



Cross Cultural Communication in Redevelopment: A Cape Town Case Study

Communication in Upgrading of the Informal Settlement of Monwabisi Park through the Indlovu Project

Executive Summary

An Interactive Qualifying Project submitted to the faculty of Worcester Polytechnic Institute in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Science

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Introduction

Communication is a crucial part of the redevelopment process, especially when the redevelopment process begins with the community.

This allows for a collaboration between the community, experts in respective fields, and us as students to establish a redevelopment plan that satisfies everyone's needs. Current informal settlement upgrading in South Africa has followed a pattern of demolishing existing shacks and replacing them with a pre-fabricated housing solution that was developed without community input.

These solutions are ineffective because much of the housing is left vacant and the sense of community, a valuable part of their culture, is lost. To change this ineffective cycle, the Indlovu Project is working to involve the community in the ecologically friendly development occurring in Monwabisi Park. In order to be effective, this process has a need for communication among WPI

teams, their sponsors, and the community.

Working with the six co-researchers proved to be a success, but learning to communicate across cultural and language barriers was a challenge. At the beginning of our work with the co-researchers, ideas were difficult to communicate. Silence was a common response to questions in the initial stages of our research. As trust developed and the co-researchers became more comfortable speaking consistently in English, communication increased.

Understanding and adapting to the nature of meetings and to the cultural and social behavior in Monwabisi Park was strenuous for both WPI students and the community. This was eased by continual work with the co-researchers, since we both learner the best means to communicate not only with each other, but with the community as a whole.

The goals of our project were to:

- Begin a flow of communication throughout the process of redevelopment
- Understand how information about the redevelopment process should be shared with the community to include them
- Establish a capacity of local residents to share their goals for redevelopment

- Develop a co-researcher program with members of the community to build trust and increase interaction with the community while exchanging knowledge.

Through working toward these goals, we examined the difficulties of cross cultural communication and the social implications of redevelopment. The coresearchers worked with us in meetings, surveys and interviews to gain the community's opinion on redevelopment as well as to gather demographic information. These activities offered them a creative outlet through charette style planning, and a television show. We found the co-researcher program to be a crucial part of every team's work and extremely successful. By first working with the co-researchers and establishing trust, we were able to expand our communication to include more of the community. We learned that people were very willing to discuss their hopes for Monwabisi Park, and



A charrette with the co-researchers, WPI students and members of the



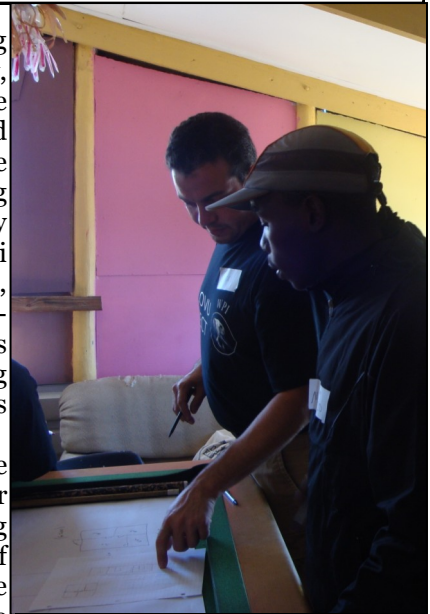
Co-researchers prepare for a day of surveying and interviewing.



Reviewing the interview session about job opportunities with the co-researchers.

embraced the idea of expressing themselves through a TV show, an interview or a forum. Future students, potential sponsors, and other interested parties will be able to use this program, along with our interview and survey data, to learn about Monwabisi Park before arrival. Once there, the co-researchers will be a valuable resource; their capabilities in surveying and interviewing could be expanded to the needs of those future developers.

This report discusses the evolution of the co-researcher program from its beginning stages to a successful mode of communication, analyzing the process we took to identify the most successful means of cross cultural communication.



Working one-on-one on the details of an alterative housing design.

Co-Researchers: Establishment

The establishment of a successful co-researcher program was a process that evolved as WPI students and co-researchers from Monwabisi Park mutually learned about the projects and each other's cultures, and developed logistics for a program that was new to everyone involved.

