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Faculty of Humanities, Development  
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text

*Zanzibar provided an evocative setting for an international film festival with some disappointing organisational characteristics*

Photo: Jonathan Dockney



*A dhow cruising off the Zanzibar coast: The great setting for the Zanzibar International Film Festival went some way to ameliorating the shortfalls of the event's administration*

# ZIFF an'a whole lotta mambo jambo

INVESTMENT IS A tricky game. Do you take the plunge and risk never coming back up again? You can choose to sit on the safe side of the fence and get ordinary returns or you can choose to jump.

I chose the latter when Thomas Hart and I were invited to present a workshop on cellphilms at the Zanzibar International Film Festival (ZIFF) 2010. I put myself in financial and emotional debt to my parents based on the idea that this could be a wonderful investment, personally and career-wise.

From the personal side, as a CCMS student, the experiences I gained in Zanzibar were priceless.

The Other got completely mixed up with feverish jungle stereotypes (I was convinced that I was going to end up sold off into the human trafficking trade). Learning and experiencing how the media operate in other parts of Africa was certainly an eye opener.

Meeting the locals was wonderful. Everyone greets you with *jambo* (hello!), *mambo* and *karibu* (welcome).

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**By Jonathan Dockney**

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Yet, ZIFF, was something of a disappointment. From the festival director's initial "welcome to the chaos" right to the bitter end, I found myself beset by what were ultimately avoidable difficulties.

The festival programme was a hoot. It was informative, sincere and riddled with spelling mistakes. 'Encourage', for example, was spelt phonetically as 'incarage' (perhaps inspired by the frightening speeds at which Zanzibarians drive?). I found this to be quite fitting for the location. This IS Africa for goodness sake; we say it like it is. I also laughed when one dignitary told the foreign audience that they would find Zanzibar to be quite the treat "because we have lots of beautiful bitches" (read: *beaches*).

However, the flip-side was that the programme was completely out of sync with the accompanying booklet and changes were made to the printed

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Photo: Jonathan Dockney

*The outdoor amphitheatre set in the Old Fort, with the Beit El-Ajaib palace behind, was a wonderful venue for viewing films*

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schedule without informing any of the visitors. As a result, I missed Connie Field's *Have You Seen Johannesburg?*, and a number of other films.

But when I did manage to coordinate my presence at a venue with the appearance of a film, it proved thoroughly divine. I particularly enjoyed the outdoor amphitheatre set in the Old Fort with the Beit El-Ajaib (the palace used by the sultans of Zanzibar) towering over the audience in the background.

The films dealt with an array of themes and narratives, most with a distinctly African flavour. *Themba* and *Ndoto ya Zanzibar* explored the role of sport, in particular soccer, in the lives of many Africans. My favourites were *Cuba: an African Odyssey* and *From Selma to Soweto*. Both dealt with the themes of liberation in Africa. The former examined the role of Cuba in liberating parts of Africa and the latter documented the role of black American civil rights groups in pushing Ronald Reagan's administration to impose economic sanctions on apartheid South Africa. Both were splendid works. After watching them, I was left with the question: how did Africa go from being so right to being so wrong?

Many of the films had a theme of social change like *8 Women*, which offered women a riposte in the face of gender oppression in Tanzania. It was a touching documentary that unleashed the force of the interviewees' emotions through the power of film. Regressive cultural practices were confronted, dared and tested; progressive politics and counter public spheres flourished. Another

favourite was *Phumzi* which was a futuristic interpretation of potential water wars. *A Precious Drop* explored similar water conservation themes although it felt more like a government children's advertisement.

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The *Festival of Festivals* part of the programme proved most interesting, although I only managed to see one session. It was a chance for film organisations around the world to come together in dialogue. The *Maisha Film Lab* (Uganda) is an organisation that trains aspiring film industry entrants in their area of choice. Trainees work towards producing a short film in various labs/workshops. Their catch phrase "if we don't tell our own stories, then no one will" rang throughout my mind as I watched the lab films and the presentation.

What impressed me the most was the exploration of African themes and the promotion of the African film industry at ZIFF. Attempts to involve the local community and draw on the power of film for social change were equally impressive. Zanzibarians were given free entrance to film screenings; helping to cultivate a local film culture.

