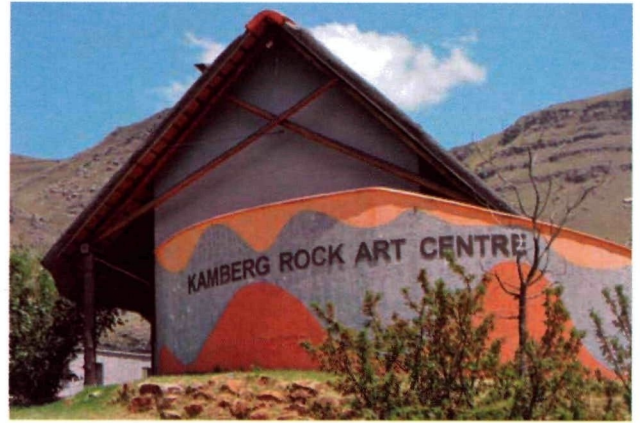


and diverse heritage. Heritage practitioners can make the difference, but I would argue that at present they are not making enough progress to bring about more effective enforcement of the heritage legislation. Common excuses that are often given, not only in South Africa but elsewhere, mainly revolve around the lack of financial and human resources.



Kamberg Rock Art Centre

Some of the challenges of heritage management in South Africa

Ndukuyakhe Ndlovu

Heritage of any kind gives individuals a sense of identity and belonging. As a result, heritage should be considered an important part of human existence.

Who determines the level of importance is a factor of power. Heritage also means different things to different constituencies and emanating directly from this is the fact that what may be considered as important heritage by one group of people may not necessarily be seen in the same light by another group.

I shall not discuss the definition of heritage as it deserves much broader consideration. Instead, I shall focus on the management approach promoted by our heritage legislation and the issues of heritage ownership in order to address some of the pertinent challenges of heritage management in South Africa.

South African heritage legislation

The country has had heritage legislation for over a hundred years. The first piece of legislation, the Bushmen Relics Act, was promulgated in 1911. We should critically evaluate the success of heritage legislation in the light of this long record.

Considering the number of heritage contraventions and successful prosecutions recorded over the years, we should be concerned about the effectiveness of this tool for the successful management of our rich

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While there may be an element of truth in this, I argue that more can and should be done to improve the enforcement of heritage legislation in South Africa. I do not foresee a day when heritage managers will argue that they have enough money and staff to deliver on their mandate. Therefore, the best must be done with current resources. My critical view on the implementation of heritage legislation should not be misinterpreted as completely denying the significance of heritage legislation. Rather, we should be critical of how ineffectually heritage legislation has always been used. Failure to improve on this situation will result in a continuation of the trend that has characterised South Africa's heritage landscape for a long time.

The management of South Africa's rich heritage, particularly the built environment, has been kept within the urban centres of the country. While the destruction of a building considered of significance will attract interest in urban areas, the same is not true in townships. I see a continuous change taking place in my township even though it has buildings dating back to its development under the apartheid regime.

The historical significance of these buildings is not protected by the active implementation of heritage legislation in these areas. A quick check on buildings of provincial or national significance in Gauteng shows that there is only one property within Soweto that has been afforded heritage status. It is no surprise that this is the former home of Nelson Mandela. This indicates that there is a great need not to localise the implementation and subsequent enforcement of heritage legislation within selected areas.

Besides the obvious bias towards heritage management to selected areas, another challenge concerns

the management paradigm promoted by heritage legislation. There is a need to consider critically a dichotomy between physical and spiritual management approaches. To illustrate the nature of my concern, I shall discuss two case studies, both from the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park, South Africa's second World Heritage Site.

The first study relates to the making of 'new-age' rock art at a shelter in the northern part of the park. While conducting research for my Masters in 2003, I came across a spiritual healer who was using a painted rock art site for her ritual activities. The paintings she made could easily be classified as graffiti. But should they be seen in that destructive way or are they not part of the process of managing the site and appreciating the spiritual significance of the paintings that were made there hundreds of years ago?

The second case study comes from the Kamberg. During the official opening of the Kamberg Rock Art Centre in 2002, Duma clan members officially expressed an interest in performing annual ritual ceremonies at Game Pass Shelter. Research has revealed that this was not the first time such ceremonies were held there. This request was warmly welcomed by the then premier of KwaZulu-Natal Province, Dr L Mtshali, and the late chief executive of Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife, Mr K Mkhize.

