Ubuntu Archaeology

A comparison of four different public archaeology projects in South Africa

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Abstract

This thesis examines four different public archaeology projects in South Africa, and poses questions related to how archaeology is defined and mediated by educational centres and museums in South Africa. The museums have a rather traditional way of mediating archaeological knowledge to a broader public, but they do include exhibitions that invite visitors to interpret human history themselves. The educational centres, on the other hand, are considered to be a category below the traditional museum, where the content is developed in collaboration with indigenous people, and the knowledge about former peoples is mediated by the indigenous people themselves, as part of an objective to develop employment opportunities for marginalised community groups. While educational centres have developed out of this collaboration with indigenous communities, museums were established during the colonial period in South Africa. The educational centres are a collaboration between experts and non-experts, and have an inclusive approach. Museums, in contrast, develop their content based on the experts’ knowledge, for the visitor and not with the visitor. However, it is evident that visitors are intended to have a dialogue with the exhibition. An inclusive approach is preferable, where experts and non-experts are on the same level, show mutual respect for each other, and are open to learning from each other. A significant issue that public archaeologists face is that each public project is unique. This means that new methods and ideas are needed for each project. I visited and examined four different projects, and found that all four projects were unique in terms of the issues that they faced and in terms of how the professionals solve those problems in specific ways adapted to each unique project. On the one hand, the question of what a successful public project is or can be remains, but on the other hand, it is clear that a well-established collaboration and an understanding for each other is needed to develop a successful public work. In South African terms, a successful public work could be termed “Ubuntu archaeology”, where the word “Ubuntu” is interpreted as Desmond Tutu put it in 1994, where both parties experience each other as equals.

Key words

Public archaeology, South Africa, community archaeology, educational centres, museums.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Personal introduction

I started my career as a pre-school teacher, and later opened my own school. Because I am a trained Montessori teacher, my educational philosophy follows the Montessori approach, which emphasises the development of children’s natural psychological, physical and social development in a way that allows them to show initiative, and does so in an atmosphere encourages independence as well as group work. In 2009 I began studying a program in Heritage Environment, majoring in Archaeology, and wrote my Bachelor’s thesis in 2011. The title was, To experience history, or public archaeology in South Africa. With my background as a teacher, I was already interested in mediating knowledge, but a specific interest in public archaeology in South Africa developed during the six-month practical component of that program, which gave me the opportunity to visit South Africa. During that time I worked as an intern at the KwaZulu-Natal Museum in Pietermaritzburg, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Here, I chose to work closely with the museum’s education and archaeology departments, and developed a travelling museum together with my colleagues. My experiences with the museum’s educational outreach programmes, with southern African archaeology and with South Africa as a whole led to the conception of my Master’s project.

My Master’s thesis aims to examine why public archaeology has become more and more prominent in archaeological research and mediation in South Africa. There are obvious reasons for this — public archaeology takes the opinions and requirements of the public into account, it receives support from the government, and in many cases it is even in line with certain industry priorities. Importantly, archaeologists and the public realise the importance of collaboration for making the subject of archaeology publicly accessible. Often this collaboration serves different purposes: on the one hand, the archaeologist wishes to educate the general public and make people understand and value the subject of archaeology; the public, on the other hand, wish to learn more about a subject that is perceived to be interesting and exciting. This collaboration also stems from a requirement that archaeologists no longer do their archaeological work in isolation from the broader public, but rather educate the public in the archaeological work. This liaison between archaeology and the public makes archaeology more relevant for the general public. Archaeologists want to preserve cultural heritage, and it can be assumed that the best way to preserve something is to educate people about it. This is what makes public work relevant for archaeologists. Since cultural heritage is to be found everywhere, and on different social and cultural levels, public archaeology involves working on a local, regional, national or international level. It is a wide field, and it requires intuition, and a feeling from the archaeologist towards the specific group he/she is working with. If the archaeologist does not understand the needs of the group, the project cannot be successful, however well it was planned.
I am interested in examining how the subject of archaeology is represented to the South-African public, which is closely linked to the questions of why and for what reason South African archaeologists work with public archaeology, and in what ways the subject of archaeology is affected by being communicated to a broader public in South Africa. One of my major interests lies in seeing the relationship between archaeologists and its public. There is also a financial aspect to public work, and I am curious to examine the consequences of such financial factors on archaeology. There are various funding opportunities available for archaeological work. A professional archaeologist knows how to apply for that funding and what kind of funding would suit the project best. In the case of public archaeology, there may be even greater possibilities for getting a project financed. This is because an archaeological project made relevant to a larger group of people encourages different stakeholders to consider their financial involvement in a project. With this in mind, there should be a major focus on public involvement in archaeological projects — not only on the archaeological research, but also on the pedagogies used to interest a broader public. In this respect I think my educational background as a teacher equips me to recognise and understand from different perspectives the issues that public archaeologists face in their work.

1.2 Research background

Even though archaeologists have worked with the public and for the public for as long as there has been such a thing as professional archaeology, it was in the 1960s that the public archaeology emerged as an approach and a discipline. Today public archaeology is an established field within archaeology, but there is still some confusion as to what it is, and there is no broadly accepted definition of the term “public archaeology”. Even though certain researchers have tried to define the term (e.g. Schadla-Hall 1999; Matsuda 2004; Svanberg & Wahlgren 2007), none of the definitions has been widely recognised. An explanation for this is that the nature of archaeology itself varies from country to country, As no two countries have the same archaeology or the same history. Furthermore, archaeologists as professionals specialise in different archaeologies, such as “the Archaeology of the North”, “Egyptian Archaeology”, “South African Archaeology”, and so on. The only common ground, it seems, is that archaeology examines the prehistories and histories of human societies in all places. Another approach is to view archaeology as a method that can be applied to the study of any material — from prehistoric, to historic, to contemporary, or even future material (Burström 2007; Sabloff 2008). The archaeological method can therefore be seen as the common denominator. The fact that one is able to approach the subject of archaeology either as archaeological research, where archaeologists try to deepen their understanding of different prehistoric time periods, or as a method to understand human societies in any time period, makes archaeology an outstanding subject, useful in many different contexts. Archaeology’s diversity as a subject makes it more vital, yet also very elusive, and this may explain why every archaeological project is unique. This uniqueness is not only attributable to the differences between countries, cultures and geographies, but also to the specific context in which a project is carried out — the history of a country, the
educational background of the archaeologist or the political situation in a specific country. To complicate matters further, even the methods used in public archaeology are not similar in every country. This confusion may possibly arise from a failure to communicate what “the public” is supposed to mean.

In his book The structural transformation of the public sphere (1962), Jürgen Habermas, a German philosopher, examines how the rise of the bourgeoisie enabled the development of a “private” and a “public” sphere. He bases his research on historical and sociological knowledge that he places into a contemporary context. His interpretation of the term ”public” means a united society that controls the state.

Akira Matsuda is a Japanese archaeologist who wrote his dissertation on public archaeology and since then has worked extensively with the relationship between archaeology and the general public, from an anthropological and a sociological point of view. Matsuda has focused his work on finding a way in which archaeologists can use the term “public”, which he proposes can be translated as “the state” or “the people” (Matsuda 2004: 66). This idea is in fact inspired by Habermas’s philosophical approach to defining the “public” and the “private” sphere, Which Matsuda translates into a theoretical approach for archaeologists working with the public. The public sphere is, in Matsuda’s translation, the area where non-archaeologists are encouraged to engage in a democratic and critical debate about archaeology based on open and inclusive participation.

This is a great challenge for archaeologists, since it means that they needs to redefine their understanding of their own profession. The new understanding of archaeology does not consider it to be enough to be a skilled archaeologist who knows how to interpret the past and how to dig up trenches. In addition to acquiring academic skills, archaeologists are required be open-minded towards a broader audience, and must convey to non-archaeologists that their voice counts as much as the voice of the professional. With these new expectations in mind, it is important to remember that a typical archaeological education does not include learning the pedagogies or other tools that would prepare a young archaeologist to engage with the broader public. These are not skills that are required in archaeology as a university subject, yet. Involving people who do not have the academic background, and including their questions in the framework of archaeological research, is consequently a challenge. To be able to meet that challenge and to perform satisfying public work, different and new methods are needed.

If, as Matsuda claims, the public sphere is where non-archaeologists are encouraged to participate in a democratic discourse with the practical work of archaeologists, the non-archaeologist can be defined as any member of society. This is why public archaeology has various sub-categories, such as community archaeology, archaeological documentaries on television, archaeological excavations open for public visits, archaeological museums, and much more. Schadla-Hall states that “every area of archaeology that interacts or that has the potential to interact with the public is public archaeology” (Schadla-Hall 1999: 147).
In my thesis I will focus on the sub-categories of community archaeology, as well as archaeology mediated in museums. At this point, therefore, the terms “community” and “community archaeology” should be explained. A community is seldom mono-cultural and never of one mind. It can be a group of people who has come together for all kinds of activities or who live together in the same place. There is no community identical to another community. But people are in many ways alike, and they have always engaged with the past in order to establish meaning in the present. In other words, there has always been something like community archaeology. In contemporary times, archaeology has become more and more of a community issue, where the communities are involved in archaeological work. The public can and should follow archaeological work step by step, be involved in decision making and have at least partial control over it (Marshall 2002: 212). Since communities can differ to a great degree, their involvement differs from one project to another. Sometimes, projects that from the beginning did not seem interesting to the communities developed into highly valued projects, where more and more people want to be included, while other public projects are not as successful as initially expected (Marshall 2002: 215). The communities that archaeologists work with are different, and Marshall (2002) identifies three main types of communities. Firstly, the community may consist of locals, people who live on or close to the site. These are people who know the place well. Secondly, the community may consist of descendants. These people are descended from the people who once lived on the site, and feel a strong bond to the place because of their history. Usually these first and second types of communities overlap. Thirdly, the community may consist of non-indigenous local communities who live at the site now and have a strong connection to that place. It is important for a public archaeologist to bear these different groups in mind, in order to understand the public’s different objectives throughout a project.

Community archaeology is therefore unique and demands a collaboration between the archaeologist and the community. Community archaeology as such is located within the field of cultural resource management (CRM), and is often not respected as a research field. In North America and Britain the tasks for community archaeology tend to fall outside the area of responsibility of serious academic research. This is why there is comparatively little literature and research in this field. However, the public archaeologist has to work effectively in areas other than simply archaeology. Those other areas are, amongst other things, education, public relations, exhibition design and marketing. In addition, it is important that archaeologists working with the public investigate and understand how their subject is best intermediated to different age groups. The implication is that the starting point in every public archaeology project has to be the investigation of the relationship between archaeology and the public for that specific project.

Public archaeology is important for archaeologists as well as the public, because one cannot detach the subject of archaeology from the cultural, economic and political aspects of contemporary society. The archaeology of recent times is an archaeological approach that emphasises the importance of archaeology for contemporary society.
Mats Burström (2007), a Swedish archaeologist working with the archaeology of recent times, sees a need for such an approach. Through researching the relationship between material and memory, and letting the audience give their perspective on what has happened, the story gains another dimension in addition to the academic one. This approach also encourages democratic possibilities and incorporates a human voice into history. In terms of the approach adopted by the archaeology of recent times, it is of crucial importance to avoid determining and communicating knowledge by means of one-way communication, and to rather look for inspiration and a willingness to learn from each other. The key idea is that different people have different knowledge, and that there is no homogeneous society. These different groups, with their different interests and perspectives, give the approach a democratic base, with lots of different voices. It can be said that the archaeology of the recent past provides knowledge about the recent times as well as a deepened insight into how material culture influences and touches people. It creates possibilities for a natural co-operation with the public.

It is clear that archaeology as a subject is linked to all kinds of people, from past to present. This is also why everyone who shows an interest in archaeology should be able to be involved in it. Since political, sociological, ethnical and economic questions have always been and will always be on the human agenda, all these issues are interlinked with public work. A specific method for this public work is needed, and according to Matsuda (2004), that method is an “archaeology from below”, where archaeologists should seek to be the messengers for and about archaeology. The person who introduced the term “archaeology from below” was Neil Faulkner, a British archaeologist, who in 2000 wrote an article about the need for a democratic archaeological approach. He based this article on his own experiences with a project in Sedgeford in northwest Norfolk, where he compared an example of “archaeology from above”, which is defined as an undemocratic process, with an example of “archaeology from below”, which is defined as a democratic process, and is described by Faulkner as follows:

Fieldwork is rooted in community, open to volunteer contributions, organised in a non-exclusive way, and dedicated to a research agenda in which material, methods and interpretation are allowed to interact. (Faulkner: 2000: 21)

Different archaeologists have been and still are working with an approach adapted to an archaeology from below. One of them is Gemma Tully (2007), who worked with public archaeology in both Turkey and Egypt. The method she used was the so-called “seven-part methodology”. With this method, collaboration between the community and archaeologists is required at all stages of the project, and the method includes seven key components to performing community archaeology: educating, communicating to the communities, communicating to the visitor of the project, contextualising, analysing, organising and involving.