But the festival administration was a serious let down. I invested around R10,000 in ZIFF of my own money. And while it is easy to shrug it off with TIA (This Is Africa), it was an expensive conclusion. With this chaotic backdrop it is little wonder then that attendance figures for the festival are dropping (according to one local whom I met). One also has to ponder how ZIFF manages to fulfil its role as a distribution platform with such administrative and operations management practices. This also has negative implications for tourism marketing in the region. ZIFF has potential to be an impressive draw card for tourism.

Festival organisers need to realise that ZIFF may no longer represent a worthwhile investment for people attending from outside Tanzania and Zanzibar. And it would be a real pity to lose such a unique African event through bad administration.

# At the Sole of the MATter

**O**UR POLITICAL FREEDOM is our own responsibility. The message was very clear. And we must not shirk that responsibility.

“There’s no excuse not to engage. We have to be political beings in our own country”. This was Sam Sole’s response to a question about what the youth can do about the Media Appeals Tribunal (MAT) and the Protection of Information Bill (the Secrecy Bill) at a seminar on the topic to a 3<sup>rd</sup> year Media Studies class at UKZN.

The media have to position themselves as an opposition to the government. The ANC’s notion of having one vision for South Africa which can be attained by one party is at odds with the realities of South Africans. There is a perception that the media is hostile to the idea of national solidarity. This hostility is rather towards a singular and exclusive national solidarity. Debate, opposition and alternatives are part of the democratic project.

However, the ANC has delegitimised

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*By Jonathan Dockney and Caitlin Watson*

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the term ‘opposition’ so that any divergence of thought is seen as either racist or counter-revolutionary. Yet, what this indicates is that the monolithic liberation movement’s grip on power is weakening. As a result, it tinkers with the levers of control. The ANC has brought its woes upon itself. The strikes that lashed the country this year are a case in point. The government has told unions that there is no more money available for wage increases. This appeal vis-à-vis reports of ministers’ million rand cars and exorbitant splurges on hotel sojourns has boxed the government in. The government asks the public to exercise control in hard times yet they do otherwise. Government officials splurge wildly without any due consideration or sensitivity for the ordinary person’s living conditions.

These unflattering reports are

unnerving the ruling party and are the real reasons behind the MAT and Secrecy Bill. But without this information – information that makes a democracy work – South Africa cannot be governed effectively. If the Secrecy Bill comes to light in its current form then, for example, the processes that convicted Jackie Selebi would become null and void, and illegal. The real issue therefore behind government rhetoric of ‘national interest’ and ‘protection of the poor’, is that the media highlight South Africa’s uncomfortable truths.

However, if any good has come from this, it is that civil society has found its voice again in a democratic conversation. It is crucial that a free press exists in this conversation. Granted, there are serious issues that need to be dealt with in South Africa’s media. But a heavy handed government clamp down is not the solution. It is the citizens’ responsibility to ensure that they exercise their democratic rights. South Africans need to become more involved in the politics of their country. If anything then, this is what the MAT and Secrecy Bill have highlighted.

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See <http://www.right2know.org.za/index.php> for more information.

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\*This article is taken from a lecture delivered by Sam Sole on Media Freedom in SA at UKZN on 3 September 2010.

## State threatens citizens’ freedom of expression

**F**REEDOM OF SPEECH and expression has come under threat by the South African government. South Africans seem to be increasingly faced with attacks on the media, despite the hardwon freedoms and rights enshrined in our constitution.

The ANC has proposed a media tribunal to regulate and punish errant journalists. Journalists could be imprisoned or given hefty fines should they be found guilty of wrong doing. The ANC feels that the current system of self-regulation is inadequate and the media’s freedom needs to be reigned in.

The government has also proposed The Protection of Information Bill which will stem the free flow of state information for reasons of so called national security. It will affect the classification of state information with punitive effects for journalists who publish such information. The consequences of this piece of legislation will affect civil society’s ability to hold the state to account for its actions. Various representatives have argued that the Bill

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*By Jonathan Dockney*

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doesn’t allow for the disclosure of classified information in the public interest and that it should include a public interest defence clause.

The Department of Communications has also proposed a new bill, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) Amendment Bill which will bring ICASA under increasing government control. ICASA is meant to be an independent regulator in terms of funding and administration. The Bill will effectively bring important ICASA functions under the control and directive of the Department of Communications. This could have serious outcomes for independent regulation in the public’s interest.

What the public needs to consider is that, although these propositions will be ‘refined’ (if they’re passed), they represent a gradual and deliberate erosion of our constitutional values of freedom of expression in South Africa.

