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# ISIVIVANE, FREEDOM PARK: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMEMORATION, MEANING AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

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## ABSTRACT

At the dawn of democracy in 1994, the nation was seeking a new identity and for many South Africans it was to be an identity based on their African culture and tradition. Politicians were seeking ways to commemorate those who had lost their lives in conflicts leading up to the first democratic elections when the African National Congress (ANC) came into power. In attempting to achieve this, the Department of Arts and Culture initiated several legacy and heritage projects, including the *Isivivane*, a memorial place at Freedom Park in the City of Tshwane. This article determines the effectiveness of landscape design in communicating the intent and meaning of commemorative places in a multicultural post-apartheid society. In this article, the *Isivivane* is presented as a case study and the research survey has been used to gauge the visitors' experience and perception of the *Isivivane*. Based on the results of a quantitative questionnaire, underpinned by theories rooted in phenomenological interpretation

and landscape narrative, the article confirms that peoples' experience and perception of the *Isivivane* are influenced by its design and that its landscape features are significant in evoking a response that enabled visitors to identify with the place and assign individual and collective meaning to it. The argument is supported by current theories of commemoration and meaning derived through landscape design. The implications of the study are useful and can potentially open doors for further studies that delve deeper into an understanding of the contribution that landscape design makes in the conceptualisation of commemorative places in a pluralistic and politically charged South Africa.

Keywords: Landscape design, memorials, commemoration, Freedom Park, post-apartheid South Africa, *Isivivane*

## ABSTRAK

Met die aanvang van demokrasie in 1994, het die volk gestreef na 'n nuwe identiteit en vir baie moes dit 'n identiteit wees gebaseer op hul Afrika-kultuur en -tradisies. Politici het ook maniere gesoek om die te herdenk wat hul lewens tydens konflikte in die aanloop tot die eerste demokratiese verkiesings, waarna die ANC aan bewind gekom het, verloor het. In die strewe om dit te bereik, het die Departement van Kuns en Kultuur verskeie nalatenskap- en erfenisprojekte geïnisieer, insluitend die *Isivivane*, 'n gedenkteken by Freedom Park in die Stad Tshwane. Die doel van hierdie artikel is om die effektiwiteit van landskapontwerp te bepaal om die bedoeling en betekenis van sulke herdenkingsplekke in 'n multikulturele, post-apartheid Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing oor te dra. In die artikel word die *Isivivane* aangebied as 'n gevallestudie en 'n empiriese data-opname is gebruik om die besoekers se ervarings en persepsies van *Isivivane* te bepaal. Gebaseer op die bevindings van die studie bestaande uit 'n kwantitatiewe vraelys, ondersteun deur teorieë gewortel in fenomenologiese vertolking en landskapnarratiewe, bevestig die artikel dat mense se ervaring en persepsie van die *Isivivane* beïnvloed word deur die ontwerp en kenmerke van die landskap en dat laasgenoemde betekenisvol is by die ontlokking van 'n reaksie wat besoekers met die plek laat identifiseer en individuele en kollektiewe betekenis daaraan laat toeken. Die argument word ondersteun deur huidige teorieë oor herdenking en betekenis wat afgelei kan word deur landskapontwerp. Die implikasies van die studie is nuttig en kan moontlik deure oopmaak vir verdere studies wat dieper delf in 'n begrip van die bydrae wat landskapontwerp lewer in die konseptualisering van herdenkingsplekke in 'n pluralistiese en politiegelaaide Suid-Afrika.

Slutelwoorde: Landskapontwerp, gedenktekens, herdenking, Freedom Park, post-apartheid Suid-Afrika, *Isivivane*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Prior to 1994, in the vast majority of South African landscape designs, the value and meaning of public places had been seriously neglected and had no meaning for most of the population. However, post-1994, the nation was in flux (Barnard & Young, 2009: 6), and the value of public space was debated as to its function, meaning, and relevance in South Africa. This led to "the awareness that public projects were vitally important and could be employed in the service of engendering forms of national identity, resulting in politically motivated legacy projects" (Barnard & Young, 2009: 6).

The designed public landscapes and the commissions that followed began to take on a significant role in attempting to be socially, culturally and

environmentally responsive. Some of these places such as new provincial legislature buildings and their landscapes were intended to become icons of cultural expression in the new South Africa. “Slowly, the scene was set in the years after 1994, for the role of landscape architecture, and its application in design to take on a new significance as it grappled [with] these issues” (Barnard & Young, 2009: 6). Within this formative context, the idea of a so-called ‘Freedom Park’ was first mentioned by the then President Nelson Mandela when he stated: “[W]e shall have a people’s shrine, a Freedom Park, where we shall honour with all the dignity they deserve, those who endured pain so we should experience the joy of freedom”.<sup>1</sup> Soon thereafter, Freedom Park in the City of Tshwane was conceived as a monumental scheme that was to symbolise a reconciled nation. In 2003, the then President Thabo Mbeki stated that the Freedom Park “Legacy Project is the most ambitious heritage project to be undertaken by the new democratic government ... an ambitious and noble task” (Noble, 2011: 213).

In 2000, co-author G. Young was commissioned to be part of the team of designers to design a place that takes its cues from African culture, namely Freedom Park, a monumental South African government project to be located on Salvokop, immediately south of Pretoria’s CBD.

