Title of project: *As You are Standing Here: An Excavation Project*

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Abstract:

This project arises out of a local interest in the suppressed and/or erased stories and histories of Stellenbosch and Kayamandi (an informal settlements situated at the outskirts of Stellenbosch). This project engages with modes of curatorship and mapping (as a visual and social practice that traces and plots forms of movement, sites of meaning and systems of personal knowledge), and uses such a methodology of curatorial-mapping to engage with the life experiences of members of local communities.

This study is geared towards forms of local social-development, and it takes a trans-disciplinary approach to forms of service learning and service-based education. As an academic project for honours, masters and doctoral students from (inter alia) the Departments of Music, Visual Arts, and History, modes of engagement between students, lecturers and members of the community are facilitated. By making use of an innovative and creative open-source digital platform that are being developed especially for this project by Prof Alan Price (Ohio State University, USA), more democratic forms of knowledge production and sharing are created on a community-based level. This digital platform, which takes the form of an 'app' (application) that uses open source mapping within a content management system, is used as a tool (be it via computer or mobile phone) for sharing information and uploading and curating texts, images, video and audio files. This digital platform is thus used for our curatorial-mapping technique.

This project is aligned with the priority areas of innovation for social inclusion and digital inclusion through education and training. By using a digital application for forms of curatorial-mapping, this project aims to enhance the development of communities within the Western Cape region, in particular within Stellenbosch and Kayamandi. In addition, this project facilitates the forging of long-term, sustainable relationships between university students and lecturers and local communities with the aim of gaining knowledge and sharing real life skills within this partnership. This relationship also adds to local knowledges regarding art, heritage and history, with the aim of producing an archive that is accessible to all. Lastly, Prof Price is hosting a series of workshops for the general public, in which they will be taught how to create such applications on their own, which would potentially be of great benefit for the local knowledge economy.

Introduction and Aims/Questions:

This project has the following objectives:

1. To promote forms of social inclusion through the creation and exhibition of an archive that uses the methodology of curatorial-mapping.
2. To use this methodology as a means to promote active citizenship where the different role players have the platform to share in and engage with ideas surrounding their relationship to a certain locality, community and idea of self.
3. To promote a form of service learning that forms part of the curriculum of various university courses, and that complies with the outcomes of a university degree.
4. To facilitate strategic, applied and innovative research into the fields of visual art, music, history and social anthropology, with a particular focus on how such research impacts on and can draw from community-based knowledges.
5. The production of popular material (such as exhibitions, concerts, publications in community newspapers, and forms of curatorship and mapping through the designated digital programme) with the ultimate aim of creating an interactive platform for sharing knowledge.

The following research questions underpin this project:

1. How can one-sided, outdated modes of knowledge production be challenged by using more inclusive, community-based resources for the creation of academic and popular and/or public outcomes?
2. How can critical citizenship and agency be encouraged amongst students and members of the community by using interdepartmental resources and interdisciplinary methods?

Research Approach and Methods:

Through joint lectures and joint research projects, this initiative draws on the respective methodologies of the different participating departments, such as curatorship, ethnography, oral mapping, archivisation and fieldwork, the lecturers involved all being schooled in the methodologies involved. Our aim for the combination of these various methodologies is to find novel and innovative research techniques through contact sessions with the lecturers, students and community members. Collectively, these methodologies translate into and speak to our employment of a form of curatorial mapping, and innovative methodology that addresses the complexities and needs of the local intellectual and material landscape.

By hosting public workshops that are specifically geared to members local communities, this project also works toward addressing issues regarding agency through learning, social inclusivity, the creation of communal repositories for knowledge, and bridging the ideological and physical boundaries between Stellenbosch and Kayamandi that was left behind after the fall of apartheid.