# The Wizards of IAMCR

Photo: Lauren Dyll-Myklebust



*"I've a feeling  
we're not in South  
Africa anymore, Lauren!"*

Photo: Lauren Dyll-Myklebust



*Above: the Se (cathedral) of  
Braga was an imposing and  
inspiring piece of local history*

WAS ONE OF the six lucky and grateful young scholars to be awarded an International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) scholarship to attend this year's IAMCR conference in the beautiful city of Braga. The University of Minho did a sterling job of hosting the conference where the careful organisation of both the academic and social aspects of the conference were evident throughout the four days (18-22 July).

**By Lauren Dyll-Myklebust**

The opening ceremony took place in the magnificent Theatro Circo where the approximately 1200 delegates were welcomed and the theme of "Communication and Citizenship: Rethinking Crisis and Change" came to life by the different speakers, including IAMCR President, Annabelle Sreberny. Another speaker was Jorge Sampaio (UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations). He was not able to be there, but in a very Wizard of Oz-esque fashion his image was projected onto a big screen at the front of the theatre. This was when the likeness of my experience in Braga to Dorothy's adventures in Oz first became clear.

"I've a feeling we're not in South Africa anymore" is a sense Keyan Tomaselli, Ruth-Teer-Tomaselli and I couldn't shake when following the cobblestone roads of Portugal's oldest city. Not knowing when exactly to cross the road, trying to order food in what little Portuguese we knew, and taking in the sights and sounds of this old city with its ancient cathedrals were constant reminders that indeed we were in a place very different to home. Bom Jesus, the venue for the Conference Dinner where Cees Hamelink and The Burgundian Combo entertained us with their festive music, indeed seemed to be a magical far-away world, set on top of a hill overlooking Braga and filled with mazes and emerald green gardens. I didn't want to click my heels and go home. I wanted to experience more... and I did just that.

The conference was attended by those I'd consider as the wizards of media and communication research. I met the scholars whose work I have been reading since the start of my studies, and was able

*Left: The Bom Jesus Gardens on top of the hill overlooking Braga. This was an old pilgrimage site where people would walk up the steps to the cathedral*

to engage in discussions and network with other young scholars. The list would be too long to include here, but I do need to mention that Denis McQuail was present and a tribute ceremony was held in recognition of his immense contribution to the field of communication theories. Manuel Pinto opened the tribute referring to the way in which McQuail "inspires people", Helena Sousa thanked him for his constant interest in other people's work

*The conference was attended by those I would consider as the wizards of media and communication research*

and his humanity, and Peter Golding ended by noting that McQuail's analysis of press content and performance "remains a masterpiece".

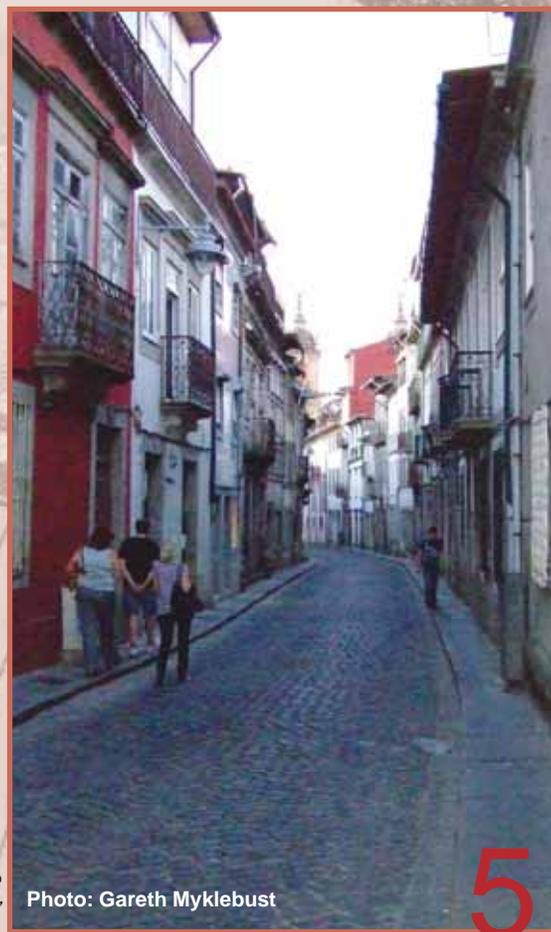
I was delighted to later discover that I would join Ruth Teer-Tomaselli (as IAMCR Vice President) and Keyan Tomaselli to share a meal with McQuail and the IAMCR Executive Board at the Café Astoria – a unique café where the stairs to the top level run adjacent to a well preserved ancient Roman wall.