What researchers strive for with the seven-part methodology is two-way communication, by means of which partnerships with local organisations can be established. Strategy documents should be developed, and the issues of authority and
ownership, as well as social interactions, should be discussed. Targeted groups for education are the communities, schools and the wider public. The aim is to develop a project team, represented by members from the community as well as researchers, in order to establish a decision-making authority when the project leader is absent. The research results should then be communicated in an appropriate way, and the site should be presented in context and made meaningful for contemporary society. The aim is also to establish international contacts and encourage international collaboration. The project should always be analysed in terms of the main question: how the different aims of the archaeologists and the communities will best benefit from the project. A database should be considered to enable a wider public to take part in archaeological discoveries, as well as a photographic and video record to show the importance of the site. Furthermore, the local community should be involved in the production and sale of souvenirs, and the creation of a project logo.

The project is seen as a meeting point for traditional ideas and archaeology. It has to be mentioned that the seven-step method was not developed to be followed rigidly step by step, but was rather conceived as a set of guidelines for a successful public project.

Another researcher who has been using a public methodology in contemporary times is Devena Haggis (2008), who has worked with a rather different public project. Haggis’s method is based on the analytical hierarchy process (AHC), which is based on a computer program that, through careful analysis, helps to understand what the public finds important. In her project, she wanted to find out what the public and what archaeologists thought about specific sites, and how these two groups think archaeology should be intermediated at those sites. It was an attempt to let the public and the researchers decide what types of mechanisms should intermediate the history of a specific site — for example, a museum exhibition, academic papers or a community collaboration developed at that place. In that way, a site’s history and the form of mediation used to communicate it were considered in relation to the interests of both the professional archaeologists and the broader public. She performed this research in Japan and Australia, and what she found was that the archaeologists and the public were in agreement on which sites were important, but disagreed on how the sites’ histories should be mediated. By asking both the professional archaeologists and the public, one can find out more about how a place is valued by these different groups. The question in Haggis’s research was, which places or sites do the archaeologists and the public equally consider to be important for the development of a public project at that specific site? Furthermore, she posed questions on how the work should be represented, and if people should work together or individually on specific projects. The results of her research showed in a very obvious way how important collaboration and communication between the public and the archaeologist are for producing a project where both sides can find value and from which both sides can benefit.

Another methodology for public archaeology, and the newest example of working with contemporary public projects, is community-based participatory research (CBPR), developed by Sonya Atalay (2012). Atalay is a North American archaeologist who
works with indigenous archaeology. She claims that participatory research, in which the public or community is involved with their own knowledge about a site, a time or a happening, attempts to break down the distinction between the archaeologist (the researcher) and the community (the researched). The projects she works with are based in communities, so the communities are directly involved in each and every step of the research process. Each group (academics and community members) always contributes something to the research process. The difficulty with this method is that each group has different values, skills and knowledge, which has the potential to provoke conflict and requires communication between the two groups. An important part of CBPR is the recognition that input from both sides is valuable and necessary for a successful research project. Community engagement is seen as an important addition to the archaeological work. It is also something that is done to appease community partners. CBPR is based on five principles that have been developed through Atalay’s (2012) experiences in her work as a public archaeologist. They might overlap to varying degrees, but still each of these concepts is distinct and important in itself for making a CBPR project successful.

The five principles of CBPR are as follows: 1) the members of the community are involved in all aspects of the research; 2) the community and the archaeologists take part in the decision-making process; 3) hands-on activities develop new skills, which makes a sense of independence from academics possible; 4) very importantly, there is a give-and-take approach between the archaeologists and the community, where both sides aim to evaluate who is benefiting from the project and how this is shown; and 5) the less powerful members of society are placed at the centre of the knowledge-creation process.

Today, there are several different methods being used in contemporary public work all over the world and new methods are still being developed. As the discussion so far shows, public work has to take into account many different issues — issues that people face on a day-to-day basis, and that are often so familiar to us that we hardly see them anymore. This is why, in addition to a definition of the term “public archaeology”, and an understanding of the methods that can be used in public work, there is also a need to understand how the public’s understanding of a subject is developed. Tim Copeland (2004) tries to understand how the public’s mind works and, based on that understanding, develop a way to present archaeology to a broader audience. He separates the process of mediating knowledge and acquiring newly learned knowledge into two phases.

The first phase contains direct or indirect contact between the archaeologist and the archaeological material by handling objects, excavating objects, or reading about the site. The professional will construct a past that is unique for him or her. The mediation then will be through his or her own experiences and values. Previous ideas may be re-evaluated and a learning process may start. The particular issue will be communicated by means of a presentation that corresponds with the audience for which it is intended. Then, a similar process of constructing the past will take place within individuals,
building on their prior experiences and knowledge. If these experiences and knowledge are challenged by the presentation, new learning may take place. But this newly learned knowledge is seldom communicated. Here, Copeland suggests a “feed-back loop” (Copeland 2004: 137), by means of which a researcher can identify and determine the meanings that individual’s make in relation to a site. Based on these meanings, a new format of representation can be worked out. This will influence the archaeologist’s values concerning how to communicate with the public. At this stage the values of the interpreter (archaeologist) need to be congruent with those of the audience, and their experiences of sites and presentations.

By applying this approach and looking at how archaeologists reflect on their own representations, an improvement in archaeological representations has been the result. The “feed-back loop” has made it possible to see that archaeologists often do not take into account the public’s construction of the past and do not adapt their representations according to the audience’s interpretations. This has changed for the better during the past two decades, but this method is still not used for every public presentation. Copeland laments that there is only limited research on understanding the public and their constructions on-site. In his opinion, explicit objectives in relation to what a visitor is expected to achieve is needed, and it needs to be established whether the visitor is taking in what the archaeologists want him/her to learn. At the same time the archaeologist has to be aware that tourists’ learning from a cultural attraction cannot be assumed (Copeland, 2004: 139). Copeland puts it like this:

… the process of constructing meaning is still a ‘terra incognita’ as far as research is concerned and there needs to be further exploration of what people experience on sites, how they connect it to their prior experiences and the values they attach to the materials they interact with (Copeland 2004:140).

For a long time the relationship between archaeologists and the public was overlooked by a majority of archaeologists, who considered public opinion to be irrelevant for understanding the past (Matsuda & Okamura, 2011: 1). But since the 1970s and 1980s there has been a continuous change in that respect, and the voices of the public have become more and more important. All around the world a public approach has been developed, and today there is a need for a discourse on global public archaeology, where different archaeologists can compare and exchange their professional experiences of their public approaches, and their experiences of different methods can be shared. In public work it is important to remember that each project is unique and develops from a wide range of different social, political and financial contexts. This is why the archaeologist cannot adopt a standard approach by looking for similarities, but has to broaden his/her perspective and find the key to a better public work by using the differences and the possibilities that the public approach offers. The researcher is often tempted to focus only on what exists in every country, and makes these places worth preserving in the name of the public. But the result is that the inclusion and empowerment of different members of the public falls away, and with that, important aspects of public archaeology (e.g. Holtorf 2005). The challenge is to find similarities in
the differences. Furthermore, public archaeology has not developed in the same way across the world, but has developed at different times in different countries.

There are three factors to be identified that might explain the development of public archaeology. The development of postprocessual theories is one factor, since these theories clearly show that there can be different approaches to understanding the past. Another factor is the postcolonial discourse in relation to managing and interpreting archaeological heritage. The third factor is an increased awareness of the importance of undertaking archaeology in a public and responsible manner, where even the development of the heritage industry is included (Matsuda & Okamura 2011: 8). In South Africa, the establishment of public archaeology has been based on a postcolonial discourse. Here, indigenous people, and their rights to their own artefacts and history, are on the agenda.

A recent article by Innocent Pikirayi (2015) on public archaeology in South Africa shows the development and the importance of such public work in the country. The questions posed in the article relate to how archaeology can be made more relevant for the non-archaeologist, and how archaeologists can involve descendant communities in their work, with the purpose of developing an understanding of and a willingness to preserve the past in these communities. To give the reader an understanding, Pikirayi explains the great challenge of sharing knowledge among archaeologists in South Africa (Pikirayi 2015: 152). She explains that the subject of archaeology is taught at four main universities in South Africa: the University of Cape Town (UCT), the University of Pretoria (UP), the University of South Africa (UNISA) and the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). In Cape Town, Archaeology as a subject is located in the Faculty of Science, and it is therefore very scientifically-orientated. At Wits University, it is part of Geography and Environmental Science, and Archaeology can be studied either as a discipline in the humanities or in the sciences. At UP and UNISA, Archaeology is linked to the Social Anthropology, is located in the Faculty of Social Sciences. Depending on where South African archaeologists study the subject, they will develop different types of expertise, but there is no method and no will to communicate those different insights in the subject, yet. While archaeologists at Wits University work closely with Wits Medical School on the Taung child and other early hominin finds, palaeontology is mainly carried out at universities and museums. This divides researchers and makes the sharing of the past among archaeologists and other researchers difficult (Pikirayi, 2015: 152).

In addition, archaeology has changed in South Africa with the shift to the post-apartheid, postcolonial context. Today archaeology is not only about prehistory, but is also about the physical expressions of the past, and has become an important component of the cultural heritage discourse in the country. Here, one of the problems is to make the subject more accessible to a broader public and to communities who are closely linked with the heritage. Expanded infrastructural development and massive building projects also pose a challenge in South Africa, and very little information from contract archaeology is shared for research. With all these issues in mind, Pikirayi lists the
demands placed on South African archaeologists in terms of the various ways in which archaeology has to change in South Africa:

1) a coherent strategic direction for archaeology needs to be developed

2) development-driven archaeology needs to connect with research-based archaeology

3) professional training for indigenous archaeologists is needed

4) local, regional, provincial and national archaeological inventories are needed (used for teaching, research and the public work)

5) a review on the current archaeological curriculum in universities is demanded

6) repositioning of archaeology in the employment sector, both private and public, is demanded. (Pikirayi 2015: 155)

There is another vital problem with the public work in South Africa. Archaeologists today still see heritage management and archaeology as two different and very separate subjects. This makes it very difficult to integrate different archaeologies, such as development-led archaeology with research archaeology. It is a challenge for development departments to accept the recommendations of archaeologists on a specific site with the purpose of preserving the cultural heritage. In additional, archaeology as a subject is seen as a “white” discipline, where the researcher tries to alienate those who are being investigated (Pikirayi 2015: 156). This is why the Transformation Charter from December 2008 recommends the training and inclusion of indigenous archaeologists. This is seen as the first step in opening up archaeological knowledge for more people, and in encouraging the broader public’s appreciation and understanding of archaeology. Another strategy being considered is the establishment of regional archaeological archives. These recommendations could stimulate archaeological discourse amongst archaeologists as well as the broader public, and public archaeology and the knowledge of the past could then be used as a source from which benefits in the present can grow. But today this strategy is very poorly developed in South Africa.

In South Africa, there is a search for engaged archaeologies that recast the roles of archaeologists towards communities, and that recognise the voices of indigenous groups and empower them during the entire process of an archaeological project. Apart from the archaeological knowledge provided, this collaboration could provide information that could be used as a tool for solving scientific as well as social problems. Through engaged archaeologies, it is believed that a civic engagement in archaeology will take place. The challenge in South Africa is to convince communities that the subject of archaeology is not irrelevant to them, and that they possess a great amount of relevant knowledge for the archaeologists; but for that to happen, archaeology and archaeologists have to change, and have to listen to the voices who are concerned about archaeology and what archaeologists do (Pikirayi 2015: 158). There are very interesting differences in how archaeologists see and preserve the cultural heritage, and how indigenous people in South Africa do so. The archaeological point of view is that sites must be preserved
and conserved. On the other hand, some traditions see in the ruins the presence of ancestors, and the ruins demonstrate for those communities the high cultural value of a site. The structural conservation of those sites would, from the communities’ point of view, interfere with the spiritual integrity of the sites (Pikirayi 2015: 162), and living religious practices would be marginalised, and the social context would be ignored, as well as the intangible values and roles.

What Pikirayi is therefore looking for is a shared archaeology amongst archaeologists, which provides knowledge about the past that is communicated for the benefit of communities and the public. Today the question is what role archaeology should play in South Africa, where issues of social justice, poverty, and economic, social and political empowerment are relevant to the public projects. The past should be shared, which includes alternative perspectives on history and archaeology, where both sides, archaeologists and the public, can learn from each other.

1.3 Purpose

In this work I examine how archaeology is mediated to the broader public within the specific branch of archaeology called “public archaeology” in South Africa. Since archaeologists in these kinds of projects have formulated specific aims with their public work, I will investigate how the archaeologists are developing these objectives. Furthermore, I aim to explore if either the archaeologist or the public will benefit from the projects in some way. Since there are always economic issues involved in all kinds of projects, I will, with the aid of my chosen projects also discuss if economic issues are a decisive factor for a positive public work.