In the past decade, many papers<sup>2</sup> and books have been written about Freedom Park and other post-apartheid heritage projects and commemorative spaces. Whilst being understood within the context of “the post-colonial policy of erecting new monuments in opposition to old colonial and apartheid” (Jacobs, 2014: ii), these studies deal primarily with the political authenticity, national identity and social overtones of the projects. A study, on which this article is based, turned away from the often “messy issues of nation-building, national identity, healing and reconciliation and the social discourses associated with Post-Apartheid legacy projects” (Young, 2019: 20). Instead, it focused on the effectiveness or otherwise of designed landscape elements specifically at *Isivivane*, Freedom Park, to evoke the meaning of place. The issue is not whether the meaning is ‘authentic’ in its expression, but to simply understand whether or not *Isivivane*’s features were effective in enabling individuals to unpack the set of beliefs and values embodied in its design<sup>3</sup> and, hence, its intended meaning, and to ultimately know what meaning individuals have attached

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1 Stated in a speech on 27 April 1999 at the Freedom Day celebrations in Umtata (South African Government Information Website, 1999).

2 Jacobs’ (2014) meta-analysis consolidates some of the critique by referring to the writings of Marschall (2006; 2008; 2010), Mare (2006; 2007) and Labuschagne (2012), among others.

3 Nordberg-Schulz (1985: 13, quoted in Noble, 2011: 4) suggests that “public building embodies a set of beliefs or values, it ought to appear as an ‘explanation,’ which makes the common world visible”.

to its aesthetic, through their “first-person”<sup>4</sup> reading thereof. In order to understand whether experience and perception of the influences of landscape design features (places) can allow people to identify with the place and consequently attach meaning to it, it was important for this study to focus only on one aspect of Freedom Park, that is, *Isivivane* (a place for ‘cleansing and healing’).

Young’s (2019) study explored the relationship between commemoration, meaning, and landscape design, with the main purpose to investigate the effectiveness of landscape architecture in communicating the intent and meaning of a commemorative place such as Freedom Park, *Isivivane*, in post-apartheid South Africa.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to understand the landscape design concepts used in this article, it is important to introduce the theories used to describe the concepts of commemoration, meaning, and landscape.

### 2.1 Commemoration, memory and identity

Commemoration, memory, and identity are fundamental concerns of human existence. The terms have been discussed in numerous scholarly media over many years, but “the relationship between issues of commemoration and identity, on the one hand, and gardens and landscape design, on the other hand, have not yet been investigated in the same thorough and comprehensive manner” (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 2001: 3). In South Africa, gardens and designed landscapes have served many purposes from public parks, leisure activities, and infrastructure to the demonstration of power, wealth and image, the latter specifically for the ‘adornment’ of office parks that proliferated in the 1980s. Gardens have also played “commemorative roles in the process of identity formation at different times and for different cultures” (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 2001: 3). This application has, however, not been widespread, as memorials have mostly been conceived with architectural elements as the central feature, such as the Voortrekker- (Pretoria) and Taal (Paarl) monuments, or during colonial times when figurative sculptures proliferated. More recently, places such as the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg and the yet-to-be-completed Sarah Baartman Remembrance Centre, near Hankey in the Eastern Cape, have incorporated landscape design as an element in their conceptualisation.

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4 “The central structure of an experience is its intentionality, its being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object. An experience is directed toward an object by virtue of its content or meaning (which represents the object) together with appropriate enabling conditions” (Smith, 2018: online).

In his discussion on the constructs of memory and identity, Wolschke-Bulmahn (2001: 2) argues that commemoration is closely related to memory and that “[i]dentity and memory are not stable and objective things but representations or constructions of [a particular take on] reality”. For example, South Africans share the same history of the nation, but this does not necessarily mean that they have the same identity or agree with the interpretation of that history. The way in which members of a particular group identify depends on “their interpretation of history, their ideas about the future, and their political, moral and other ideals” (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 2001: 2). Identity and memory, therefore, relate to specific interests such as class, gender, or the political agenda of any given ruling political party. According to Gillis (1994: 3), these interests ultimately “determine what is remembered (or forgotten), by whom and for what end”. Wolschke-Bulmahn (2001: 2) finds that identity is perhaps inconceivable “without the remembrance and commemoration of history, however much such remembrance may distort historical events and facts”. Thus, the conflation of these terms suggests that they are mutually dependent on each other, since the core meaning of individual or group identity is “sustained by remembering and what is remembered and is defined by assumed identity” (Gillis, 1994: 3).

The search for group identity and the need for places of commemoration in post-apartheid South Africa gained traction with the Legacy Projects, which sought to redress history (TRC, 2002) and to reflect an ‘African’ identity, which, it was hoped, would be shared by all South Africans. Jackson (1980: 92) confirms this notion by stating that “every new revolutionary social order, anxious to establish its image and acquire public support, produces many commemorative monuments and symbols and public celebrations” (Wolschke-Bulmahn, 2001: 3).