Theory and Ethics and Methods, oh my! There were 31 different parallel sessions to accommodate for the diversity of sections, working groups and themes. Amongst these were; Communication Policy and Technology, Ethics of Communication, Health Communication and Change, Islam and Media, Digital Divide, Political Economy, Comic Art and Communication and HIV/AIDS. The multi-lingual/-national/-cultural/ethnic audience ensured that a variety of perspectives were heard and critical debate encouraged.

Like the Cowardly Lion, in spite of my fears, I was able to present my paper, "Decolonising Methodologies in Development (Communication) Studies: Xaus Lodge as a Case Study in Critical Indigenous Qualitative Research" in the Participatory Communication Research Section. I was fortunate to have Pradip Thomas as my discussant who offered insightful comments that will add much value in the continuation of my PhD.

In Oz, the Tin Man's desire for a heart notably contrasts with the Scarecrow's desire for brains, reflecting a common debate between the relative importance of the mind and the emotions. Symbolically, because both characters remain with Dorothy throughout her adventures she does not have to choose between them and the lesson to be learnt is that perhaps both brain and heart are vital.

This is apparent in the IAMCR conference - although it attracts the top media and communication scholars, it is also a conference 'with a heart' where the social events are enjoyed by all and people from diverse backgrounds, passionate about their fields of study, relax with each other, laughing and learning together.



*Right: 'Follow the cobblestone road ...'*

Photo: Gareth Myklebust

THE RESPONSE OF former SABC board member and current Deputy Dean of Humanities at UKZN, Professor Ruth Teer-Tomaselli's in identifying what, in her opinion, is the single greatest danger of the proposed Protection of Information Bill was: "It can be used against any person at any time, in any respect".

**By Damien Tomaselli**

The uncertainty that is generated by this is perhaps the most dangerous factor that is presented by the Bill, as it stimulates a sense of paranoia among media organisations. This confusion is exacerbated by the proposition of government for a media appeals tribunal. "It's not entirely clear what the extent of the tribunal will be. The scopes and purposes are open ended, this creates an enormous amount of uncertainty." says Teer-Tomaselli.

The proposed Bill and media tribunal have been met with criticism from the print media at large at both a national and international level, and has been interpreted by many as an incident backed by political motives to control rather than regulate access to information. This observation could be applied to the case of Mizilikazi wa Afrika, who was arrested by the Hawks for alleged possession of a resignation letter, which may or may not be fraudulent in nature. There has also been speculation that this letter was planted as part of an elaborate sting exercise by unknown (or at least unnamed) individuals in an attempt to set up the journalist and create an opportunity to discredit his newspaper, *The Sunday Times*, which has been fiercely critical of corruption within political circles.

THE ARREST HAS been seen by some as an intimidatory act propagated in order to scare journalists from accessing private information, which may be illegal under the new act. The arrest of wa Afrika enhances the issue of uncertainty as the current laws, which are still legally in effect, offer no legal reason why the arrest occurred in the first place. This may lead journalists to fear accessing information at all, as they may think that they may be arbitrarily arrested and charged with the threat of a 25 year sentence, without any clear guidelines of legal boundaries which may or may not be infringed upon in the collection of information, which may or may not be illegal. To be safe journalists may just 'back off' in order to disassociate themselves from any potential illegal activity.

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# Protection Of Misinformation

According to the ANC, the issue is that government wants to work with editors and media houses to help them and to ensure that the highest media ethical standards are adhered to. If this is the case then why does this sense of fear and panic exist within the media? Why have media houses across the board responded with the level of resistance which they have? One issue would be that of the historical precedent of media suppression imposed in South Africa in the 1980s, where the media was pressurised into reinforcing the social and political values of the previous government, all in the name of helping the press to get it right. According to Teer-Tomaselli, "Given the history of the media in this country and the way the government

*The uncertainty generated is perhaps the most dangerous factor presented by the Bill, as it stimulates paranoia among media organisations*

have used it to stifle media and media practitioners on an ad hoc basis, there is very good reason for media and media practitioners to be distrustful of these developments. The Bureau for Information which came into effect during the 1980s state of emergency played a very similar role to that of the proposed media tribunal, which served as both a threat and a tool of censorship and persecution."