1.4 Examined projects

I have given the reader an overview of public archaeology and its development, and have shown how this public work is performed in South Africa. It is clear that the public work involves a variety of questions linked to the people involved — the archaeologists, as well as communities or fundraisers. Archaeology as a subject, and also public archaeology, cannot be understood separately from its political, social or economic context. A public work in South Africa needs therefore to include all these issues in the planning phase of the project. Pikirayi shows very explicitly all the issues that a public archaeologist in South Africa is confronted with, and how those issues

Figure 1. Map of the sites visited (http://southafricamap.facts.co/southafricamapof/southafricamap.php, with project sites added by Frauke Sontberg).
should be incorporated into developing a good public work. Because of its political background South Africa struggles to make archaeology a subject that is valued by the greater public, and there is also a need to open up the subject for voices other than the professionals. There are many public projects being conducted in the country and I examined four of them for this thesis.

I visited two educational centres and two museums: the Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre in Kimberley, the !Khwa ttu San Education and Cultural Centre in the Western Cape, the Maropeng Cradle of Humankind in Gauteng, and the Origins Centre in Johannesburg. I chose these specific projects because they are located far away from each other and are very different in nature, and were likely to add some diversity to the research. I will briefly introduce the four projects I have chosen to examine.

1.4.1 Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre (Kimberley)

The Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre lies on the outskirts of Kimberley in the Northern Cape. It opened its doors for visitors in 2001. This rock art centre is a community-based rock art project. In this project San and Khoe people, as well as researchers and stakeholders, work together to conserve more than 200 rock engravings spread out on a small hill at the site.

The site is surrounded by land which is owned by the !Xun and Khwe San people. There is an archaeological dimension but also a cultural dimension to the history of this place. From the 1880s to the present day, a number of different researchers have visited the Wildebeest Kuil rock art site. The rock engravings have been examined for over a century, with different research outcomes depending on the understanding of scholars and the methods that have been used. During colonial times, for example, the Wildebeest Kuil was recognised as a site of lower importance. In the late 1950s it became more important after microlithic stone artefacts were found, and in the 1980s one of the stone clearings was excavated and a link between the art and the occupation of the site could be seen. Later Stone Age artefacts found in the 1980s and radiocarbon dating to 1790 + 60 BP to 1230 + 80 BP were interpreted as skeuomorphs, objects that retained the design elements of contemporary iron originals. The interpretations of this site have demonstrated various research biases. Morris comments that “today, researchers are grateful for these diverse outcomes of former research” (Morris 2012), since these outcomes have enriched the place and show in what ways the biography of a place can reflect different stories.

The Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre is open to the public, and the scholarly perspective on the site tries to link the results of earlier research with today's
understanding of the site. The Centre is situated on a major tourism route, which is one reason why it was decided to develop an on-site educational centre. It is a collaboration between the McGregor Museum in Kimberley and the !Xun and Khwe communities. The !Xun and Khwe were caught up in the political turmoil of the 1970s and were taken prisoner in Angola and subsequently in Namibia. When Namibia became independent in 1990, around 4000 !Xun and Khwe people were flown to a tent town at Schmidtsdrift, a town situated 80 km west of Kimberley. But Schmidtsdrift itself has its own history. The Tswana, a San population, originally owned it and in 1994 it was returned to its former owners. That forced the !Xun and Khwe people to move again. They purchased the farm of Wildebeest Kuil in 1996 for resettlement of the communities from Schmidtsdrift. Then in 2003 the resettlement from tents into the new Platfontein housing scheme began. Platfontein is a place where underprivileged people receive houses sponsored by the state. As a result, the communities became the owners of the land that surrounds the Wildebeest Kuil engraving site.

When you visit the Rock Art Centre you start your tour with an introductory film about the place and the people. Additional information about the place and the history of the communities is provided through different displays. After the introduction, a guided tour is provided. It is an 800 m long walk, along which are information boards. A guide follows this path and provides a commentary on the tour, and is able to answer different questions about the place. After the tour one can visit the craft shop. The San communities involved in the project produce the art and craftwork that is sold here. The centre offers additional facilities for conferences and workshops (http://www.wildebeestkuil.itgo.com/).

1.4.2 !Khwa ttu San Education and Cultural Centre (Western Cape)

The !Khwa ttu San Education and Cultural Centre is situated 70 km northwest of Cape Town. Here the San people give visitors an insight into their history, traditional knowledge, skills, customs, languages and current affairs. The centre is based on the theme “A celebration of the San culture, present, past and for a better future”.

The heritage of the San people is being restored and the education of the general public about the San is the first aim of this project. To achieve this, San people are educated and trained in different areas of their heritage. The visitors can engage with the San culture through guided tours, where they will learn about the oral history, how to track animals and how to identify plants. This tour ends with a visit to a replica of a traditional San village. There the visitor gets a better insight into the social structure and beliefs of the San communities. In addition, visitors may

Figure 3. Road to !Khwa ttu (Photo: Frauke Sontberg).
visit the restaurant or craft shop. It is also possible to spend more time at the site, by staying in the guesthouse or renting a bush cottage. Conference facilities are also available.

Since May 2013 the centre has been accredited by the Cultural, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality, and Sports sector Education Authority (CATHSSETA) as a provider of Nature and Cultural Site Guide Skill Programmes. In other words, it is a place with highly educated guides, and this has given the centre a good reputation that has made it popular with different visitors, such as tourists from abroad (http://www.khwattu.org/).

1.4.3 Maropeng Cradle of Humankind (Museum, Gauteng)

The Maropeng Visitor Centre is a World Heritage Site. It was listed as a World Heritage Site in 1999 because of its areas, which are an exceptional contribution to people’s understanding of the history and development of humankind. This site is situated one and a half hours’ drive from Johannesburg.

Here visitors learn about human ancestors and the story of humans and humanity, and get the feeling that they are a part of the future, and that this future is just beginning. The exhibition leads you through the journey of discovery to the beginning of the world and reveals the elements of water, fire, air and earth for the visitor. The visitor then learns about the history of humankind and leaves the exhibition with the feeling that the future has just started. This is achieved with innovative architecture that communicates the past through the creation of an illusion: on arriving at the museum, the visitor enters an enormous burial mound, known as the Tumulus building. Inside the building the visitor is led through the exhibition, and when leaving the building, looking back, the visitor no longer sees a tumulus, but instead a building made out of grey stones and glass shimmering in silver.

The word Maropeng means “returning to the place of origin”, and that is what the museum intends to show. History started there, and this is shown at an excavating site on the way to the Tumulus building, where archaeologists have been excavating an Early Stone Age site since 2005. Artefacts found in that excavation are shown in the exhibition. But the visitor does not only get an insight into the past, but also an understanding of the various contexts of the past, the present and the future. The pedagogical aim is that the visitor can learn more about human history through imagination, exploring, contemplating and discovering. The aim is to show the visitor that he/she is part of human history. “You get a feeling that you are not at the end of a history, but at the beginning of the future” (http://www.maropeng.co.za/).
1.4.4 Origins Centre (Museum, Johannesburg)

The Origins Centre is situated in Johannesburg on the campus of the University of Witwatersrand (Wits). President Thabo Mbeki opened the centre in 2006. Academics and designers from the University conceptualised the museum and its exhibitions. The museum can count itself lucky since it has an extensive collection of rock art from the Wits Rock Art Research Institute (RARI) in its exhibitions. Ancient tools and artefacts of spiritual significance are other items the visitor can see and learn more about. In the exhibition the visitor follows a path that represents 80,000 years of the art and culture that have inspired human innovations. In addition, the experience of San rituals, such as hunting and trance dance, are other highlights for the visitor. The tour inside the museum is captured in an entire exhibition. Audio guides can be hired, and these guides are available in six different languages: Zulu, Sotho, English, Afrikaans, French and German. If the visitor prefers a personal guide, that guide must be booked in advance.

The aim of the exhibition is to capture the attention of every visitor, from children to academics. Computer games and films are some of the tools used to capture specific groups. The audio guide on the other hand, offers a deeper insight into human evolution and the history of humans and humanity in South Africa. It can also be used for gaining a general survey of the subject. It is the visitor’s decision.

The main aim of the centre is as follows, in their own words: “The Origins Centre seeks to restore the African continent to its rightful place in history — at the very beginning of mankind’s journey to humanity” (http://www.origins.org.za/).

The four specific public archaeology projects that I examine in this thesis are based on two different starting points of archaeological mediation. Two of them are declared community projects developed in collaboration with indigenous societies. The objectives that archaeologists have with those projects are to teach communities about their heritage, and to give a sense of history as well as an understanding of their own culture back to these communities. As a visitor to those projects, one will not meet an archaeologist teaching about culture and history, but will instead meet the indigenous people themselves. The two other projects I examine engage with archaeological mediation in a more traditional museum context, where archaeologists have developed the content of the exhibitions and where trained guides show the visitors around.

All four projects aim to reach a broad audience, but they are rooted in very different contexts. The first two projects mentioned were from the beginning community projects, which can now be defined as visitor attractions. The objective was to work in collaboration with communities to develop educational centres open to a wider public. The two other projects were based on a collaboration of professionals such as
archaeologists, anthropologists, pedagogues and artists, with the aim of producing exhibitions that have the ability to attract many visitors.

The initial work of developing a specific site into an educational centre or a museum differs, but the objectives for all four of the projects that I examine are the same. They all want to attract a broad spectrum of audiences, such as school classes, students, academics, families and tourists.

1.5 Research questions

The background that has been covered is related to my experiences and how I understand public archaeology. It also shows the research history of the subject and explains the chosen projects. The combined understanding has led me to formulate the following research questions:

a) How is archaeology communicated within the four chosen examples?

b) In what ways can the objectives formulated by archaeologists be seen through an examination of the different projects?

c) Are there any kinds of benefits in public projects, for either archaeologists or the public, or both of them?

d) How does the financial state of a project influence the mediation of archaeology at a specific visitors centre or museum?

e) Is it possible to discern specific pedagogical methods throughout the examined projects?

1.6 Delimitations

South Africa has a variety of community projects and museums that work with archaeological mediation. In this study, four of those projects have been chosen for a closer examination. The intent is to get a deeper understanding of how museums and educational centres work with respect to the mediation of archaeology, and of how this work is contextualised in relation to economic and archaeological issues. I claim that a closer look into the specific chosen projects can give a better understanding of how public archaeology works in different contexts. The different contexts are evident in the different nature of the chosen projects, such as educational centres and museums. The perception of the term “public” or “visitor” differs slightly between the educational centres and the museums I have chosen. The public in the educational centres were from the beginning indigenous communities. During the initial work, community members and academics worked closely together to develop plans for a sustainable educational centre. The community members were educated about their heritage and trained as
professional guides. After that initial work, the audience for those centres shifted. Now community members do the mediation of archaeology, trained by archaeologists, with all kinds of visitors to the centre. The new general public can be defined as school classes, tourists, university students and academics, although the two latter groups are only relevant for one of the centres I visited because of its proximity to a nearby university. The museums I studied developed their exhibitions with only professionals involved, and the objective was to attract a great range of visitors. The targeted groups of the museums are school classes, university students, academics, families and tourists. Here, clearly, the archaeological work was done for the visitor and not together with the visitor. In other words, there was no collaboration between professionals and the public. But exhibitions developed by the professionals are made in such a way that the visitor can interact with the exhibition (e.g. by watching films, touching things, and experiencing history with all the senses). But also, the projects were deliberately selected for their unique geographical locations in the country. South Africa is a very diverse country with different indigenous groups in the different parts of the country. By choosing different parts of the country I hoped to see different types of collaboration with the indigenous people and the wider public in general. These decisions together set the delimitations of my work.
2. Definitions, Theories and Methods

2.1 Definitions

In this thesis, *educational centres* and *museums* are the most crucial research objects. Therefore, I will provide an overall understanding of museums and their history, and from there will provide insight into how museums are defined in South Africa. This leads naturally to a definition of educational centres in South Africa.

South Africa is one of the African countries that adopted the universal model for museums, and retained them even after the colonial era. But South Africa is also a country with a specific political situation. The system of apartheid was a reality for all South African citizens from 1948 to 1994. The apartheid regime, and later the postapartheid context, has influenced museums and their content. This means that museums today need to promote reconciliation, national unity and the development of a national identity. A mutual understanding of diverse societies is essential for preventing xenophobia. Educational programmes are needed in order to give community members the opportunity to express themselves, and information should be made available to a broader public through various kinds of media. The South African Museums Associations (SAMA) puts it like this:

Museums are dynamic and accountable public institutions which both shape and manifest the consciousness, identities and understanding of communities and individuals in relation to their natural, historical and cultural environments through collection, documentation, conservation, research and education programmes that are responsive to the needs of society. (Draft National Museum Policy n.d. p.18).