Whilst landscape architects may be well placed to design commemorative places, the elusiveness of objectivity in memorial design can be an issue in multicultural societies where content is often contested, specifically as it pertains to the search for a uniquely African ‘identity’, or universal South African identity in post-apartheid South Africa. Albertyn (2009: 172) addresses this issue when he suggests that, in the national liberation struggle, tribal and racial identities were strongly resisted in favour of a South African identity, which emphasised that “[B]lack South Africans were citizens of South Africa and not tribal subjects tied to ‘homelands’”. Prinsloo (2012: 141) adds that “Africanness involves a palimpsest approach where the project is not to deconstruct and de-layer the different gestalts of identity to discover the ‘original’, but rather the approach is to understand identity as being ‘dynamically constructed and fluid’ at any point in time and place and that ‘identities are marked by a multiplicity of subject positions’”.

Thinking of identity in this way is important, because no one identity could be expressed at *Isivivane*. South Africa is a multicultural society and the design narrative at *Isivivane* was, by implication, to be 'open'. When considering the relationship between commemoration and identity in the application of landscape design to memorial places, it is clear that political issues will always be at the forefront of the debate. Wolschke-Bulmahn (2001: 4) asks: "Who are the social, political, ethnic, or other groups that 'own' history, who have the power to interpret it and to determine the ways to commemorate it?"

A description of the processes involved in the case study sheds some light on these questions. Ultimately, the debate moves to the intended meaning of the place and the effect that is to be created. This is the challenge, as it is not possible to accurately predict a visitor's response to a place, yet Wolschke-Bulmahn (2001: 4) inquires "can landscape design facilitate a common experience, ... or is the visitor's reaction and perception of the place defined solely by his or her predisposition alone?"

## 2.2 Place and design

People perceive places holistically through their senses, recollection, and imagination to ultimately make sense of the place or experience its Genius Loci (Norberg-Schulz, 1980). To sense or to know the place involves an emotional interaction between people and the place. Yet what makes up place and how do people identify with it? For Relph (1976), there are three integrated aspects: its physical setting; its human activities and events that take place there, and the individual and group meanings that arise from their experience and reason for being there. The unique quality of place, therefore, lies in its "power to order and focus human intentions, experiences, and actions spatially" (Relph, in Seamon & Sowers, 2008: 45). Reinforcing these concepts and to safeguard memories of the place, Pallasmaa (2009: 35) suggests that its design "must slow down and focus [on] the experience of the place".

When considering the design of a commemorative place, it is important to bear in mind the factors that make it memorable. As noted earlier, these factors relate to peoples' memories and the vibrancy that the sense of place evokes as they experience the place, along with the associations they bring to it. Relph (1976, cited in Wattchow, 2013: 90-91) suggests that the distinctive characteristic of how a place is experienced is that of *insideness*. He elaborates by explaining that to be inside a place is akin to feeling some kind of attachment with it, and that, when you are there, there is a sense of being welcomed home. This suggests that, when experiencing a good place, it will feel familiar, safe, and comfortable.

Wattchow (2013: 91) believes that for a person to truly experience a place and its 'sense' requires that "[s/he] suspend[s] [her/his] belief in several cultural ideas and ideals that [s/he] hold[s] dear". Thus, to develop a reciprocal relationship with a place requires a person to actively engage with it, with the knowledge that it already is innately meaningful. The responsibility shifts to the participant who must not merely view it, but also see into and appreciate the essential elements of its identity. This ties in with Relph's concept of insideness, which demands a willingness of the participant to be open to the significance of a place; to be able to feel it, and to know and respect its symbols. Experiencing a place in this manner will ultimately lead to a person being able to identify with it (Relph, 1976: 54), and allows for the bonds that arise between a person and a place to be rich and powerful. Knowing this, the responsibility shifts to designers to consider a place quite differently (Wattchow, 2013: 91).

Therefore, in recognising the importance of 'essential elements' in good place-making, how do designers embed memories such that they are also clearly understood by those who engage with the place? Lyndon (2009: 64) advocates that these essential elements can be "held in the mind" to allow for places to gain significance. It is the act of vivid recall that dwells in the mind of individuals. When these elements are incorporated into the design, shared conceptions are developed (Lyndon, 2009: 64). These also reinforce a unified or common understanding of the place. Lyndon (2009: 65) suggests that "[g]ood places are structured so that they attract and hold memories; they are sticky – or perhaps you would rather say magnetic ... The difficulty often lies in the conflict between professional doctrine regarding the way things should be made, and the experience of places that people commonly enjoy."

Schröder (2013: 2) contends that in the "creation of places of remembrance, landscape architects have a responsibility to history. More than anything, however, they are faced with the task of making remembrance possible in the here and now." He is clear on the responsibility of designers to ensure an equitable approach to the design of memorials, and challenges landscape architects in this regard. He mentions that, while the design of a commemorative place is "always an individual process", it should strive to ensure that more than one opinion or perception is expressed. The design "through its expression in space" should attempt to give "history intersubjective validity, to allow it to be accepted, not least and precisely because an objective historiography is not possible" (Schröder, 2013: 2).<sup>5</sup>

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5 In order to gain the knowledge and a variety of opinions during the conceptualisation process, this approach was adopted by the FPT who invited the design team to be part of focus-group workshops (with the youth, traditional healers, traditional leaders, women, war veterans, and so on) where this knowledge was used to guide the design process.