Another primary point of concern is that media regulation already exists. With respect to the press this takes the form of self regulation which includes the press Ombudsman which can order a retraction of any particular article to be printed. There are in some circumstances even criminal regulation in which media practitioners may have to answer to the court for their printing of misleading or illegal information. Again referring to the example of the arrest of wa Afrika, if the

letter he holds is a classified document, which could be potentially damaging to the security of the state and it was to be printed, that may be an illegal act subject to scrutiny from the Ombudsman. As it stands, without the letter being published no crime has been committed. Wa Afrika was reported asking, "Is it a crime to receive a fax?"

CONSIDERING THAT various systems of media regulation already exist, is one more system of regulation really that dangerous? The credibility of the Ombudsman to make neutral decisions has come under criticism from the ANC. The ANC discussion document on the proposed print media tribunal states that, "The mere fact that the press Ombudsman is from the media ranks, a former journalist, and is not an independent person who looks at the media from the layman's perspective, poses an inherent bias towards the media with all interpretations favourable to the institution and the other party just has to understand and accept the media way, which is grossly unfair and unjust." So then is the Bill not just reinforcing the existing regulating structures? What does the government's suggested system offer that is not already in existence?

Primarily the fact that it moves away from a system of self regulation to that of state imposed regulation. *Mercury* news editor, and UDW graduate, Philani Mkhanya is of the opinion that "it is damaging to have any interference coming from government and government appointed people". The fact that it has been suggested that these regulators would be appointed directly by government reinforces the notion to many that they are there to filter out negative criticism towards government related events rather than to endorse standards of ethical reporting. "The fact that these people would be appointed by government, for me indicates that this is not intended for the free flow of freedom of information." says Mkhanya, who is not alone in this opinion.

One of the first lessons that any journalism student from any institution in the country is taught is how to choose

which information is appropriate to be reported on, or what is considered as 'newsworthy'. In the case of newspapers this is largely determined by which information can be considered as being in the public interest. Currently this is decided on by the media and in turn the public, who want to know about what is going on in their government. The effect of the Bill could mean that in all likelihood only a handful of people appointed by the government will hold the ultimate decision over what is seen to be in the public interest to the exclusion of what the media, or the public may think.

**H**OW MUCH DOES all this affect the average person on the street? Let us consider that the Bill was already in effect, would the press have been allowed to reveal information of events such as the Selebi/Alogotti case and the Arms Deal for instance? In Mkhanya's opinion "Definitely not. The press has been able to uncover so much in the last 10 years. If the Bill was in existence it would give power to government officials to classify information which they could then go out of their way to classify." Mkhanya refers to the example of another event which could have been in jeopardy of coming to light, "...Toni Yengeni's, discount he received on a Mercedes Benz, which led to him going to jail", in reference to Toni Yengeni's defrauding parliament.

The ANC majority government claim that they understand freedom because they fought for it, but the issue is not about who fought for freedom, it is about the role of media in society. Currently that role is defined in part as the watchdogs of society. When government, one of the primary institutions which media are socially responsible for watching, are allowed to pick and choose what information is to be made available to the public then what role is left for the media to serve?

**G**IVEN THAT IT has been suggested that the media tribunal has now been in discussion since the ANC Polokwane conference in 2007, the question arises as to why it has only been formally imposed just over a month after the end of The Soccer World Cup. Why not earlier? Even better why not while foreign tourists were in our country?

Is it perhaps that government didn't want to taint their iconic imagery of Nelson Mandela casting the first ever democratic vote signifying freedom, which included with it transformation of all forms of media and special provision for Freedom of Speech, so that previous mistakes to impose censorship would not be repeated? I suppose that's a better image to keep than having foreigners discussing that 16 years of official press freedom is now, almost over.



*By Adam Meikle*

**T**HE DURBAN INTERNATIONAL Film Festival (DIFF) is the premier film festival held primarily at the University of KwaZulu-Natal which screens international heavyweights and local films to the public. Running from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July to the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, this year the festival screened an array of diverse films, with a particular focus on Swedish film. The festival also provided workshops such as *FilmMart*, a programme for up and coming filmmakers. The aim of DIFF is to expose the public to films resonating with meaning and social context. DIFF offers a chance for students and the public to immerse themselves in the language of film.