The South African Department of Arts and Culture, in contrast, has another and somehow more traditional interpretation of what a museum should be:

A South African museum is a formally constituted institution that promotes the development of society through research, collection, conservation, communication and exhibition of natural and cultural heritage in ways that reflect the diversity and values of a democratic society. (Draft National Museum Policy n.d. p. 18)

But there are, as anywhere else, different kinds of museums in South Africa. Identity-building museums in include sites that interpret events. This kind of museums includes liberation history museums, community museums, peace museums or sites of memories. Furthermore, there are some urban and cultural landscapes defined as museums. These places often have an adjoining interpretive centre or site museum, which are seen as communication departments and not as the museum itself. Another example of a different museum type is the eco-museum. This kind of museum involves large spaces which serve as continually changing exhibitions. They depict a way of life, a culture or customs, and mediate the tangible as well as the intangible heritage (Draft National Museum Policy n.d. p. 19).
In this interpretation I find what I would name an educational centre. It is a place where a cultural landscape is to be found, or where a different way of life, as well as a different culture, is depicted. Here, the tangible as well as the intangible heritage is preserved. These centres are often linked to a specific culture or community that may have a special connection to the place. These communities were often marginalised in the past and have regained their voice with the establishment of a new democracy in South Africa in the 1990s. Those centres offer education and employment possibilities for members of those communities. Community members will, for example, meet tourists and mediate their newly learned knowledge to a third party. For the visitor it is an outstanding and very authentic experience to be guided by a member of the community. That experience, together with the experience of the place, conveys a special feeling to the visitor. In the following case studies the educational centres are concerned with the mediation of the culture of the San people, considered to be the first people of South Africa, in the regions of the Western Cape and Kimberley.

2.2 Theoretical discussion

Often archaeologists need to work with public archaeology in one way or another. The public work examines the relationship between archaeology, heritage, and public engagement with the subject of archaeology. By involving the public in archaeological work, the value of cultural heritage and human history increases for the public. The cultural heritage and the history of humanity become more important when archaeology is contextualised in relation to things that take place today, for example, in terms of the politics and conventions constructed on all levels of society. A link between the past and the present is constructed which conveys a deeper understanding of the archaeological work as well as showing how people are part of a greater history. The understanding of time grows, as well as the understanding that all human beings are part of human history, and are able to develop the best conditions for the future:

Archaeologists should seek to engage with the public to encourage self-realization, to enrich people’s lives and stimulate reflection and creativity. (Merriman 2004)

If archaeologists work to involve a greater audience for the archaeological work, the audience will gain the ability to see themselves in a historical context. This can enrich their lives and instil a sense of pride in them, and even inspire them to consider how their lives and creativity can contribute to solving contemporary problems in a sustainable way.

The practice of archaeology differs greatly from country to country, depending on economic and socio-political conditions. The public perception of archaeology is often inextricably intertwined with local traditions of interpreting and interacting with the past through material culture. As a result, each nation’s history inevitably influences the meaning of archaeology. This shows that archaeology is not uniform, either in association or accessibility, across the world (c.f. Matsuda & Okamura: 2011).
South Africa, for example, is a society made up of different groups. Each of these groups claims the right to their own history. Each group has a right to their own history, and naturally each group has got their own history. The histories of all these different groups are interlinked, and as a whole they construct the history of South Africa. It is understandable that every group claims its own history, but it might be impossible for an academic to depict one history out of context from the other histories, and only show that part of a whole. It is a challenge for an archaeologist working in South Africa to develop public projects while being aware of that problem. Every public project is unique, and requires a great deal of reflection on what histories the archaeologists tell and why they are told in such a way. It demands a great sense of empathy and sensitivity towards the public, and a great deal of knowledge about the history and the politics of the country is essential in such a multi-ethnic state.

The South African example shows that public archaeology has to keep in mind that each and every project is unique, and should take into account the circumstances formed by the history and politics of a country. But public projects also vary in terms of their target audience, and according to the type of institution in which the project takes place. Such a project can include everything from museum visits to visiting archaeological sites, to real hands-on experiences. Consequently, archaeologists interact in different ways with their audiences. One reason for that is because they need to find different ways of handling the different regulations about cultural heritage or cultural politics. Another reason is because the public itself is very diverse. A public project can aim to reach out to children as well as to academics or indigenous people. The emphasis on — and the importance of — archaeology varies, as do the perceptions of archaeology and the past. This might be linked to different methods of intermediation, as well as the fact that this work is strongly connected with the cultural politics of a specific country. Here it is important to see that the development of both cultural politics and archaeology as a subject are inextricably linked to the history of a country. This may explain why public projects always lead to questions about economic resources, and it is therefore important to consider how the economic aspect of a project affects the work and the subject matter. This includes how archaeology is communicated to the public, and raises the question of which group will be the one that benefits from those public projects. Will it be the archaeologists or the broader public?

The methodological and practical work of Gemma Tully (2007), Devena Haggis (2008) and Sonya Atalay (2012) has made a great impression on me. These three researchers, who have worked with community-based archaeology in North America, with public archaeology projects in Turkey and Egypt, and have examined public archaeology and the hierarchy process in North America and Japan, have good insight into public work. The give-and-take approach in community-based public research (CBPR) is very attractive to me. Using that method in community work ensures that the professional archaeologists and the community are made as equal as they can be for a public project. It shows that collaboration is important, but can only be established if each party accepts the different values and knowledge of the other. Presumably, this kind of work needs a lot of empathy from both sides, as well as hard work and an open mind and
flexible attitude from each group. But if we now, for a moment look at the usual project planning for a random project, collaboration with different experts is always needed. So, one can ask, what is the difference here? Perhaps the only difference is that one party, the archaeologist, is an outspoken specialist on the subject, while the other party is seen as the community that should learn something new by being involved in the project. In community projects, community members are almost always in a subordinate position to begin with in relation to the archaeologists. This is naturally because the archaeologists are educated in the subject, but there may also be a further explanation in that community projects are often fundamentally designed for educating the public or community. This implies that the archaeologists are the ones who know and are able to educate. If one now puts the archaeologist and the community members on the same level, the implication is that their starting positions are the same. There is a principle of equality built in from the beginning of the project, which allows both sides to benefit from each other’s knowledge. Both sides can and will learn from each other while abiding by the five principles of CBPR. This method is very different from a lot of other public archaeology methods. It is based on a positive view of working with indigenous communities. Here, a willingness to collaborate between two or more very different groups is necessary. It is a basic requirement to see each other as equals and to be open to different values and ideas. This is why I have chosen this method as an analytical tool for examining the educational centres that are built on the community archaeology principle.

The methodology used by Gemma Tully for her public projects is very organised and shows that a focus on the public work can contribute to making public archaeology more attractive to the academic world. Since I am also looking for benefits of public work, these benefits should be considered for both the community and the researcher. In my opinion, archaeologists tend to focus only on the benefits for the public, but since the public work should be a collaboration, both parties should benefit, and the researchers should examine the ways in which the public and the archaeologist can profit from the public work.

The analytical hierarchy process is interesting insofar as it shows what sites are important for the public and for the archaeologists, and how both these groups would like to provide information about the places. With this analytical process it is possible to get a sense of the value of different sites for people with different knowledge backgrounds. I am convinced that this method was not used in my case studies, but through my work I can still form ideas about how the archaeologists and the public value a site in different ways. The analytical process could be a very useful tool for implementing new public projects. For my thesis I will try to use the hierarchy process in order to identify the different values that the public and the archaeologists may have.
2.3 Methods

In order to answer the research questions, I conducted on-site visits to the aforementioned educational centres and museums. The first part of my visit was in the form of participant observation. There I engaged with the sites as a normal visitor would if they were unknown to the person who was guiding the tours at the specific site. In that way, I was able to observe the project and at the same time participate; I could see how the guide interacted with the public and at the same time gain insight into how the public might understand the project. The second part of my visit comprised qualitative interviews with the archaeologist who was in charge of the project under study. By using these methods I was able to get a good impression of how and what the public and the archaeologists think about archaeology, archaeological sites, heritage and communication.

I designed a strategy to look at the same things in every guided tour I participated in, to ensure that each project would be examined with the same questions in mind. All the visited projects were examined in terms of how the guide represented the site, and how well trained he/she appeared to the visitor. Furthermore, I observed what methods were used to represent the knowledge to the visitors. Another area of interest was how appealing the information was in terms of how it was designed and represented. Since all of the sites and places were established to appeal to a diverse public, I wanted to examine in what ways all these different visitors would benefit from their newly acquired knowledge, and what special features these sites/places had to offer the visitor (for example, restaurants, souvenir shops and the natural surroundings).

After my visit to the site I interviewed the archaeologist in charge of the project. For these interviews I prepared questions about the history of the project, how it developed and why it was started in the first place. The funding issues of the projects were also important to me. To finance a large public archaeologic project is not easy, and to develop a sustainable project might be even more difficult. This is why some of my interview questions were created to find out about the financial part of the projects. Since all these projects are developed to educate a very diverse public, I was also interested in how the quality and success of each project was defined, and in how educational programmes for employees are put in place.

2.4 Critical aspects on the choice of method, theory and places

One aspect that could influence my results was the fact that I had come from another continent and was now conducting research in South Africa. Even though I have a great interest in South Africa, I did not experience apartheid myself, or the radical shifts to the post-apartheid context, and can only research and imagine how this must have influenced the socio-political situation in South Africa. This could be seen as a disadvantage, because I lack first-hand, inside-knowledge of those times. I can only examine these events from a distance. But such a distance can also be seen as an advantage. It gives me the opportunity to look at the events from an outsider perspective, with neither emotional nor political bias. Even today, South Africa still grapples with many issues related to the apartheid era, but since I have no personal
involvement with those issues, I can observe the situation from the outside. Sometimes I may not understand why certain issues exist, because of my lack of personal experience with those problems, but I believe that this distance benefited my study greatly. It required me to be observant, and to reconsider and reflect on the answers I was given, and reminded me that different countries have different historical and political issues that are not always easy to understand from an outsider point of view. Another critical aspect of my work was that I chose to use qualitative methods, such as observation and interviews. I am convinced that this method yielded better insights into a kind of work that is not possible to measure in other ways. But at the same time, it is not unproblematic to work with qualitative methods, since they are often very subjective. In this research, the participant observation is completely built on my own perception of the guided tours I was participating in. Therefore, it was important to find a second way to get information about the projects. For that I chose to conduct interviews with the archaeologist in charge of each project. Even here there was the risk that the archaeologist would be far too subjective in his/her answers. At the same time, it must be remembered that we always find ourselves in different contexts that form our perceptions on things and events. I realised early that was advantageous to let my informant speak freely about the experiences of the project in question. In that way some of my questions were answered, while other prepared questions could not be asked, because they would no longer be suitable for the context. Still, I think by leaving my interviews open and working with a semi structured approach I was able to get important inside information about the different projects, and it was possible for me to see how the archaeologists’ perceptions differed from what the visitors were experiencing.
3. Analysis

In this chapter I describe and analyse the information gained from visiting the sites and interviewing the responsible archaeologists. I structure my analysis by discussing each site individually, first presenting the visit to the educational centre and the interview with the archaeologist, and then presenting an individual analysis of the site. These individual site analyses are followed with a comparison of the educational centres. The analysis of the museums follows, and is structured in the same way.

3.1 Visits to and interviews at the educational centres

During my stay in South Africa I visited two educational centres (the Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre in Kimberley and the !Khwa tuu San Cultural Centre in the Western Cape) and two museums (the Maropeng Cradle of Humankind in Gauteng and the Origins Centre in Johannesburg). I visited these sites as a participating observer by joining a guided tour, and later interviewed the archaeologists in charge of the specific site.

My first visit was to the Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre in Kimberley. Here I met David Morris, the archaeologist who was involved in developing the Rock Art Centre. My second visit was to the !Khwa tuu San Cultural Centre in the Western Cape. At the San Centre I talked to Chris Low, archaeologist and project leader for developing the San museum where !Khwa tuu is situated today.

3.1.1 Visit to the Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre in Kimberley

I visited the Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre during the South African winter holidays. The centre was closed, but I could book a guided tour on the Internet, since the centre is always open for interested visitors, even during holidays. When I arrived at the centre the guide, a man from the communities involved in this project, was already there and welcomed me in the parking lot. Then we went into the centre together, where he showed me the way into a small movie theatre and explained that I would first see a 20-minute film about the history of the site and the history of its people. After the film the guide returned and we went outside together. Following a narrow pathway we reached a small hill with hundreds of stones of different sizes.
Each and every stone had an engraving. Some of them seemed to be very old, while others were, as the guide claimed, quite recent. I was told that one of the most recent engravings was a rhino made by some children only a few years ago.

The guide explained the meaning of the different engravings. He also mentioned that children go there to play and they remove stones, and that it is very hard to prevent the stones from getting removed. I was able to spend a great deal of time exploring the site myself, looking at the engravings and observing the different landscape. After a while we went back to the centre on a parallel pathway. Here I spotted an information sign about the place. I asked the guide about it and he explained that this was part of the educational programme they have for school children visiting the centre, but was not of importance to me. Back at the centre there was a small shop with a few books and some indigenous art. I bought a piece of art and found out that the next day they would announce on the “community radio” that an artwork by this specific artist had been sold. Sadly, I also found out that not very much art is sold here, because of a lack of visitors.
3.1.2 Interview about the Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre

I interviewed David Morris, the director of the archaeology department at the McGregor Museum in Kimberley, and the archaeologist in charge of the community project that developed the Rock Art Centre. Morris told me that he was concerned that the centre had only ever had one trained guide. This guide had been involved with the planning of the centre and was very engaged in the project. He had studied archaeology at university but had never completed his degree. Later he had left the Rock Art Centre, and with his leaving the quality of mediation at the site had deteriorated.