Lyndon (2009: 80) suggests that the commemorative landscape must also offer choice and create features that users can connect to their own lives. The importance, in this instance, is that the designer determines what these features might be through active participation with potential users. However, the designer should also incorporate universal or archetypal representation, thus not negating a participant's understanding or interpretation of the place. By designing in this manner, the place can offer a wide variety of choices (and interpretations) and not be subjected to a singular pattern of use and sequencing of space predetermined by the designer. The designed landscape would thus offer a variety of associations and interpretations (Lyndon, 2009: 80). Pallasmaa (2009: 34) suggests that the [landscape] architect's role "is to establish frames of perception and horizons of understanding", which sensitise participants to the place, and become the "projection screen of remembrance and emotion".

Supporting this understanding, Wasserman (2002: 195) argues that good design should juxtapose elements in revealing ways and that many of the forms should be universally recognisable. For example, water used to symbolise renewal, healing, reflection, and contemplation, thus allowing for both a common and an individual interpretation of the place. Potteiger and Purinton (1998: 15) refer to this concept as "opening".

### 2.3 Landscape narrative

Potteiger and Purinton (1998: ix) argue from the premise that "narrative is a fundamental way people shape and make sense of experience and landscapes". They advocate that the story can link time, experience, and memory to the more tangible, physical aspects of a place, because "stories sequence and configure experience of place into meaningful relationships". Potteiger & Purinton (2002: 136) explain the concept of an open narrative:

"To link the practices of making landscapes to narrative practices requires an expanded notion of text, of the role of readers [of the landscape] in producing meaning, as well as recognition of landscape as a spatial narrative shaped by ongoing processes and multiple authors. Design practice derived from understanding these conditions forms 'open narratives,' as opposed to the current trend for highly scripted and controlled narratives".

To achieve this, landscape narratives are produced within three inter-related realms:

- *"The story realm* – which emphasizes the designer's intentions to create meaning within the structures of the story being expressed in the design

- *The contextual/intertextual realm* – in which the design emphasis is on the role of users, community or memory in making the landscape narrative and
- *The realm of discourse* – which requires attention to whose story is being told and to what ideologies are implicit in the telling” (Potteiger & Purinton, 2002: 137).

Supporting the place theory discussed earlier and the idea behind open narratives, Potteiger and Purinton (2002: 43) emphasise that “meaning in landscape narratives can only be derived by removing the designer as the sole creator of meaning and bestowing that purpose on the person experiencing the place”. This combination of user-interpretation and use of symbolic landscape elements leads to the ‘opening’ of the narrative, the opposite of which is a closed narrative that effectively seeks to eliminate diverse voices and a misreading of the place (Potteiger & Purinton, 2002: 143). Typically, this approach would be used in memorials placed in a Fascist context.

In a pluralistic society, it is thus important to encourage a manifold reading of landscape design and, in the case of commemorative places that have a specific message, to “retain gaps, disjunctions, ambiguities and indeterminacies as intentional aspects of the work” (Potteiger & Purinton, 2002: 143). This technique effectively “shifts the production of meaning from the author to the reader, so that the vitality of the work is created by the active engagement of many readers” (Potteiger & Purinton, 2002: 144).

But how does this come about? How do people make sense of landscapes and places? In reinforcing his ideas, Wattchow (2013: 93) suggests two ways. The first is “being present in and with a place”, and the second is through “the power of place-based stories and narratives”. Elaborating on these, he refers to Lopez (1998: 67-68), who argues that narrative is a powerful way to learn about landscapes, and that those stories make visible those ‘invisible threads’ that connect people to the place. The narrative in the landscape, through symbolic representation, is thus capable of connecting the physical landscape to the interior landscape of the person (Wattchow, 2013: 94).

The implication for the designer is not only a matter of learning how to tell stories in landscapes, but “developing a critical awareness of the processes and implications of narrative: whose story is told and what values and beliefs [exist essentially] in the telling?” (Potteiger & Purinton, 1998: 25). “Perhaps, then the most direct way to see the interplay between landscape and narrative is in places designed explicitly to tell a story” (Potteiger & Purinton, 1998: 15).

## 2.4 Meaning and landscape design

It can be deduced from the discussion so far that a phenomenological perspective advocates that the meaning of place is embedded in the narrative, as expressed in metaphor or symbolism, each dependent on its context. However, when referring to the question “Must landscape mean?”, Treib (2002: 99) poses two questions: “Can a (landscape) designer help make a significant place? Yes.” and “Can a (landscape) designer design significance into the place at the time of its realisation? No, or let’s say, no longer”.

“Significance” (or meaning),<sup>6</sup> according to Treib (2002: 99-100), “condenses at the intersection of people and place, and not alone in the form the designer’s idea takes”. The design is the filter through which the visitor experiences the place, and “while this transaction between people and place is never completely symmetrical”, it can “circumscribe the range of possible reactions to a designed place” (Treib, 2002: 99-100). The implication is that the designer cannot make a place *mean*, but he can, “perhaps, stimulate reactions and emotions to that place, which fall within the desired limits of the intended (or wished for) reaction to the place” (Treib, 2002: 99-100). This, of course, reflects Pallasmaa’s (2009) thinking.

Treib (2011: 130) returns to this idea by arguing that, in multicultural societies, meaning over time can only be “constructed through a transaction between people and place – and that meaning is ultimately personal”. Elaborating on this, he suggests that, because the individual is formed by his/her culture, and that s/he interprets meaning through his/her own experience and knowledge, “meaning” is, therefore, “fluid and changes with time as well as the individual; even meanings that are lucid today become obscure in the future as a society and its symbolic systems evolve” (Treib, 2011: 131).