DIFF had a strong focus on Swedish film, especially the work of filmmaker Ingmar Bergman. Bergman was an internationally renowned Swedish director, writer and producer of film and stage. Much of his work was screened at the festival to eager audiences. Bergman, with a career spanning from 1941 to 2003, was known for producing films that explored the human condition, examining the tragedy that befalls people through humour and emotion. Themes in his work varied from exposing patriarchal society and its effect on women, to issues of faith and God which dominated his later work. Bergman's most famous film entitled *Smiles of a Summer Night* (1955) peered into the life of a middle-aged Swedish lawyer who becomes entangled in affairs and tragedies, captured by Bergman with great humour and understanding.

On the local front, one film stood out in the competition features on show. *A Small Town Called Descent* depicted the events of a xenophobic attack and its aftermath in a small town in South Africa, filmed in the style of a Hollywood cop-drama. The film tells the story of three Scorpion agents investigating an outbreak of xenophobia and an attack on two Zimbabwean brothers, one killed and the other assaulted by rioters. *A Small Town Called Descent* utilised the genre conventions of the Hollywood cop-drama, exploiting them to create a story rife with political animosity and a genuine emotional core.

Overall, the Durban Film Festival is a successful event offering the best of international and local film. The future of the festival is bright and as it grows in popularity so does its roster of films which can be shown to the public.



Photo: Luthando Ngema

*Basking in the sun: Verona, Miliswa, Wandile, Roanne, Tamryn and Phume thawing out*

# Extreme Education

THE CLEAR LACK of our camping experience epitomised itself in the oversized blankets, extra pillows and enormous suitcases that lay sprawled outside Professor Tomaselli's home in Westville. A boundless chaos reigned in this orderly leafy haven in which we were preparing to leave for dust, extreme temperatures and vast, scarcely populated plains.

**By Roanne Peters**

This was the start of the 2010 CCMS research trip to the Kalahari. This year's trip consisted of an all-female component of the honours class. We were privileged to have had the company of two research affiliates, Stasja Koot from the Netherlands and Julie Grant from Scotland, as well as troop leader Professor Tomaselli and Visual Anthropology lecturer Dr Nhamo Mhiripiri.

We set off bundled in our warmest winter woollies ready to conquer the icy cold of the Northern Cape. "Apprehensive" and "fearful" were the main student emotions on the 12-hour drive. What if we weren't ready for hands-on research? What if spending all day and night with experienced academics shattered the little tiny slice of academic self-confidence which three years of undergrad study had provided us? What if we freeze, starve, or worse, can't charge our cell phones? These feelings quickly dissipated on arrival at Kimberley. We were here to learn, and experience, that is all. The first day saw us at a seminar at the Wildebeest Kuil Rock Art Centre where presentations were made by

8 PhD students from CCMS, the SASI (South African San Institute) directors and other speakers linked to the development of the

Northern Cape. We were also lucky enough to meet David Morris, a renowned archaeologist, who led us on a tour to Drie Kops Eiland, a "secret" site that contained rock engravings dating back over 2000 years. To us CCMS students, we were yet to make a link between the artwork, the museum tours and our purpose as Visual Anthropology students. This was Prof. Tomaselli's ingenious way of teaching us fieldwork. We were actively learning about the Bushmen through the process of ethnography. On many an occasion we had progressive debates about our day, and then sat alone or together in silence, this is what Prof later informed us was called the process of reflexivity, a process which helps one become a more holistic researcher. Ok, so we weren't just lazing about, semi-dumbfounded, we were experiencing theory in practice. Thank goodness!

These teaching methods were debated around the campfire in the safety of our 'boma' in the bushcamp at Witdraai. Video diaries were made that documented our experience, our thoughts as well as our uninformed debates about what it means to be a Bushman. We were in the midst of academics who valued our fresh ideas, laughed at our perceptions, but continued to share their invaluable knowledge on the true meaning of research with us. The freezing nights often erupted into shrieks of laughter, punctuated by chattering teeth and the sound of an ever-boiling kettle, as we all bonded over what can only be seen as an amazing experience.

In those two weeks we were educated by experiencing the 'self' and 'other' in the most memorably comprehensive ethnographic exercise which our CCMS 'family' embarks on annually. And not for getting that by the end we were all really experienced and hardy camper!

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