The co-researcher program was planned as a means for the WPI teams to obtain valuable information from the community process. The program was set up by the Communications team, in conjunction with the Shaster Foundation, who arranged six of the VPUU trained community members to work specifically with the WPI project teams. The co-researchers themselves were responsible for different needs of the WPI teams. The different responsibilities involved providing guidance, helping in the interviewing process, working on gathering survey information from different parts



All members directly involved in the co-researcher program. Marco Angulo (center), Amanda Jenkins (right), and Matthew Perrone (left) were the WPI students who organized the co-researcher program alongside Buyiswa Tonono (center).

of the informal settlement, as well as translating whenever necessary. It was important that the co-researchers effectively communicated the intentions and apolitical nature of our projects. They also explained that the effort would not propagate immediately, but rather laid the framework for a cohesive redevelopment plan.

Three of the co-researchers during the planning of the day's activities. (Left) Thobisa, Nodumo, and Anele enjoying the co-researcher experience. (Right)



Six community members involved in the co-researcher program.

Accomplishments of the Communication Program

- Establishing trust and recognition within the community
- Traveling safely through the community
- Soliciting the views of the community through surveys and interviews
- Translating from English to Xhosa
- Sharing stories informally
- Documenting the steps taken in the current redevelopment process
- Transferring skills

Tours And Surveys

WPI teams made use of the co-researchers in different ways for obtaining information about the informal settlement. Two such methods included taking guided tours within Monwabisi Park, and conducting surveys that encompassed the inquiries various teams had.

Tours

The co-researchers provided an opportunity for the WPI teams to tour through the park in search of the existing conditions within the community. They provided the guidance necessary for knowing what parts of the informal settlements to go through in order to gather the desired information.

The tours were the best means to establish the existing conditions of the park. This data was necessary in shaping the goals of each team. The overall goal of this communication process was to be able to achieve a

mutual level of trust with the co-researchers.

There were numerous challenges faced with the guided tours. The first included clearly communicating what the teams wanted to learn and observe on the tours. Other challenges were found in addressing miscommunications and conceptual questions, both which needed to be approached in a more indirect fashion.

It was useful to plan with the co-researchers the activities for the day and then split into touring groups that would go to the different areas in the park. This showed the rich potential of the co-researchers, as well as introduced us to the flexibility and improvisational nature of the research process we were embarking on.

Surveys

In order to gather as much data as possible for all of the WPI teams, we made use of the co-researchers by obtaining demographic data of the informal settlement through surveys.

We wanted to have updated



Groups of WPI students on tours guided by the co-researchers.

demographic data representative of Monwabisi Park for the immediate use of the WPI teams and for later use of other entities involved in the redevelopment process.

The problematic aspects of the survey can be grouped as either difficulties formulating the questions and layout, as well as communicating the questions to the co-researchers. There were many questions to be asked, but, in interest of scale, distribution and quality, a shorter survey was opted for, leaving out questions for particular groups. The layout needed to balance an easy-to-use interface with clear objectives, as well as the need for more quantitative, rather than qualitative, questions. Familiarizing the co-researchers with the survey took time, but once the idea and the process was communicated successfully, they were able to capture a very large amount of information in a short period of time.

As the problems cropped up, we saw the importance of organization and clear questions in a tight, concise layout. The potential for the information we gathered could be useful to establish statistics in question, many of which we had not found in research. The need for data entry was also seen, as the 380 survey completed needed to be captured and statistics extracted in an easily replicated way.



The Mapping Team utilized surveying to document various types of pathways. From the top down, a road (capable of carrying a vehicle), a largely traveled footpath, a normal footpath, and a smaller path between houses. (Right)



WPI teams meeting with the co-researchers to make plans for the activities they wanted to accomplish during the day.

Personal Interviews

The need for interviews came from the idea that the community had a voice that needed to be heard, and mass conducted surveys did not include the personal element, or capture the spirit of the people of Monwabisi Park.

The interview process began as a way to express the views of the community in a more personal fashion compared to the overarching view that the survey provided. At first, individual teams would travel with co-researchers to inquire about problems in their area specific to their work. Short, factual answers were recorded, given that

they did not require a creative response, yet they allowed for detailed information to be collected in a personal context.

The in depth interview process evolved from this, with a member of the communications team and two co-researchers traveling to peoples homes. There they would explain the purpose of the interview in a

mixture of English and Xhosa, then conducted the interview, asking them about their lives and finishing with taking pictures of the interviewee and important things in their lives. This provided a look at peoples life stories; their reasons for moving to Monwabisi Park, where they came from, and how they felt about living in Monwabisi Park. These written life histories, combined with the photographs, gave powerful images of life in Monwabisi Park. By having the co-researchers take the lead with the digital cameras, it allowed us to gain their insight, and allowed them to increase their technical skills.