Raymond, Kyttä and Stedman (2017: 20) challenge this ‘long term’ perspective of the acquisition of meaning. They argue, from the perspective of Affordance Theory, that, through direct perception of a place, people create immediately perceived place meanings related to functional, social, or symbolic elements of the place, and that “meanings are assigned to places within one’s immediately perceivable environment”. Scale is, therefore, important for immediately perceived place meaning to occur; in other words, the place must be able to be perceived immediately and it must have “clear material and perceptual components” (Raymond *et al.*, 2017: 20). They conclude that “perceived meanings, ... may play a bigger role in ‘sense of place’ than we typically think. We propose that in any experience in life, a sense of place can be associated with immediately perceived place meanings.” They, however, do not eliminate the notion that place meanings

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6 Treib uses ‘significance’ and ‘meaning’ as interchangeable concepts in his essay.

are also formed “through longer-term processes of social construction” (Raymond *et al.*, 2017: 33).

Given that perception and meaning can be infused either in the short term, as is argued by Raymond *et al.* (2017), or more conventionally, over the long-term (Relph, 1976; Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Pallasmaa, 2009; Treib, 2011) and that “meaning condenses at the intersection of people and place and not alone in the form of the designer’s mind” (Treib, 2002: 100), what must designers do to create places that promote their intended meaning?

As in any art, it is the designer’s role to set out the material and to select and arrange the various elements such that they create reference points to induce a certain curiosity and familiarity of the place. However, in memorial design, the theory suggests, it is also important that these reference points are evocative and encourage users to delve further to discover the significance of the place. Olin (2011: 79) challenges designers to not be too complacent about the task at hand and to recognise the complexities inherent in landscape design:

“At the same time the close reading one enjoys with poetry can only be applied to landscape with great care and subtle examination of the myriad elements and their relationships. Landscapes are made of many diverse phenomena – visual, aural, tactile, olfactory – that may trigger the recall of things from our personal environmental history, which in turn combine with a world of information from our education and experience. For this reason, there is no question in my mind that the art of landscape design – when it is an art – is possibly the most complex and sophisticated art we possess.”

Wasserman (1998: 42) is encouraging when she advocates that landscape architecture is ideally placed to conceptualise commemorative places, because landscape architectural training typically includes rigorous studies of site history and user needs, as well as the use of the spatial organisation of materials and elements to transmit meaning. She believes that landscape architects have the appropriate credentials to “transform space into a place of significance, a place of storytelling, a place of lessons” (Wasserman, 1998: 42).

In summary, the literature review suggests that landscape design can facilitate a common experience of a place, when its form is structured to attract and hold memories that have been shaped by cultural representations that “encourage others to think of particular (or general) things, [and] to have both [a] sensory experience and discoveries of particular references” (Treib, 2011: 74). Designers of commemorative places must consider an open narrative approach that offers choices and includes elements that have universal meaning, so that visitors can also form their impressions and thoughts about the place.

### 3. THE *ISIVIVANE* CASE STUDY

Described by the Freedom Park Trust (FPT) as a Garden of Remembrance, Freedom Park was to integrate with the natural ecology of the site and include “symbolic spaces for cleansing and healing” (*Isivivane*).<sup>7</sup> In addition to being a place for “cleansing and healing”, *Isivivane* was to be a “spiritual” place, a place where the memory of those who died in the cause of freedom could be honoured (FPT, 2004a).

#### 3.1 The conceptual framework

The conceptualisation of the *Isivivane* by a consortium of architects and landscape architects<sup>8</sup> originated through consultations with advisers and experts in the field of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Their challenge was to introduce cultural sensibility through a narrative based on the abstract expression of African values, but also related to universal archetypes.

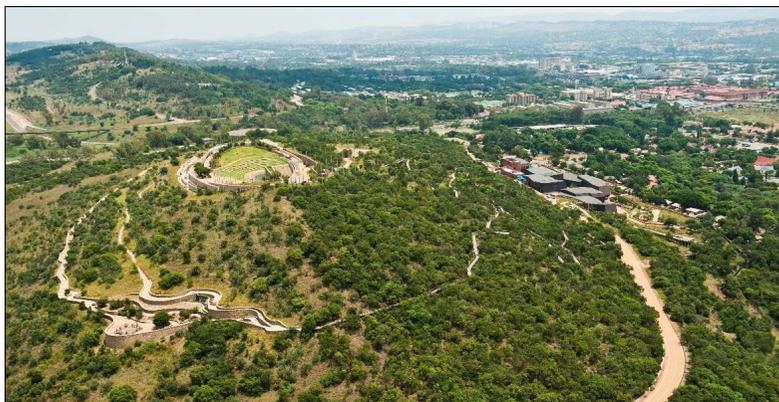


Figure 1: *Isivivane* (foreground left) located at the south-eastern side of Freedom Park on Salvokop

Source: OCA, 2015<sup>9</sup>

7 In the naming of the various places at Freedom Park, The Freedom Park Trust sought to use a variety of South Africa's 11 official languages: *Isivivane* is IsiZulu; *S'khumbuto* is IsiSwati; *//hapo* is Koisan; *Moshate* is IsiSotho; *Tiva* is Zitsonga, and *Uitspanplek* is Afrikaans (Mufamadi, 2014).