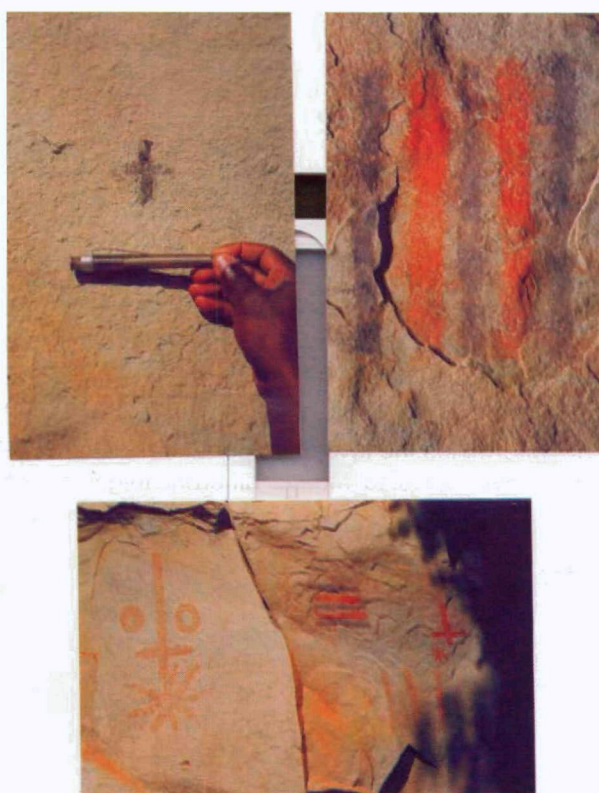
However, it soon became clear that provincial heritage legislation and the relevant policies of Amafa aKwaZulu-Natali were not fully supportive of the intentions of the Duma clan members. For instance, the policy required that a custodian be allowed to supervise the ritual ceremony to ensure that participants did not partake in activities that were deemed unacceptable to the management of the rock art. In the absence of trained custodians within the Duma clan, this person could only be an outsider, but such infiltration went against the traditional ways of conducting the ceremony. Members of the clan had to accept this condition even if it did not meet their approval as it was the only way to reach a compromise with Amafa aKwaZulu-Natali.

Furthermore, they were not allowed to burn anything nor dance while inside the shelter. It is obvious that this management approach supports the bias towards the physical aspects of the site, and anyone who has an insightful understanding of traditional ritual ceremonies will see this as a significant barrier. For the officials of Amafa aKwaZulu-Natali it was more important to safeguard the physical appearance of the paintings for future generations than to satisfy the spiritual interests of the living.

The relevant question that needs to be considered is on what basis does the spiritual management of a site become less important than the physical management of the site? How appropriate is it that we should talk about future generations when the current generation cannot be allowed to practise their ritual

activities in the way they deem necessary? As a traditional, conservatively oriented man and an Africanist archaeologist, I am tempted to argue that the concerns of someone living today are more important than those of a person who will live tomorrow. I believe it is important to question how I can prepare for tomorrow when my needs of today are not taken care of. I am yet to come across someone who will volunteer to go hungry today in order to save money and food for future generations.

Equally so, it is important that the person living today, who holds strong views about the traditional means of managing heritage sites, is afforded the opportunity to act in the way they deem necessary. However, considering that our heritage legislation and accompanying policies are favourable inclined towards the physical identity of heritage, this has not been possible.



New-age rock art from Mnguni Shelter, northern uKhahlamba-Drakensberg National Park

Some people will argue that the current national heritage legislation promotes living heritage, adding that this is a significant improvement on previous legislation. While there may be an element of truth in this statement, the reality does not necessarily conform to legislation that promotes living heritage. Transformation of our management approaches to heritage management should not only be theoretically but also practically implemented. The case study indicates that this is currently not the case.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges in the management of heritage, besides the implementation

and enforcement of heritage legislation, is the ownership of heritage resources. According to the national legislation, heritage resources are owned by the state. This means that the state and its learned advisors have the power to decide on the heritage that is to be protected and how it is to be managed. To me this is the main deciding factor in as far as the heritage management approaches to be applied. There is a need to address this challenge.

In conclusion, we need to implement significant improvements to the management of heritage in our country. The current one-size-fits-all approach to implementation does not work. There is a need to have a less rigid approach. This may sound simplistic, but I do not intend it to be so. There is, therefore, a need to find common ground and see how the challenges discussed in this short contribution can be addressed.