Physically, these methodologies will be translated into various creative enterprises, such as the production of academic articles by students and lecturers, collaborative research projects (such as the digital mapping platform, as well as a public archival exhibition, which will open on the 5th of November at the Gallery of Stellenbosch University). Such forms of collaboration allow students to work with members from the community, under the mentorship of the lecturers involved, in order to promote and explore forms of active citizenship. In addition, members of local communities are also participating, through workshops and performances that are hosted by local community poetry group *InZync*, in the final exhibition, the creation of the digital application, and forms of sound collecting and editing.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Follow-up Action:

Thus far, the following components have been launched under the *As You Are Standing Here* banner:

1. A postgraduate, interdepartmental and inter-institutional <u>research seminar</u> has been running from the beginning of the year, which engages postgraduate (honours, masters and doctoral) students from the Visual Arts Department of Stellenbosch University, as well as from the Departments of Music, English, and History. Participants from other institutions, such as the University of the Western Cape, are also part of this seminar series, as well as interested members of public. These seminars were successful insofar as they created a platform for scholarly and community engagement in forms of curatorship, archival research, historical intervention and critical citizenship.

2. An <u>exhibition</u> is currently being assembled and conceptualized that will open in March 2016 at the Gallery of Stellenbosch University.[1] This exhibition is serving as the platform for engaging with the material culture of Stellenbosch and the participating lecturers, students and interested members of the community are currently working together to create a new experimental exhibition. The purpose of this exhibition is to critically explore and speak to the complex, historically loaded history of this town as it was affected by various socio-political and cultural discourses pertaining to the colonial, postcolonial, apartheid and post-apartheid eras. Participants in this project include myself (as project facilitator), participating lecturers and academics (Prof Alan Price from Ohio State University, United States; Dr Lizabé Lambrechts, Department of Music, Stellenbosch University), masters' and doctoral students whose research are actively involved in the project, honours students (whose research articles will be focused on the project), as well as pre-graduate students from the Departments of Music, Visual Arts and History. In addition, the *InZync* Poetry Session group is also collaborating on this project, which entails members from this group, local communities and students working together in a series workshop-based sessions to create auditory and visual material that will be used for the exhibition project.

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[1] This exhibition was scheduled to open in October 2015, but due to the student protests on campus it had to be postponed.

3. Currently, the application as it was developed by Prof Price and Drs Lambrechts and van der Wal is being introduced and distributed within Stellenbosch and Kayamandi. The application (in its current form) can be viewed at http://recluse.accad.ohio-state.edu/~aprice/ayash/index

4. In this manner, some of the goals of this project has been realized and is in the process of being realized, particularly as it is actively promoting (be it through workshops, teaching projects or public seminars) forms of social inclusion through the development of a technological interface that can be used as a product or learning tool within both academia, as well as the general public. In addition, this project promotes active citizenship where the different role players (be it lecturers, doctoral, masters' students, honours students and members of the local community) have the platform to share in and engage with local histories. In all, these processes are actively leading up to the production of an exhibition, with the ultimate aim of creating an interactive platform for sharing knowledge, learning about local histories, and exploring theoretical and practical tools for engaging with such histories.

Follow-up Actions:

The project will only conclude in March 2016, but the following conclusions and suggestions for further research/work can be made:

1. One of the definite strengths of this project has been the fostering of cross-departmental and cross-institutional ties. The latter can, however, be further developed to allow for different universities to work together on such projects, which would allow for the circulation of knowledge and expertise on a wider scale. Such forms of collaboration would definitely form part of the follow-up actions in coming years in my postgraduate teaching programmes.

2. The former point also emphasizes the need and usefulness of creating cross-departmental teaching and learning programmes, which has proven to be a great tool for getting interested students and lecturers together to work on a given research project. This has already culminated in the development of joint supervision and teaching programmes for 2016, and I wish to expand on such initiatives in the coming year by working towards a structured cross-departmental programme that specifically deals with the interface of the performing, visual and musical arts.

3. Thus far, the project has been very helpful for getting into contact and working with local communities. One of the key issues that arose from this project is the format and impact of the digital platform that was created, i.e. how shareable and usable it would be to use amongst a general public. This is one of the key concerns, and it is an issue that we will be addressing once the project is launched amongst local communities in December and January and its actual usability can be tested.

Lastly, I would just like to extend my gratitude towards the CHEC/WCG Research programme for funding this project – this has been a truly enriching and empowering experience thus far, and it has made a great difference in our academic and community-based teaching projects. Your financial assistance is sincerely appreciated!