8 The team was made up of landscape architects, architects and artists who worked in conjunction with traditional healers, academics, historians and poets to conceptualise the project. The design team comprised NBGM Landscape Architects Joint Venture (Newtown Landscape Architects, Bagale Environmental, GreenInc Landscape Architects and Gallery Momo); OCA Architects (MMA Architects, Mashabane Rose Architects and GAPP Architects and Urban Designers), and Africon Consulting Engineers.

9 By permission of the Office of Collaborative Architects (OCA).

The close referencing of IKS, introduced at Freedom Park (Figure 1) with the conceptualisation of *Isivivane*, advanced the idea of an IKS-directed method to knowledge production. According to Serote (2014: 41), "*Isivivane*, which became the first element of the [Freedom] Park, ... is a direct result and manifestation of the consultative processes ... [and] the restructuring of the ruptured and fragmented African voice and belief systems based on IKS".<sup>10</sup> Serote (2014: 42) further emphasises that "[t]he design ... was informed by Harriet Ngubane's writings on the subject, and oral research done in South Africa involving the variety of IKS practitioners, ... [and] borrowed from and also innovated IKS concepts as they were adapted to the construction [of *Isivivane*]" . The FPT (2004a: 7) later suggested that this approach "led to indigenous people taking control of the process away from the pervasive interpretation of indigenous knowledge through the gaze of non-indigenous people", and that this knowledge must then be applied to its design. However, the FPT (2004a: 7) cautioned the design team: "In such [an] indigenous directed approach to knowledge production, caution should be exercised that it does not become an exercise to return to some golden age, but must be transformative towards a new future of a very different kind."

In attempting to deal with the differing perceptions and values that vary across the landscape of South African cultural identity, the FPT commissioned research and engaged with the greater South African community. These included focus-group meetings with indigenous leaders, indigenous healers, IKS artists, and historians, among others, whose opinions were solicited as to what the *Isivivane* should become. This material was filtered by the creative team and FPT to, ultimately, derive a concept believed to be responsive to, and representative of South Africans' expectations for a place of commemoration. This emphasis on indigenous knowledge, as the source of authentic African identity and meaning, had already found its way into the design and construction of the *Isivivane*, which was handed over to President Mbeki on 8 March 2004 (FPT, 2004a). Thus, *Isivivane's* form, materiality, and organising principles were based on ideas originating in traditional values, IKS, and African philosophy.

The Three-person Committee and Heritage Department's 2004 Vision for the Architectural Design Brief, written soon after the completion of *Isivivane*, bears the influence of Serote and a continued reference to African philosophy as the basis of design decisions for the remaining elements of Freedom Park. The document reinforces the emphasis on IKS and authenticity, coupling these to a binding form of nationalism (FPT, 2004b).

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### 3.2 Location and design response

The *Isivivane*'s location was all-important and the design team, along with traditional healers, artists, and historians, debated this on numerous occasions when together on site. Ultimately, it was decided to locate *Isivivane* on the south-eastern slope of Salvokop, where it “would see the sunrise throughout the year no matter what season” (Figure 1), because, according to the traditional healers, this was of critical importance from an African cultural perspective.



Figure 2: Members of the design team with IKS and traditional healer advisors discussing the location of *Isivivane*

Source: Young, 2019: 46

Professor Harriet Ngubane, who was commissioned by FPT to prepare a research paper on the concept of an African understanding of the concept of a memorial, cites examples of African custom and practice that signify types of memorialisation that are not necessarily tied exclusively to “commemorative buildings or portrayed in sculpture” (Ngubane, 2003a: 1): “A well-known structure that portrays memorial is a heap of stones along long-distance pathways known as *Isivivane*”. Ngubane mentions that burial sites were fortified with stones and a planted aloe near the top end of the graveside and the practice of burying family members within the homestead ensured that “their own identity was embedded within the homestead precincts” (Ngubane, 2003a: 1). Concerning the naming of places to capture a special aura, she states that “the names of royal residences reflect the area or aura connected with a historical event” (Ngubane, 2003a: 2). Thus, in this case,

the naming of *Isivivane* takes on special significance in African culture. Concerning Ngubane's (2003a: 1) earlier statement about African memorial places not necessarily tied to buildings, it can be argued that *Isivivane* was conceived as a landscape and not a building. Noble (2011: 137) endorses this idea when he suggests that it is "a stylised landscape – not a building".

The fundamental concept for the layout of *Isivivane* (Figure 3) is that of an African 'homestead' encompassing '*lesaka*' (the burial place and shrine) and '*lekgotla*' (the meeting place) (Serote, 2014: 42). *Lesaka* is a Setswana word, "which in African culture ... [is used to describe] a circular structure – often a cattle byre commonly found in South African villages where generation upon generation are buried" (FPT, n.d.[a]: 2).