Today there are a few guides, but none of them is trained and none of them wants to be trained. The reason for that is that Wildebeest Kuil is quite a distance away from the settlement of the communities. It is hard to reach, and the guides get a very low salary.

Morris explained that the centre had to be developed in only twelve months. The researchers had had to start from scratch, and community involvement was almost impossible. The project leader was very skilled and had a good expert knowledge, but in spite of this professional experience it was difficult to accomplish the project’s goals. The intention had been to cater to the public’s interest in rock art, and to find out what could be of interest for tourists visiting the site. But how could the archaeologists accomplish that when there was no time for research? Another challenge was the financial aspects of the project. The time schedule was linked to the funding, and not completing the project on time would have threatened the entire project funding.

Morris is dedicated to educating people about the past and he believes that it is the most important part of the public work. This is why there is a specific pedagogical elaboration of the site’s timeline, for school groups and tourists to follow. During the interview, both Morris and I realised that I had not been introduced to the site through the timeline, but the sign I had seen at the pathway was a part of it. Since I had not received the proper tour at the Rock Art Centre, I received a virtual guided tour during the interview. During that virtual tour I also learned that the rhino that had been represented to me as one of the most recent engravings at Wildebeest Kuil, is in fact much older.

I learned that Morris would like to rename the centre and even revise the content of the educational programme. In his opinion “Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Educational Centre” would be a better name, since it sounds more dynamic. A place with such a dynamic history deserves a name that suggests this dynamism and gives visitors the feeling of a living history. Morris would like to see this history presented as something good for the community, and he feels that stereotypes should be avoided. But at the moment the community does not derive any benefit at all, and due to the financial situation there is no possibility of helping the community by restoring their sense of pride and history.
3.1.3 Visit to the !Khwaa ttu San Education and Cultural Centre

When I wanted to visit the !Khwaa ttu San Education and Cultural Centre I had to book a guided tour in advance. But even though I was one of only two visitors, it was no problem to get a guided tour. When one arrives at the site, one passes through a gate and follows a small road that leads to the centre.

At the gate a man from the San community met me, greeted me and gave me a plant as a small gift. There was a piece of paper on the plant that explained what kind of plant it is and how it is and is used by San people. He then explained the way to the centre. At the centre some men and women from the San community welcomed me. They asked where I came from and got to know that I was German, and suddenly my guide switched from speaking English to speaking German (an unexpectedly good German). I was asked if perhaps I would first like something from the restaurant, because they did not have any time schedule, so it was not important when the guided tour started. I decided to have a snack, and after that the tour started, with one other visitor and a volunteer. The volunteer was there in order to learn about how to guide visitors at the site.

First we went through a contemporary San art exhibition into an auditorium. Here our guide told us about the San people and their different languages. They have, for example, eight different “clicks” in their languages. Yes, the visitor had to try those clicks. It was not easy, but was amusing. We also learned that there are a number of different languages spoken by the San people. The differences between the languages are so immense that different tribes cannot communicate with each other. It was an interesting introduction, after which we left the auditorium and went outside. We, the audience, still impressed by the San languages asked the guide to welcome us in his mother tongue, which he did. It was very interesting to listen to a completely different language.
Outside we went to an area that contained different displays on San history and some San artefacts. The audience was asked why we think the San decided to represent themselves through these specific artefacts, and a short discussion followed by an explanation took place.

From there we went through the garden. Here a lot of different plants had been planted, and the guide showed us some of them and explained how they were used, for example as poison, tea, sunblock or food. The audience had the opportunity to smell or taste those plants, and was warned not to touch others. The audience had a lot of questions and every question was answered. From the garden we went to the “San Village”, a reconstruction of a typical San village.

At the communal area of the village we received an explanation for why the villages were built in that particular way, and why the meeting place was surrounded by all the huts in the centre of the village. Here the audience learned how to make pearls out of ostrich eggshell, and received an introduction to how San people dressed themselves.
Next to the communal area was the village tree. It was explained that each morning the elders of the village would go there and praise the spirits and ask for a good day. Behind the tree was the area where the hunted animals were processed. To prevent children from getting sick or dying, this area was off limits for children, and for women too. The women are the ones who prepare the food for the community, and they should not have any possible contact with poisoned meat. However, visitors were allowed to visit the place and here the audience could see the bones of eland and other antelope.

The guided tour ended here, and the visitors returned with the guide to the educational centre. At the centre there was a little shop, with art and books and other things that tourists like to buy.

### 3.1.4 Interview about the !Khwa ttu San Education and Cultural Centre

I made contact with Chris Low, the archaeologist who is currently working at the site, and had a short interview with him about the site and its future. I was not able to get answers to all my questions since the !Khwa ttu San Education and Cultural Centre has a research policy that forbids all research of the site. Low is a British archaeologist who regards himself as an academic who does not have any experience to develop a museum. However, he received this wonderful opportunity to work with giving back history and developing something significant for South Africa’s indigenous communities.

There is a film on the Internet which shows Low giving a lecture about his work and his thoughts on the !Khwa ttu San Education and Cultural Centre. The following discussion contains information from the film, other information about the Centre that I could find on the Internet, and additional short answers from Low.

The site was a run-down cattle farm, but today it is an 850 ha nature reserve where eco-tourism is offered. In 1998 a working group of indigenous minorities in South Africa partnered with the South African San Institute (SASI). The idea was to create a tourism and training project for San people from all over South Africa. In 1999, Irene Staehelin, a Swiss anthropologist, bought the farm and launched the UBUNTU Foundation. Since then San people from across South Africa have been coming to the site for a nine-month stay to gain work experience and receive a guide certificate. This hands-on work experience enables the participants to find good work in the tourism field. The educational programme for the San people involves learning from the elderly and passing this knowledge on to the younger generations. Visitors, on the other hand, are able to get a good understanding of the San and Bushman world. At the Centre, San culture is celebrated and it forms the basis for various entrepreneurial opportunities for South Africa’s most marginalised communities (South Africa Travelinfo homepage 2015-05-11). Four million CHF (Swiss francs) was spent on the project between 1998 and 2010. The objective was that the !Khwa ttu San Education and Cultural Centre
should become an independent institution in 2011 (Homepage of the Ubuntu Foundation 20015-05-11).

A project began in 2014 to build a museum at !Khwa ttu, and Low is in charge of that project. The objective is to put together a museum for the San hunter-gatherers. The challenge is that the museum should be built for the San and in the voice of the San. The San come from another intellectual and social environment, and it is important for researchers to understand the San people if they want to develop a museum. A San working group was therefore organised, consisting of 20 people from different San communities. Low is very keen that San people have a voice, and that they say what they want to, and in their own way. This is called the “native voice”. Other museums in countries with postcolonial issues have already worked with the native voice approach. In Low’s words, “Cultural restitution — the museum is part of a wider initiative. It is one part of the museum to foster San heritage for the San and visitors, school groups alike” (Low 13/5/2015). In order to gather ideas about how to mediate the content, visits with the working group to different local museums were made.

Furthermore, there is the question of giving back. In Low’s opinion, someone cannot give back land and belongings. But he believes that giving back information about San culture that was collected by different scientists over times and stored in museums all around the world is a way of giving back. As a good example of that kind of giving back he mentions Australia, where archives in collaboration with different research groups and communities were established. These archives hold knowledge about the Indigenous Australians that was almost lost, and that is greatly appreciated by the indigenous communities. At the !Khwa ttu San Education and Cultural Centre there has been an attempt to place the history of the San in a wider context, where colonialism is explained and the San will learn about other ‘first people’. The museum and its exhibition are intended to serve as a healing process. Only a few San have been to museums, which implies that a number of San communities do not have any kind of relation to that institution. Still, the demand for developing a museum at the site came from the San and the Working Group of Indigenous Minorities in South Africa (WIMSA), as well as SASI, and San community members are stakeholders of the museum project. The !Khwa ttu museum wants to represent the San story according to the San meaning of the word “story”, which can mean “conversation”, “folklore” or simply “telling something”. Fact and fiction are not distinguished, and there is no difference between story and news. With this in mind, the museum will create the exhibition content. Moreover, in the San culture people cannot be wrong. The word “wrong” does not exist in their language. Instead of saying someone is wrong, people will have a discussion, the conclusion of which is often “it’s just how you are”.

It was decided that the !Khwa ttu story will be told, not only about the San, but with the San. The museum objectives are that the San people will restore their dignity and pride, and that there will be space for grieving and rejoicing, and a reattachment with the world. However, Low still asks himself whether a museum is the most suitable medium to represent the San, and wishes for even more involvement of San people.
3.2 Analysing the educational centres

3.2.1 Analysis of Wildebeest Kuil

At the Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre the visitor comes into contact with San rock art. At the site are more than 200 stones engraved with different pictures. Usually one finds that kind of art in rock shelters or caves, which makes Wildebeest Kuil exceptional. Here, not only is archaeology mediated, but also the history of two different communities, which through time has transformed the site into a place that connects them with their ancestors. Visitors to the centre may be primarily interested in the rock art and less interested in the sociocultural issues that are also mediated here. The aim of the professional archaeologists here is to offer a contextualisation of the site through time, from the Stone Age until today. If the visitor does not receive this contextual information, he/she may not necessarily be missing anything, since the attraction of the site is primarily found in the engravings. I myself was highly impressed with the rock art, and did not feel that I had missed anything, even though I was guided by an unprofessional guide and received incorrect information.

In spite all the goodwill from the professionals, this is not a project that the communities derive much benefit from. The project initially aimed to provide certain benefits to the communities, such as giving back a sense of pride and history, and developing some employment opportunities. The location of the centre and the low salary make the site unattractive for community members to work at. This dilemma frustrates the archaeologists and contributes to the low quality of the mediation at the educational centre. If there is any benefit, it is for the school groups who come and visit the site and learn more about San rock art. But even though the quality of the mediation is low, the guide was very engaged in telling the story of Wildebeest Kuil and explaining the meanings of the different engravings. Questions could be asked at any time. Unfortunately some questions were answered incorrectly, but that did not matter then. Only later was I disappointed that I had received the wrong information.

I suggest that the issues related to not being able to give something back to the community are closely linked to how the project was initiated. There was no time for quality research about what was needed to ensure a successful project. What exists today is a product of poorly done research, and the threat of not getting funded at all if the project was not completed on time. Even if the project was not very successful in fulfilling all the original objectives the archaeologists had for it, a pedagogical programme was able to be developed. This programme shows the history of Wildebeest Kuil, with the visitor travelling through time by following a path that starts today and that travels further and further back in time through the history of the site, ending up in the Stone Age. Here, the rock engravings are explained, and after that one travels back to contemporary times. This should function as an interesting and educational
experience that teaches the visitor about the biography of the site, as well as the complexity of time and place.

3.2.2 Analysis of !Khwa ttu

!Khwa ttu is at the moment a San Education and Cultural Centre. But even though an educational programme for San people is in place, and eco-tourism has been established here, there are plans for developing a San museum at the site. To achieve that, expertise from abroad has been sought, and Chris Low, a British archaeologist, is the person responsible for that project. He is very engaged and wants to involve the San people in the making of the museum. I would term this approach to the project “public museology”, as the aim is for a museum for the San people and others, where San communities can tell their story. The South African National Lottery granted the equivalent of £50 000 for developing the content of the museum, on the condition that the content was completed by June 2015. At the time of writing, it is therefore clear that the decisions about the content are being made on the basis of factors such as time and money. It is not clear whether there will be enough time to realise all the good ideas and intentions that people have for the museum.

Low mentioned that the most important thing for developing a museum is to have “a feeling” for the San and their culture. The San culture is a living culture, and therefore there are doubts about whether a museum is really the right medium to represent the San. However, the San people are involved with the project and are keen to present their culture in the form of a museum.

The !Khwa ttu is an educational centre, where San people have the opportunity to take part in an educational programme that leads to work experience and hopefully to employment within the tourism industry. They are educated in their own culture, and receive a chance to enter the job market. The centre itself has opportunities to employ San people. During my visit at the site I had a very positive feeling about that project, and on how the educational and employment aspects function. During the guided tour, for example, there was a girl participating who was being trained in how to guide.

The question is why a seemingly well-functioning educational centre is being transformed into a museum.