Since the photographs added much to these personal stories, the idea of using video was introduced. Although we did not know how this would be perceived by the community, we discussed it with the co-researchers before visiting residents of Monwabisi Park in their homes. We found that people greatly enjoyed being interviewed on video, and that it was more effective to tape a conversation than to transcribe it in English while it was being told to the co-researchers in Xhosa. This way, none of the stories would be lost, and the elements of body language and vocal expression could be captured.

At first, WPI students from the Communications Team organized and filmed the interviews, while the co-researchers asked questions or translated



Yolisile getting experience behind the camera before heading out to examine the various shabeens.

from English to Xhosa. After a few interviews conducted like this, the co-researchers began experimenting with operating the video cameras themselves, as well as setting up shots and formulating questions. The transfer of the filming skills was gradual, as the co-researchers took turns operating the camera and asking the interview questions. Eventually, they began to conduct the interviews independently of the WPI students.



A bricklayer's family, living in C section, explaining important aspects of their life in Monwabisi Park to one of the co-researchers in a videotaped interview.

Life Story

Nosipho

Nosipho has lived in Monwabisi Park since she moved there in 2000 to live with her mother. She currently lives with her siblings and their children, and her house is set up so that each family has a room, and they share the common areas such as the living room and kitchen. Usually she works one day a week and earns about 50 rand, which is not enough money to feed her family. Nosipho likes living in Monwabisi Park because of the feeling of community and sense of family among her neighbors, but wishes she could have electricity and better toilet systems. Below is a picture of Nosipho and her daughter in their family's shack.



A priest and soup kitchen worker pose for a picture after an interview in the church that doubles as a soup kitchen in C section of Monwabisi Park.

EndloviniTV: The Production

The production of EndloviniTV is the culmination of the entire process of working within the community. The skill exchange that happened with the technology involved was also important because it marked the complete hand-off of all aspects of the process. The coresearchers were able to choose the topics themselves, formulate questions to ask, operate the cameras and coordinate each other on the “set” of the Youth Centre. From this, three episodes have been filmed and put on DVD.

While the idea of a TV show came from internal

ideas, the use of community television in redevelopment has been approached and used before, many efforts being seen in rural, low income situations. The opportunity to develop such a capacity in Monwabisi Park fulfils several goals. This effort is an ideal way in which the community

has an outlet to share their opinions, express their concerns, and voice their insights to, potentially, the rest of the Monwabisi Park community. This avenue for community discussion is a valuable instrument in the redevelopment process, as the topics, chosen by the members of the community, are an insight that an outside researcher cannot

gather with the clarity that it can in this fashion.

The use of the film captured has immediate research benefits in terms of data acquisition and gauging community feelings, but has exponentially more in terms of community involvement and representation in the redevelopment project as a whole, strengthening the effort.

	<i>Episode 1: Community Safety; Awareness & Needs</i>	<i>Episode 2: Crime; Personal Instances in MWP</i>	<i>Episode 3: Indlovu Centre Fire Documentary</i>
Date Filmed	November 20th, 2008	November 25th, 2008	December 1st-December 5th
Guests Interviewed	Gernikhayk Somashini, Phumlani Yeye, Lizo Shebusukie, Olwethu Salukazan	Siyabonga, Yolosile, Nodumo, Thobisa	Various members of the community volunteering in the area around the Indlovu Centre
Host/Interviewer	Nodumo	Yolosile, Nodumo	Nodumo
Videographers	Yolosile, Siyabonga	Anele	Anele, Thobisa, Nodumo
Synopsis	With the VPUU training, the four community members selected from the charette were asked to discuss the role of the neighborhood watch, safety in the community, and their ideas in improving the situation. Run in Xhosa, with a short English summary to end.	Continuing with the subject of safety, we asked the co-researchers of specific instances of crime in the community. Thobisa’s home was broken into that previous night, Yolosile was accosted waiting for the bus, and Siybonga walked into a morning hold up. Run in Xhosa.	The destruction of the Indlovu Centre buildings was rapid, but not as fast as the community response to clearing and assisting in rebuilding shacks in the area. Run in Xhosa, the three female co-researchers traveled about the site, asking anyone who would offer to talk to be interviewed, the first in-field production.
Production Notes	See Appendix	See Appendix	See Appendix



Top, Middle: While the co-researchers were primarily responsible for setup. Layout design, and the actual course of the interview, WPI students still supported the effort and gave help in starter questions and overall supervision for the first episodes. **Bottom:** Over the shoulder of Siyabonga, one of two co-researchers filming the first EndloviniTV episode, targeting safety and the neighborhood watch.