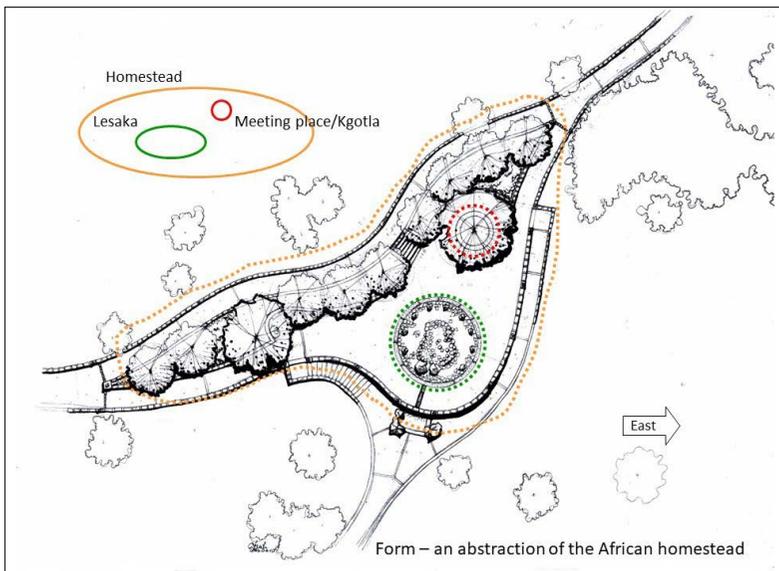


Figure 3: *Isivivane* layout is based on the primary spatial arrangement of an African homestead

Source: Young, 2011: Slide 28

The chosen location of *Isivivane* was on a steeply sloping piece of land (Figure 4). The designers chose to "fill up the slope of the terrain, bubbling it out to form an inhabitable terrace rather than cutting into the side of the hill, a move that is uncommon to indigenous practice" (Young, in Noble, 2011: 237).



Figure 4: A sketch of *Isivivane* showing its relationship to the site's topography

Source: Young, 2011: Slide 30

Symbolism was not translated literally at *Isivivane*; rather, it remained abstract, “simple and devoid of clutter”<sup>11</sup> (Young, 2011: 11). The designers thus hoped that the ensuing aesthetic would evoke emotions of reverence that could be understood crossculturally and that relate to the meaning and themes of commemoration and healing (Young, 2011: 11). The extensive use of stone, water and the limited use of indigenous plant materials form the basic design elements.

*Isivivane* is built primarily of stone and comprises nine boulders, one from each province placed near the edge of a circle. Balancing these and completing the circle are two larger boulders representing the national government and the international community. Contained within the boulders circle are stones that have come from countries outside South Africa – symbolic of combatants and exiles that fell while they sought refuge in other countries (FPT n.d.[a]). “The circular pattern is all-important. It is an archetypal symbol of unity and equality and the boulders being placed in a circle at the same level, engage in a ‘dialogue’, where none is more important than the other” (Young, 2011: 11-12). Ngubane (2003b: 5) explains the importance of stone in African culture and particularly at burial sites. She mentions that placing a stone at a place is an act of leaving something behind that unites people with the “land and its people, spirits, flora and fauna”.

A fine water spray at *lesaka* (Figure 5) raises as a mist from the stone floor to eventually envelop the boulders. “The significance of this ‘smoke’ or

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11 This directive came from Dr Serote during the first phase design review process.

*impepho*<sup>12</sup> emphasises the sanctity of the place and is also representative of the cleansing and healing process<sup>13</sup> central to helping the South African nation heal from its past.<sup>14</sup> (Young, 2011: 12). The spiritual and ancestral significance of *lesaka* is reinforced and captured in the words of a Vhenda elder in a discussion with Archbishop Dandala during a fact-finding mission to Vhenda (FPT n.d.[b]). These words, translated to English (the original is in Tshivenda), are inscribed against a stone wall at the entrance to *Isivivane*:

*I am an African*  
*If you dig the Earth in this lesaka, you will find me*  
*If you dig and dig and dig*  
*You will find me still*  
*If you dig and dig and dig*  
*And even if you use the big machines*  
*Which the human race has made*  
*To dig and dig and dig*  
*To the fathomless bottom*  
*There .... You will find me in the earth*

Near *lesaka*, also on the terrace, a single tree is located in the curve of a stone bench as counterpoint to *lesaka*. It is a *Senegalia galpinii* (*Mologa* or Monkey Thorn) symbolic of a marker for the '*lekgotla*', a place where elders would traditionally gather to discuss important tribal matters. "At *Isivivane*, the *lekgotla* is a place where relatives, friends and loved ones of the freedom fighters who fell use the space for contemplation." (Serote, 2014: 42).

The selection of plant species at *Isivivane* was intentional and referenced African cultural practices. The spiritual bond that formed between the Nguni people and the Buffalo Thorn trees inspired the choice of nine *Ziziphus mucronata* that create a soft green, vertical edge to the lower terrace at *Isivivane* (Figures 3 and 4). The concept of 'bringing the spirit home' is central

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12 *Impepho* is an isiZulu word for a plant very sacred to abaNguni and also burnt to communicate with *abangasekho* who are entities of influence or a broader term for all types of souls who have passed on, but continue to exert positive influence on the 'living' (Ntshangase, 2012: iv).

13 "At Freedom Park, the ceremonies at the *Isivivane* are linked to the question of reconciliation and symbolic reparations for the human violations of the past because it is believed that the spirits of those who died for freedom must be cleansed and healed before coming to rest at the *Isivivane*" (Noble, 2011: 235).