3.2.3 Overall analysis of the educational centres

Both Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre and the !Khwa ttu San Education and Cultural Centre were developed at nearly the same time in the second half of the 1990s. At Wildebeest Kuil the communities asked the professional archaeologists for help, while at !Khwa ttu, a collaboration between a working group for minorities and SASI was established. At both sites the San people themselves guide the visitors. However, if one visits both centres, one notices a difference in the quality of the guided tours. The Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre does not have any trained guides, while the !Khwa ttu
San Education and Cultural Centre does have explicit educational programmes for their employees. As one of their objectives, both centres aimed to create work opportunities for the San people. At Wildebeest Kuil this did not become a reality, while !Khwa ttu found a way to establish a programme.

Wildebeest Kuil has a very complex history, which is narrated during the visit. The main importance lies in giving the visitor some information about the site and its biography. In addition, the visitor gets insight into San rock art, what the motives for creating the rock art could have been, the meanings behind it and the very special site for rock art. !Khwa ttu tells the story of San culture, and visitors are able to learn about how San people use plants, how they read tracks, how they hunt and how they live. Two very different stories are told, but both are linked to the oldest people as well as the oldest culture of South Africa.

It is clear that the Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre is struggling financially, but there are currently no solutions to change that situation. I do not know anything about the financial situation at !Khwa ttu, but there are plans to develop a museum. A centre where San people are involved as guides and get trained is being transformed into a museum. A museum as an institution sounds much stricter and more rigid in terms of the ways in which they exhibit cultural history. The Educational Centre currently represents San culture in a way that is very inclusive for visitors. My concern is that a museum might not be as well suited for representing a living culture.

3.3 Visits and interviews at the museums

My third visit was to the Maropeng Cradle of Humankind, a World Heritage Site and museum in Gauteng. Here Lindsay Marshall, a South African archaeologist and manager of the museum, gave me the information I asked for. The fourth and final place I visited was the Origins Centre on the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg. Here I interviewed the museum curator, Lara Mallen.

3.3.1 Visit to the Maropeng Cradle of Humankind

I visited the Maropeng Cradle of Humankind in Gauteng during the winter holidays and the number of visitors was very low. If visitors wished for a guided tour, they had to wait at the ticket centre for a guide to meet them there. I was the only visitor interested in a guided tour that morning. A guide met me there and together we went to the museum, which from the outside looks like a giant Figure 16. Entrance to Maropeng (Photo: Frauke Sontberg).
burial mound.

On the way to the museum, the guide explained the meaning of the name “Maropeng”, which means “returning to the place of origin”. The guide and I entered the museum and a round room with a giant fountain in it. Along the walls, information posters about evolution and about some well-known researchers were placed. The guide encouraged me to read the information. After I had read the information, we went downstairs where the main exhibition is to be found. Here we followed a timeline in a tunnel, a journey back in time. The guide did not explain very much and I did not ask. At the end of this tunnel was a boat ride. I had to get into a small boat, which looked like a rafting boat, and enter a tunnel, and did not know what to expect. I was suddenly travelling through the four elements. After the boat ride, during which I experienced earth, fire, water and air, I came back to the starting point of the journey. The guide met me there and we then entered an auditorium with a giant-sized hologram of the Earth. A voice explained the emergence of our planet as it is today.

From there we went into a very large room with audio-visual stations. Here, the guide asked me if I had any questions, and then left me to explore the stations myself. The stations were themed as “The beginning of the world”, “The path to humanity”, “What does it mean to be human?”, “Bipedalism”, “Development of the jaw and diet”, “Development and growth of the brain”, “Stone tools”, “Control and use of fire”, “Development of language”, “Living with others”, “Peopling the world”, “Creative explosion”, “Sustainability”, and “The original fossil display”. Each display was designed in such a way that the visitor could interact with it. At one of these stations one could call different pre-historic animals by picking up a telephone receiver and listening to, for example, a Moa telling you the story of the largest bird on Earth. At another station one could do a quiz on different archaeological terms by marking the right answer on a display. There was also a large amount of information in written form in that room. This information, with all the interaction, was like a rain of facts coming from all the cardinal points. When I
left the museum, which the visitor does by leaving the mound on the opposite side from the entrance, I was very tired from all the information I had been inundated with.

3.3.2 Interview about the Maropeng Cradle of Humankind

At Maropeng I interviewed Lindsay Marshall, the director of the museum. The following is the information I obtained.

In 1999 the surroundings at Maropeng were declared a World Heritage Site. The whole World Heritage Site consists of 300 properties. To make it more interesting for visitors it was decided to develop an interpretation centre for the public: the Maropeng Cradle of Humankind Visitor Centre and Museum, which opened in 2005. The objective was for the centre to attract a lot of visitors. Sterkfontein, a cave that lies only a few kilometres away from the museum and interpretation centre, is owned by Wits University. The cave is a site open to tourists. Here people are able to learn about fossilised hominid remains and the history of human beings. The objective was for the cave and the interpretation centre (that I term “museum”) to work together to attract as many tourists as possible. The interested visitor is supposed to buy a combined ticket for both the museum and the cave. Different stakeholders finance the museum. This has been the case since 2009, and the museum is constantly looking for new stakeholders and partners. They have even looked for a chair at Wits University, and the Gauteng tourism authority has been included. Something outstanding in this project is that the government funds all losses. This makes this project vastly different from other, more traditional, museums, and shows how highly the site is valued, even by politicians. The greatest importance lies in the marketing of the site, rather than the collaboration between the public and the professional archaeologists.

Researchers from Wits University provide the exhibition with content and it is their responsibility that the content is correct and up to date. The director of the museum, on the other hand, only has a say in relation to operational aspects, even though she is a trained archaeologist. Her function at the museum is to take care of the museum’s management. At the Cradle of Humankind the management world and the academic world meeting each other and work very tied together. Even though the institution is strongly educational, it is seen as a business. At the end of the day, the revenue has to cover the costs, and the objective is to make a profit. The target is a million visitors a year, but it is difficult to reach these large visitor numbers, since the World Heritage Site lies outside town. As Marshall puts it, “We are drowning slowly, but at the moment we are making our way to the surface. And of course there are operational costs as well” (Interview 11/7/2014).

The Cradle of Humankind puts a great deal of effort into training well-educated guides. To become a guide, one has to have a successful interview with the museum director, have good English skills, and have the added advantage of being able to speak one of
the indigenous languages. The people who apply for guide jobs are usually from the local communities.

Guided tours in indigenous languages are given on rare occasions, but it is still preferable to have someone who knows those languages and can communicate with people in their mother tongues. After completing their training, the guides are shadowed for two months on the job. In this way it is possible to see how the content is being mediated and if the guides have understood it themselves. After passing the shadowing, the person will finally get a site guide qualification. In order to keep the guides updated, they have regular meetings with the researchers.

One objective for the Cradle of Humankind is to attract as many visitors as possible. To achieve that the leisure market is examined in order to learn what people like to do and what places they visit. You have to know the visitor to satisfy his/her needs. But since one of the important objectives at the Cradle is to educate, the most important target group for this museum is school groups from Grade 2 to Grade 12 (age 7 to 17), as well as international students. They have a close relationship with the Department of Education, and the content is contextualised for the school curriculum.

The second most important target group is families, and here it is important to know that they are often more attracted to zoos, cinemas and shopping centres (all available in the city centre).

To make the museum more interesting to a broader public and not only tourists and school groups, different researchers are invited to give talks about their work. Furthermore, tours to Swartkrans are offered, which is a farm close to Sterkfontein with rich archaeological material. These tours include a picnic. “The public enjoys it. And it is outreach at the other sites of the World Heritage Site, not only the museum” (Interview 11/7/2014). The objective here is that people should interact with the researcher. A mystery evening has been another attempt to make the museum more interesting. The museum tries to reach the public via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and its own website. Furthermore, they do a lot of advertising and public relations work. The overall ambition is to offer a good service and good experiences on different levels.

3.3.3 Visit to the Origins Centre in Johannesburg

When I visited the Origins Centre in Johannesburg, it was impossible for me to get a personal guide. If a visitor wishes to get a personal guide, an advance booking for a group of at least ten people is needed. Instead, I had the opportunity to experience the museum with an audio guide.
When one enters the museum, the first thing one sees is a giant artwork, which showed Africa and all the other continents constructed in steel, with Africa at the centre of the piece. From here the visitor enters the first room, which contains a display of a large number of stone tools. There are also glass pillars with stratigraphic soil samples from Africa, Asia, America and Europe. In this room the visitor also finds drawers to open. There is one drawer with hominid fossils and a corresponding drawer with the stone tools used by these groups.

From there the visitor enters a corner room with benches, where a film about evolutionary history can be viewed. This first part of the museum is designed to show the southern African Stone Age. I used the audio guide, which I found interesting, and interacted with the material only when I thought that would be more interesting. Then you follow a “corridor”, which contains representations of southern African rock art. There the visitor finds original pieces/fragments of South African Rock art. These are pieces of rock art that have been removed from their original context and are now displayed in the museum. The audio guide explains this in detail.

From this corridor the visitor enters a bigger hall. Here, the most striking part of the exhibition is a mounted eland, which shows the beauty and strength of the animal. The spiritual world of the San people is explained, and in this the Eland plays a very important part. Another interesting feature of that room is a “wall of fame” that shows photographs of all the well-known researchers who work or formerly worked in the field of South African Rock Art. The visitor can also watch a film, but it was unfortunately not available during my visit.

The visitor then follows another corridor and can see the rock art of the San people from more contemporary times, in which trains are suddenly depicted. A film describes more about that. From there the visitor comes to a room that contains art. Great tapestries show the San history from the Stone Age until today. In this room background music is played and it is darkened a bit, which gives a special feeling to it. Here, some bigger stones with engravings are positioned along one wall. When visitors leave this room and follow the corridor, they enter another big exhibition room. In addition to a lot of other information, visitors to that room can watch a film that shows a discussion between different researchers about rock art. Here, it is demonstrated that there are different interpretations and not just one truth.

Figure 20. Africa in steel (Photo: Frauke Sontberg).
The next room has a great bookshelf along one of the walls. In every cubical of that bookshelf lies an open book showing quotations from San People about their treatment by the colonialists. This was a very touching part of the exhibition.

From this room the visitor leaves the museum and is led into the bookstore of the Origins Centre.

3.3.4 Interview about the Origins Centre in Johannesburg

I interviewed Lara Mallen, the curator of the Origins Centre Museum. Mallen wrote her MA dissertation on rock art and identity in 2008 at Wits University, and so she has a natural link to the exhibition content of the museum. In that interview I discovered that it took seven years of planning for the Rock Art Research Institute (RARI) to develop the museum. The Centre, as such, is a product of the African Renaissance, a cultural, scientific and economic renewal that is a key component of the post-apartheid intellectual agenda. People wanted to do something, but there was no money. The government had spent a lot of money on preserving Game Pass Shelter in the Drakensberg, and other natural environments. But now people wanted to develop an interpretation centre (which I term here “museum”) at Wits University in Johannesburg. A great deal of professional fundraising was done for the project, and the long list includes private donors, the South African government, and even a sum of four million rand given by the United States government. I did not receive an explanation for why the United States was willing to donate such a large amount of money to the project, but my own reflection on this question is that they wanted to be part of the African Renaissance. With all this financial support, a big research museum could be built. In the planning stages, architects as well as a design team and a team of researchers were involved. The initial donor had a great interest in films, and this is why there are so many films throughout the exhibition, all funded by this person. The Centre opened in 2007.

Visitors to the Origins Centre can choose to have a guided tour in person or through an audio guide. Some years ago the Centre had a chief guide, but that person left for a guiding position in Soweto. Today there are six or seven guides employed at the Origins Centre. The guides are graduate students in Archaeology from Wits University. If visitors choose a personally guided tour, they have to pay extra for that, whereas the audio guide is included in the entrance fee. Often it is groups, for example school groups, who choose the guide in person. The standard format for the guided tour is a one-and-a-half-hour walk through the museum, and the guide chooses the group. Because groups are booked beforehand, and the guide has some information about the group, it is possible for the guide to adjust the content of the tour according to the main interests of the group. Guides are educated through a process of self-training and studies, and are required to keep up to date with recent research. The guides are
shadowed by PhD students and by Mallen herself, and if necessary they get retrained. The open-door policy prevails, which that means that any staff member can listen at any time to a colleague guiding a group. If the museum is short of staff members, the “education curator” will do some guided tours. If the visitors are diplomats, funders or politicians, Mallen in her position as museum curator guides them herself.

The objective for the Origins Centre is to educate visitors, and to encourage young children and families to be active and involved. To achieve these objectives, special events offered at weekends, for example excavations for children.

The Origins Centre aims to educate visitors in art, history, archaeology, visual arts and art history. There is a strong collaboration with the government and the City of Johannesburg to make the museum more interesting. Here public archaeology and museum education overlap. The Origins Centre can be found on Facebook and Twitter.

From the beginning the museum was planned as a non-profit business. But the non-profit managing company left after only one year. Then Wits University stepped in with a supporting grant and the opportunity to share expertise. The sharing of operational costs and ticket sales were introduced. Over the past three years the Origins Centre has lost R400 000. A proposal has been sent to the Vice-Chancellor of Wits University in the hope of involving the institution as a shareholder of the museum. Furthermore, fundraising for exhibitions in the museum is done.

