important national institutions, it is important that museums be responsive to the imbalances of the past in its displays. It is important, therefore, that government explores the role of marginalisation in the construction of museum displays.



- **Museum Charter:** There is a need for museums to make a concerted effort in addressing diversity and social identity through its displays especially bearing in mind the traumatic and 'deeply emotional' past that Dr. Ngubane highlights. It is therefore strongly recommended that a transformation charter and policy on museum and displays in particular, be developed if effective transformation of South African museum displays is to occur.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

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University of Fort Hare

Informed Consent:

1. Title of Study: **Heritage Transformation and the Role of Museums in Post-Apartheid South Africa.**
2. Benefits: The study will help researchers gain a better understanding of the role of museums in post-apartheid South Africa.
3. Participant's Rights: I may withdraw from participating in the study at any time.
4. Financial Compensation: I don't expect to get any financial reward from the researcher. I understand and accept that the researcher will have contact with me once I have agreed to partake in the interview.
5. Confidentiality: I have been assured that everything I say will be kept strictly confidential except in cases where the researcher shares information with the authorized supervisor. Furthermore, I have been assured that my responses will be anonymous since I will not be requested to mention my name. Anonymity is assured by the use of a number system for comparison of the pre-test and post-test results.
6. If I have any questions or concerns, I can call 043 7047 082 at the University of Fort Hare during office hours.



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I understand my rights as a research subject and voluntary consent to participation in this study. I understand what the study is about as well as how and why it is being done. I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

Subject's signature.....

Date.....

Signature of the Investigator.....

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

The semi-structured interview shall focus on the following themes as part of the interview guide:

Main Research Question

To what extent have permanent displays of pre-1994 museums been transformed since 1994 in representing the history of the former marginalised people in the Eastern Cape?

Related questions:



1. What was your perception of management in pre-1994 museums and their displays, in particular in the East London museum?
2. How are displays now in the East London museum in the post 1994 era?
3. What kind of transformation has taken place in the East London museum since 1994?
4. For effective transformation to occur in the East London museum, what needs to be improved?

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