

The Mashishing Marking Memories Project: A Culture-Centered Approach to Participation

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Abstract : This research explores the importance of including a multitude of voices in the cultural heritage narrative, particularly in South Africa. The Mashishing project is an extension of and builds on the existing 'Biesje Poort project' which is a rock art project that was funded by the National Heritage Council in 2010 - 2013. Hence, the Mashishing marking memories project applies comparable Biesje Poort project objectives, though in a different geographical area. The wider project objectives are to transfer skills, promote social cohesion and empowerment, and lastly to add to the knowledge base of the Mashishing region and the repository of the local museum in the Lydenburg museum. This study is located in the Mashishing area, in Mpumalanga, South Africa. In this area, there were no present multi-vocal heritage projects. This research assesses the Mashishing marking memories project through the culture-centered approach for communication for social change, which examines the impact that the diverse participants have on the operations of the Mashishing project and also investigates whether the culturally diverse participants facilitates or hinders effective participation within the project. Key findings of this research uncovered the significance of participation and diverse voices in the cultural heritage field. Furthermore, this study highlights how unequal power relations affect effective participation. As a result, this study encourages the importance of bringing the researcher and the participant in a safe space to facilitate mutual learning. It also encourages an exchange of roles, where the researcher shifts from being an authoritarian figure to being in the role of a listener.

Keywords : culture, heritage, participation, social change

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