Collaborations with archaeologists and historians are in place, as well as with Humboldt University in Berlin, Germany. Since September 2014 South African and German researchers have been working together to develop a travelling museum. The researchers from Germany are from the Humboldt School of Technology and Economy, and they aim to find out what interests people, and from there develop an interactive museum that will travel around the country and educate South Africans. A link between culture and technology will be made. The questions for that project are “How do we make museums interesting for the people?” and “What do people want?”

Even the process of developing this museum will be interactive, which needs a great effort in engaging San communities in the process and getting those communities involved with creating the displays. The initial thoughts about that project have already been formulated and the working process has started, but to develop such a museum will take some years.
3.4 Analysing the museums

3.4.1 Analysing the Maropeng Cradle of Humankind

When visiting Maropeng, the visitor first sees a museum building, which seems to be a giant burial mound. When I learned that the word “Maropeng” means “returning to the place of origin”, my first impression of the museum building was confirmed.

Inside the museum, in the circular room, it seemed to be of great importance to underpin the evolutionary story with the names of well-known researchers. In contemporary South Africa there is a vital discussion regarding the evolutionary story.

The following boat ride seemed to be intended to speak to the visitor through experience. The visitor did not get any explanation of what to expect. There was no explanation about the boat ride, either before or afterwards. The giant hologram was stunning. It felt as if one’s eyes were taking in all the information about the formation of the planet Earth. Maybe the hologram should be seen as the first experience, which invites the visitor to stand up, watch, listen, and be amazed. This hologram is a station where visitors understand the content from a personal perspective based on their own educational background. From here, the visitor enters a large room filled with various stations that invite interaction. This interaction can lead to learning more about human history, or simply function as entertainment. Thus the objectives of the museum in relation to the visitors are fulfilled.

However, the archaeological objectives for the museum are somewhat different. The professional archaeologists want to offer a good-quality exhibition. The exhibition that can be visited today is ten years old and I could see a slight frustration in my informant with being an archaeologist working in the museum close to the visitors and yet not being able to have any influence on the content and design of the exhibition. In Marshall’s opinion, a revision of the content should take place and a partly new exhibition be created. In her opinion the large room with the interactive stations is too much for the visitors, and she questions how much the visitors actually learn. Even though those problems are significant, at the museum there is a close collaboration between the academics and management. But there is still no collaboration with the public in terms of public museology or a development of a new exhibition that at least is done for if not with the public. Since the museum is a business and works towards generating a high profit, questions about public involvement take a back seat. Here one
can say that visitors are fairly satisfied with what the museum offers, while the archaeologist sees behind the scenes and knows which parts of the exhibition could be improved or changed. If we take into account the financial situation, it is clear that there is currently a challenge for the museum. The exhibitions are ten years old, and in need of some revisions and updating, but the main objective for the institution is to attract visitors. I would claim that the museum still holds a great attraction for visitors; it is not lost, yet. So, even if the financial situation is difficult, and the current exhibitions are not up to date in terms of the latest research, these may not be indicators of a good or a bad museum. Additionally, it can be assumed that management may not be very keen to revise the content of the exhibitions as long as they look attractive and the visitor numbers are satisfying.

Even if there is some frustration from the archaeologist’s perspective, the museum can still be a place that benefits its visitors in one or another way. A family experience can be counted as one of those benefits. But the museum does not only offer quality time with the family; it also offers exhibition content that is contextualised according to the school curriculum in South Africa. There is also a learning benefit for school children and teachers. This place is about learning through experiences, which is a benefit in itself. With the experiences from my visits to different schools in South Africa, I was able to observe that strict one-way communication is carried out in South African schools. The experiences that school children can have at the museum definitely differ from the sort of learning by one-way communication that is usually carried out in South African schools. The different experiences that the museum aims to offer are the interactive exhibitions, the restaurant, the souvenir shops and the natural surroundings of the museum.

It is important for the museum to have skilled guides. This person is the public face of the museum and the person who has the closest contact with the visitor. They can make the tour something special by interacting with the visitor and contextualising the content of the exhibition according to the visitor’s understanding of the place. My own experience of a guided tour at Maropeng was that my guide was not welcoming, but rather showed me how to find my way in the museum and left me alone without explanations. Is it possible that a guide is not needed at this place, since the exhibitions are designed for interaction with the visitor?

3.4.2 Analysing the Origins Centre in Johannesburg

The Origins Centre aims to make a link to human origins through mediating the history of the San people and their rock art, as well as their spiritual beliefs. To achieve that purpose the museum has a nicely worked out exhibition. An audio guide is conceptualised as a personal guide. One cannot ask questions, but it is possible to choose either to learn more about a theme or to go on into a more attractive part of the exhibition. The interesting thing with the audio guide is that there is not only one speaker, but several different voices to be heard. Sometimes these voices will get into a
discussion and the visitor can listen to that. The audio guide leaves a lot of space for an individual experience in the museum. But even though the Origins Centre has nicely developed audio guides, a great deal of effort has been put into providing well-trained personal guides. All the guides are graduate students in Archaeology from Wits University. By choosing to have guides that are educating themselves in the subject of archaeology, the visitor can be sure of having a high-quality guided tour. In addition, the Origins Centre encourages interaction, in the form of pulling drawers, watching films, or simply listening to the audio guide. The overall aim of the interaction is not for the visitor to do as much as possible, but to choose the theme that seems most interesting.

The museum aims to educate its targeted groups in the subjects of art, history, archaeology, visual arts and art history. The rock art exhibited at the museum is therefore not solely used as a part of San history, but also as part of South African art history or as part of a general education in visual arts. Multi-vocal approaches to the rock art as well as an interactive approach are very important for the Origins Centre. Families and school groups are supposed to visit and do things, like interacting with the exhibitions or taking part in special events, such as excavations for children. The objective is to reach a broad public and to achieve that different tools are used, such as going online with a website and being visible in different social media.

The financial situation of the museum has changed drastically since the time of the initial project. The museum was established in the context of the African Renaissance. That is why there where a lot of financial donors from all over the world. The development of the museum began with very good economic conditions, but today the museum is struggling financially. The visitors do not experience this, since the exhibition is well made and nicely presented. The perception from the visitor’s point of view is of a well-organised and nicely designed exhibition. The benefits for the visitors are a deeper knowledge of the South African Stone Age as well as of the San people and their culture and rock art. A benefit for the archaeologists is that the Origins Centre is very close to RARI on the Wits University campus. The Centre is always up to date on the latest research on rock art and the San people.

3.4.3 Overall analysis of the museums

Both museums tell the story of human origins. Maropeng is related to the place of origin while the Origins Centre tells the story of the oldest culture of South Africa. So both tangible and intangible cultural heritage are represented.

Maropeng underpins thoughts on origin through its architecture, while the Origins Centre shows a giant piece of art at the entrance of the museum. Both museums are made for the same target groups, but it was decided to mediate the content in different ways. While Maropeng developed an interactive exhibition, the Origins Centre placed more value on an attractive exhibition with lots of films and fewer hands-on
experiences. The Origins Centre has, in comparison with the Maropeng museum, a stricter mediation approach.

Both sites initially operated with healthy budgets, but are now struggling to keep the museums going. There are different explanations for that. Maropeng is hard to reach since it is situated out of town and there is no public transport at all. The visitor needs to have a car. Furthermore, the entrance fees are very expensive from a South African point of view. The low number of visitors to the Origins Centre might also be explained by the location of the museum. It is difficult to find on the campus of Wits University, which might deter visitors.

A declared objective of both museums is to educate. They use different methods to achieve that, and have different areas of focus. But education is paramount in both museums, and is clearly framed as something highly valuable and important for the visitor. Both museums have researchers from Wits University involved in developing the exhibition content. It can therefore be assumed that the content is of good quality.
4. Concluding discussion

By studying four different public archaeology projects in South Africa I was able to gain insight into how public archaeology projects in a country as diverse as South Africa are conceptualised and managed. I consciously chose educational centres as well as museums for my research, to be able to reflect the diversity of the country in my work. It became quite clear that museums in South Africa initially developed from the colonial idea of what a museum is. In the past this concept was simply emulated in order to entertain and educate visitors. But today South African museums operate in the post-apartheid context, where it is important to restore a sense of history, pride and national unity to a very diverse population. To accomplish those demands, educational programmes have been established. But museums are not only about education; they are also there to provide leisure time with family and friends. The experts’ primary objective with museums is to provide high-quality content that attracts visitors.

If we go back to Maropeng and listen to museum director Lindsay Marshall and her opinions about the museum, we learn that the content of the museum is out of date and needs to change. The big issues here, according to Marshall, are bureaucracy and the fact that experts, who are difficult to access, are needed to work on the museum exhibits. “The content is heavily written, and even though there are interactive elements in the exhibition it is only a one-way communication” (Lindsay Marshall 2014). The focus at Maropeng is on education, but in the museum director’s opinion this should be achieved differently to how it is currently being done, by using methods that include the visitor more strongly in the learning process. The current pedagogical approach at the museum is that the visitor should go through three levels of learning: going through the exhibition, interacting with the exhibition and analysing the exhibition. This is the pedagogical plan, but the current execution is not perfect. Marshall hopes that over time changes will be made. As we can see it is not easy for a museum to provide content that invites dialogue.

Both museums are making great efforts to involve the public, but neither of them is satisfied with their work. The question of how to create a museum exhibition that invites dialogue remains unanswered, and is an important issue within museum work today.

The educational centres provide a somewhat different insight into how to mediate knowledge and how to invite dialogue. They show that there has been an attempt to collaborate with indigenous communities to accomplish successful public projects. In the Wildebeest Kuir Project the communities came to the archaeological specialists and asked for help. A pedagogical concept was constructed and an educational centre was built. I would say the first phase of establishing the Wildebeest Kuir Rock Art Centre was well executed, with good collaboration between the experts and the communities. The centre as a visitor’s attraction has not worked out that well. The centre is situated in Kimberley, a town that does not attract large numbers of tourists. The visitors who do come to the rock art centre from abroad are people who are specifically interested in
history, archaeology and ethnology. As a result of the low numbers of visitors, the centre is not sustainable and struggles with financial issues.

At the !Khwa ttu San Education and Culture Centre, there was also a collaboration between the San and the experts from the start. The initial objective was to restore a sense of history to the San, and even to preserve traditions and the understanding of them. An educational centre was established and visitors from all over the world visit the site today. Over the years the idea of building an additional museum at the site has developed, where the museum and the educational centre can co-exist. The San communities themselves have asked for the development of the museum. They want to show their history primarily to other San people, and place this history in a greater context. The archaeologist in charge of that project is very enthusiastic about it and wants to involve the San communities as much as possible. The objective is to give the community a voice. I find it very interesting that the idea of establishing a museum has developed in the first place, because I conceive of museums in South Africa as highly colonial institutions. By that I mean that museums in South Africa have developed from ideas of mediating, educating and entertaining in a European context that differ greatly from indigenous people’s ideas of the same terms. The project work for the museum at !Khwa ttu has started, and I would suggest that museums still have a higher status than educational centres in South Africa. Museums as institutions were established primarily in the late 19th century in South Africa. Everyone knows what a museum is, and it was out of this understanding that the idea of developing a museum grew. At the same time one has to see that there is only a thin line between an educational centre and a museum. The term “educational centre” is not explicitly defined. The San communities and the intended visitors for the museum under development have an already established understanding of what a museum is, but most likely do not have any specific idea of what an educational centre is.

This brings us to a discussion about the different characteristics of the places and the names chosen for them. In their names, the Origins Centre and the Maropeng Cradle of Humankind have defined themselves not only as museums but also as interpretation centres. This suggests that these institutions would like to be perceived as more modern and less traditional than ordinary museums would be perceived to be. Both museums try to be innovative and to interact in different ways with their visitors, but this interaction still involves the type of one-way communication that usually takes place in museums. This does not necessarily have to read as a disadvantage for the institution or the visitor. It rather depends on what the objective of the institution and its content is. The institutions that define themselves as educational centres are laid out so that the visitor can interact more with the exhibition and the content. There is also a personal guide, which is important for a dialogue between the visitor and the centre. Here the most important objective is that the visitor can interact with the newly learned knowledge, for example by smelling something, touching it, or trying it out.

The question of including a public that is increasingly diverse in terms of its cultural and national backgrounds in the decision-making processes of preserving cultural
heritage is a vital one all over the world. In Sweden, Anders Högberg provides a Swedish perspective on this issue anchored in Swedish cultural politics in his book Mångfaldsfrågor i kulturmiljövården (Cultural heritage and issues on diversity) (2013). Even though the level of diversity in Sweden differs in comparison with the levels of diversity of the South African population, where the vast majority has experienced apartheid, I would claim that many of the issues are the same as those identified by Högberg. The archaeologist has to develop conceptual links between the present and the future, so that people can understand the relevance and purpose of the archaeological work. Certain conceptual links can also foster the development of relationships between individuals and between different groups, and to build those relationships material/artefacts are often used. They establish certain meanings in relation to contemporary times, and show how traditions, memories and culture have been developed in the past. It is always the preserved material that is important in contemporary times, because people can relate to it, and that specific chosen material will be mediated to the public.