A chart showing the current TV shows that have been filmed to date, with further detail and elaboration to be found in their respective dedicated pages further on.

Indlovu Centre Fire Documentary

This episode takes place in the area after the fire that destroyed the four Indlovu Project buildings, and consists of various interviews. The unique aspect of this episode is that there was no WPI intervention whatsoever. After the fire occurred, Nodumo took up her camera and started videoing, and enlisted the help of Anele and Thobisa in order to assist in some of the more formal interview setup.

This capacity for on-site, readily-available documentation leads to film that is invaluable for research, and, if proper sustainability is achieved in post-production and dissemination, could be used by the community and shaped into a regular community broadcast.

This, however, is proof that not only has capacity been built to do this, but the co-researchers acknowledge the value and importance of the need to capture the situation in a way that they could not previously. The quick response, without being told, caught the emotion right in the first moments of cleanup and rebuild, something that we, as outside researchers, could not have documented.

Various pictures taken about twelve hours after the start of the fire that claimed the four Indlovu Centre buildings, as well as approximately twenty other edifices. Despite the tragic loss, people were contributing their time and effort into the cleanup and rebuilding process, working day and night. Students were able to assist, from shoveling ash to unloading timber, as well as share in the true sense of community that was present.



Working And Researching With Community

The ability to research in the community is the framework for all teams ability to gather data from the community. By starting with the VPUU training pool, preparation for working with our research group in English was started. A mindset was developed around increasing the safety of the community, focusing on the taking a stand to assist the community. Working with the co-researchers, a select group of these trainees, allowed us to start more in-depth, valuable research. The research capability increased as we spent more time with the co-researchers, progressing with surveying, interviewing, and EndloviniTV. With this progression, the amount of information communicated from one party to another grew, as well as the reach of our project work into the community, as seen in the table below.

VPUU Security Training

What:
VPUU training pro-gram for 50 English-speaking residents of Monwabisi Park, teaching them the skills of being part of the neighbor-hood watch.

Why:
The preliminary y training made possible the co-research program, as well as to plant the mindset of community involvement, in specific the nature of the community watch.

Co-Researcher Program

What:
Program based on the Security Training Program, by having six of the fifty trained to act as translators, guides, and chief consultants.

Why:
The WPI teams planned to have successful interaction with the community, in order to take into account their needs and wants into their designs, with the co-researchers enabling a bridge to any barriers present.

Surveys

What:
Surveys were per-formed solely by the co-researchers in order to pro-vide with basic demographic data over a large scale area, namely Monwabisi Park.

Why:
The overall demographics data of the informal settle-ment is useful for future redevelopment entities in-volved by providing with a base to plan for and work upon, as well as can be transformed into projected statistics.

Interviews

What:
Personal interviews with residents were performed by the Communications Team, alongside the co-researchers, who provided a sense of who to speak to and translation when needed.

Why:
The ability of broad-casting to the world the voice of the community, which also showed the community members the value of their individual voice and in-sights for the redevelop-ment process.

EndloviniTV

What:
The evolution of using video recording in the inter-viewing process, End-loviniTV is a group forum that takes the form of a TV talk show, progressing into an entirely self-sufficient process, using interest found through surveys for new guests.

Why:
The TV show aspect is the culmination of both our skill exchange and the opportunity to spread the community's voice.

Fire Documentary

What:
The third episode of End-loviniTV, this documentary comprised of interviews with community members during the clean up and re-building occurring after the Fire that destroyed the Indlovu Centre buildings

Why:
The Fire Documentary is a key proving point of our work; eight weeks prior, this response of using video to capture a crucial event in the community would not have occurred.



These pictures represent the various phases of research we progressed through, showing the need for a well organized, well established co-researcher program.

•For more information about accessing the full project report, Envisioning Endlovini: Options for Redevelopment in Monwabisi Park, see www.wpi.edu/Pubs/Faculty/jsj.html.•