The primary responsibility for deciding what should be preserved and what should not lies with the staff of the institutions working with those questions. These institutions have power and control over cultural heritage. During the past 20 years there has been a more inclusive approach in Sweden, where the public has had a greater influence on decisions, and where alternative stories have been told, different sites have been chosen, and innovative methods of communication have been developed. Högberg claims that if one looks at these developments from above, it seems as if the issues raised by diversity are already being taken into account in the cultural work, and that different kinds of solutions are being given. However, the perspective from below shows that, on the contrary, a perspective and approach that accommodates diversity has not yet been clearly formulated (Högberg 2013). This implies that theoretical efforts are being made, but the practical work still has to be done. It shows that a perspective from below and a perspective from above should be combined in order to find the missing link. Even though practical methods that demonstrate inclusivity may be in place, a balance between different interests is essential to provide a holistic view of the archaeological work.
5. Results

In light of all the issues that have been mentioned, and using the various methods for conducting public archaeology as a starting point, I will now answer my research questions.

a) Archaeology has been mediated differently at the four chosen projects. One explanation for this lies in the nature of the institution chosen for mediating knowledge. The institutions that are defined as museums choose to mediate knowledge in a more traditional way. But by naming these museums “interpretation centres” and providing different stations that the visitor can interact with, these institutions try to create a sense of a dialogue between the visitor and the museum. At the institutions that are defined as educational centres, the visitor is able to touch the material that is presented, and the guide presenting that material is there to answer all questions. There is a stronger dialogue between the one who knows and the visitor. In addition, because the guide, or one who knows, is a member of the community that is presenting the history of the place, the visitor gets a feeling of authenticity. In that way the institution is the word giving instance that decides how to communicate archaeology. It is interesting that the !Khwa ttu educational centre has also chosen to develop a museum at the site. I would claim that the reason for this is because a visitor from abroad has a particular understanding of what a “museum” is, while the term “educational centre” has not yet been established in the visitor’s mind.

b) The archaeologists want to present work of a high quality that attracts visitors. It is important for them to present everything in what they consider to be the correct context and to mediate knowledge in a trustworthy way. At the same time it is important for them to provide the visitors with an experience that will have a lasting impact. I did not conduct broader research on how the public would receive the knowledge mediated at the four places, since I saw myself as the public. What I found was that as long as visitors do not know what they are missing (for example with my experience at Wildebeest Kuil), they will not be disappointed with the visit, even though the archaeologists would not be satisfied with the presentation.

c) The benefits for the visitors at all four projects are that they are given a pleasant experience and the sites offer a good way to spend a day. Furthermore, the educational centres develop benefits for the communities involved in the work. So, for example, employment and educational opportunities are in place. Establishing benefits for the communities is hard work, because it requires collaboration between the communities and the expert archaeologists. Sometimes it is difficult to find adequate common ground between the archaeologist and the community, and this may lead to few or no benefits for either party. !Khwa ttu shows that a good established educational programme
for San people has benefited them in terms of employment opportunities, as well as in terms of preserving their own history and traditions. Wildebeest Kuil, on the other hand, shows that there can be other issues, such as indifference on the part of the communities towards learning about a place and mediating its history, that leads to no benefit at all for the community. The archaeologists, on the other hand, are able to benefit by collaboration with the communities. But in my examples this is not very obvious.

d) One would think that the financial state of a project would be of great importance for the mediation that takes place. The Origins Centre shows that with strong financial support, a very attractive place can be developed, where knowledge is mediated through different media, such as films, hands-on experiences, showcases and an audio guide. It also shows that the initial financial investment into a project does not necessarily lead to a sustainable business. The Wildebeest Kuil project had to struggle with financial issues from the beginning, but that has not resulted in a bad mediation of the centre and its content. Unfortunately I did not experience the best guided tour myself, but I follow the centre on Facebook, and it is clear that a lot of good work is done, and that this good work does not depend on large amounts of money, but on very dedicated people. I would suggest that the financial support of a public project is not the most important part of the public work, but that the archaeologists’ commitment and dedication to the work really do affect the outcome of a project.

e) All four projects aim to include the visitor, either by providing interactive stations where the visitor can explore history, as the museums did, or through other means, such as the timeline that visitors are able to follow to learn more about the past at the Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre. The 'Khwa ttu San Education and Cultural Centre, for example, includes the visitor by letting them taste traditional herbs and by encouraging the visitor to try make the “click” sounds. All four projects strive to include the visitor in the learning process. But they try to achieve this in different ways, adapted to the place where the mediation is performed. I claim that you cannot discern a specific pedagogical method throughout the four projects, but a general aim to involve the visitor in the exhibition experience is obvious at all four places. Since the purposes of the institutions under examination differ as much as they do, there may not be a reasonable expectation for them to use the same pedagogical methods at all four places.
6. Concluding remarks

When I started working on my Master’s thesis I approached my topic from the perspective of a Montessori teacher, a pedagogue working with a philosophy that is built on mutual respect between teacher and learner. I thought that it would be the same in public archaeology, since mutual respect is a prerequisite for good public work. During my research I realised that basic mutual respect still does not guarantee a dialogue in which both parts are equally important to each other. The public work that I have termed “Ubuntu archaeology” goes beyond this mutual respect. It is about listening and understanding the other, in a situation where both parties are on an equal level. How can that equal level be reached? A willingness and an open-mindedness from both sides are needed to listen to and to understand each other. This goes beyond measurable factors and makes the archaeologists as well as the public sensitive to the opinion of the other side. Here the perspective from above as well as the perspective from below is needed, and questions on what has already been done practically in the public work and what has only been formulated thoughts, ideas and objectives need to be asked. This will provide a holistic perspective on the public work.

Moreover, if there is a diverse public, divided into different interest groups with different cultural and social backgrounds, there must also be a diverse mediation of archaeology. If we recognise that and link it to my examples, the museum as an institution may be the right type of institution to educate a specific group of people. Even though museums are generally more traditional and often are only able to engage in one-way communication, this may be an appropriate method of communicating knowledge to a specific group. We can perhaps also assume that groups visiting a museum have specific expectations of how a museum mediates knowledge, and expect to learn from a museum exhibition in a traditional way. In South Africa, the museum may be the institution that people value most in terms of mediating history and culture. This is because many of the museums have been established since the late 19th century, but also because at museums researchers often prepare the exhibition content, and as a result it has a higher perceived value in the eyes of the visitors.

Today museums in South Africa and elsewhere aim to have more inclusive exhibitions for visitors. Offering the visitor hands-on experiences is one example of how the visitor can be included. The pedagogical understanding of learning has changed over the years, which has led some museums to call themselves “interpretation centres”. This term sounds more inclusive and may even show that the museums are aiming for an inclusive approach. But as my examples show, these museums/interpretation centres still currently use one-way communication.

The educational centres are built more on mutual respect. I would say that this is because of the different nature of these centres. They have been developed through a collaboration of archaeologists and indigenous communities, and while this collaboration does not automatically mean that both parties operated on the same level, they are closer to each other than the museum exhibition and the museum visitor. In
working together people are forced to listen to each other, which builds a stronger relationship. This relationship can be built on respect, but this does not necessarily mean that both parties see each other as equals. For that to happen the relationship needs to be deepened even further, and trust between both parties needs to be established. I do not know if there was an initial aim to work at the same level during the initial work with the centres I examined for my thesis, but I believe the objective was that after educating the communities, both the communities and the archaeologists would be on the same level of knowledge.

At the !Khwa ttu San Education and Cultural Centre, educating community members has been successful and today lots of volunteers come to the centre to learn more. Furthermore, members of the San community have decided to establish a museum that can co-exist with the educational centre. Since in my view the education centre offers a more inclusive approach by letting visitors try different skills, smell flowers and herbs or examine eland bones, it is somewhat confusing why the community members now choose instead to have a museum on site. I think one explanation for that is that a museum is generally perceived to be a more established institution for mediating knowledge. This may relate to a desire to get more recognition and respect for the work that is done at the centre, and perhaps to even get better funding for the site. However, the archaeologist involved with the development of the museum is very committed to presenting the history of the San in a way that includes the San people’s own voice — in other words, by creating a museum made by the San people, for the San people and for other visitors.

The Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre on the other hand, has failed to educate the community members. It is hard to grasp why this has presented such a difficulty at this site. It could have been due to the financial situation, or to a lack of interest on the part of the community members as well as professionals in developing a well-functioning educational programme for community members, or to a lack of time. What is clear here is that even though there was once great interest from both sides in developing an educational centre, it is not certain that the centre will be sustainable.

It seems like there is no greater influence on how a good project can be developed and carried out. With other words, there is no single most important influence. At this stage I would like to claim that a successful public work also needs a good understanding of the people (the public) that the archaeologist is working with in relation to all the professional work that the archaeologist does. Chris Low called it “a feeling” for the community. You cannot build up a museum or an educational centre if there is no understanding of the people you work with and whose history you are describing. The archaeologist needs to be an expert on more subjects than just archaeology. A deep understanding of politics, sociology, pedagogy, archaeology and history is needed. Just as archaeological artefacts are worthless when taken out of context, the history of different groups is without value if it is taken out of its sociological and political context.
7. Summary

In this thesis I examined how public archaeology is carried out in South Africa. For that I chose to visit four different projects that work with mediating the human past in South Africa. I chose two educational centres that worked with communities, and at both centres a community-based public archaeology approach was in place, to develop employment opportunities as well as restore a sense of history pride to the communities. Additionally, I examined two museums that work with mediating archaeology to a broader public, and that aim for an approach that includes visitors. This is not only visible in how the exhibition content is presented to the visitor, it is also to be seen in the naming of the museums, which are also called “interpretation centres”.

All four institutions in this study were established after the end of apartheid in South Africa, during a period of reconciliation. History and archaeology were seen as a sort of therapy for building up a proud nation characterised by its diversity. Today the reconciliation process is still under way in South Africa, and in the museums and educational centres there is an awareness of how public archaeology offers employment possibilities for underprivileged communities.

I asked the question of how archaeology is mediated within the four different projects, and it is evident that both the museums and the educational centres aim to involve the visitor in the interpretation of the exhibition. Museums that mediate the knowledge in a more traditional way, tend to name themselves “interpretation centres”, to create the impression that a more modern approach is being used to reach the visitor, while one of the educational centres is working on establishing a museum on-site and is going back to a more traditional way of mediating knowledge.

Another question was related to how the objectives formulated by archaeologists differ from the public’s perception. The archaeologists have clearly formulated objectives that their work should be of a high quality and that the visitor should gain new knowledge. Since the visitor does not know what these objectives are, a site can be visited without any sense of these clearly defined expectations. Visitors can therefore feel that they have had a good experience, while the archaeologists might not be satisfied with the mediation involved in that same experience.

In relation to my question on the benefits that the archaeologists and communities receive through public projects, it was found that through a collaboration of archaeologists and communities, new knowledge can be gained on both sides. Moreover, for the communities, employment opportunities can be created, and for the visitors at least a nice day with family and friends can be experienced.

I was also able to show that financial support and a successful public work do not necessarily depend on each other. It is fortunate to have a large budget to establish a successful project, but this does not imply long-term sustainability. Public work can be done successfully with a smaller budget and dedicated researchers.
All four projects aimed to reach out to a broader public. I initially wondered if a common method was used to achieve that, but this was not the case. I suggest that a common pedagogical method is not in place, since the projects are very different from each other. Even though they all work on including the visitor, different methods for achieving that are needed since the pedagogical method should conform to the place at which it is applied.

My examples show that even though a lot of work has been done to include communities and the greater public, this work has not always been successful. Regardless of the amount of work and money that has been invested into the projects, the archaeologists are not satisfied with their public work. The museums aim to have a more inclusive approach, where the visitor can have a dialogue with the exhibition, while the educational centres struggle with educating community members. Only one example shows that community development is in place. One of the educational centres has decided to establish an additional museum at the site for telling the story of the San people.

It is hard to grasp why public work is so unsatisfying for the archaeologists. The objectives set for the projects are ambitious, and reaching those high standards may be difficult. I would claim that even though the archaeologists might not be satisfied, the visitors are. As a visitor it is impossible to look behind the scenes and see the objectives. For the visitor it is more important to have a pleasant experience and to broaden one’s mind. All four projects provide that.

The public work in South Africa is complex, and it is difficult to get people interested and to keep that interest alive. This complexity must be understood by both parties: the archaeologists, and the public or the different communities. Even though there are still many unsolved problems today in public archaeology in South Africa, both parties should continue to work on it.

I would like to conclude my thesis with a quote from Innocent Pikirayi:

Southern Africa’s complex past can only be successfully disentangled when this past is shared appropriately among experts and non-experts. (Pikirayi 2015: 164)
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