14 When designing *Isivivane*, Young understood the universal symbol of water to represent cleansing and healing and he included a waterfall on the lower terrace. At a later date, another waterfall was included on the upper terrace to reinforce the archetypal reference to the process of "healing the wounds of the past" (Young, 2011: 12).

to the purpose of *Isivivane*. Manqele and O'Donoghue (1994: 1-3) state that the Nguni people coped with death through an intimate and spiritual relationship connected to the Buffalo Thorn tree, and that the *hlahlankosi* (Buffalo Thorn) is one of the Nguni 'chosen' trees. They suggest that, in earlier times, when a person died far away from home (often in battle), the elders of the family would send a party to "fetch the spirit". Branches from the tree were used in this ceremony. The party would carry a branch and, at the spot where the person had died, would call out the name of the dead person and announce that they had come to take his spirit home. Significant to the purpose of *Isivivane*, Manqele and O'Donoghue (1994: 5) further explain that "the practice of bringing the spirit home is still often observed when people have died far from home ... and their bodies cannot be found."



Figure 5: *Lesaka*, a resting place covered in mist symbolising *impepho*

Source: Young, 2019: 51

Completing the main landscape features of *Isivivane* are two waterfalls (Figure 6) designed into the stone-packed walls near *lesaka* and beneath the Buffalo Thorn trees immediately above the spiral path. Water flows over a trough and down stone pitched walls into shallow pools below to create an ambiance that the designers suggest may remind the visitor that, in this place, "the spirit flows and cleanses like water" (Young, 2011: 15).

A still bowl of water is carved into the top of a large quartzite boulder placed near the western exit of *Isivivane*. This functions as a basin in which visitors can wash their hands after visiting and paying homage at *Isivivane*.



Figure 6: Upper waterfall at the *Isivivane*

Source: Young, 2019: 52

### 3.3 Reflection

*Isivivane* was designed around an IKS-informed place-based narrative; beginning with *locating* and *location*, through to its design as ‘a place of burial’ and memorial. The symbolic elements and cultural values behind *Isivivane*’s conceptual narrative, which were used to portray its meaning, were derived from the FPT’s engagement with various focus groups and commissioned research. There was no structured brief from the client; rather, the conceptual underpinnings were passed to the design team, who had to interpret these and create, through the designed response, “frames of perception and horizons of understanding” (Pallasmaa, 2009: 43).

In the context of post-apartheid South Africa and the telling of this uniquely South African story, the designers sought to anticipate the audience’s reactions, perceptions, and experiences. In so doing, they hoped that the landscape design at *Isivivane*, based primarily on narrative techniques, would become visible, tangible, and palpable, giving form to an experience that aesthetically, emotionally, and spiritually engages them. The designers also hoped that the place would become an effective crosscultural catalyst, enabling visitors to discover and know the meaning behind the place.

While narrative is a fundamental way whereby people shape and make sense of their experience of a landscape (Potteiger & Purinton, 2002), the question still begs: Can a visitor’s reaction to, and perception of *Isivivane* be fostered through its built elements, in order to facilitate a common experience?, and: Is *Isivivane* a place that is responsive to, and representative of South Africans’ expectations for a place of commemoration?

The case study and the theory neither provide verifiable comment about these statements nor confirm whether these sentiments would ring true with visitors to *Isivivane* (Figure 7). An empirical survey was carried out to better understand how visitors experience, perceive, and attach meaning to *Isivivane*, and which landscape elements contributed to a better understanding thereof.



Figure 7: A visitor paying her respects at *lesaka*, *Isivivane*

Source: Young, 2019: 53

## 4. RESEARCH SURVEY

### 4.1 Research design

The study analysed user perceptions and the effect specific design elements had on their reading of *Isivivane* relative to its discourse, as described in the case study.

A quantitative research design was adopted, as this type of design allows for the use of structured questionnaire surveys (Creswell, 2014). In this survey, the data on how people comprehend and experience *Isivivane*, together with the significance and meaning of the place as perceived, was analysed using descriptive analysis on respondents' profile, reasons for visiting, experience, and building design elements used in the study area. This technique summarises data in an understandable way, by using frequencies and percentages (Satake, 2016: 663).

## 4.2 Sampling technique

As they randomly arrived at Freedom Park, visitors to *Isivivane* were the target population of the survey. Using nonprobability convenience sampling, visitors, upon entering Freedom Park, were asked by staff and/or the research assistants whether they would like to take part in the survey. This is a method where there is no way of forecasting, estimating, or guaranteeing that each element in the population will be represented in the sample (Leedy, 1989: 152). Nonprobability convenience sampling was conducive to the situation at Freedom Park, as it would represent the typical cross-section of people attending Freedom Park. This sampling method was chosen, as it reflects the profile of visitors to the park and provides a first-person, physical experience of the place. There was no selection process. Participation was voluntary and it was left to the individual to decide whether s/he wished to complete the questionnaire.

## 4.3 Data collection

Based on the visitors' first-person experience, the data were collected from 144 participants during an on-site survey between July and October 2015. The questionnaire survey consisted of four sections. Section A on the participants' bio-demographic profile obtained information on their country of origin, province, location type, race and educational level. Section B set eight tick-box questions on the reasons for visiting *Isivivane*. Section C contained two open-ended and nine closed-ended 5-point Likert-scale items on 'experience'. Participants' level of agreement was rated to show their overall experience with visiting *Isivivane*. Section D set four tick-box questions, one open-ended and one closed-ended 5-point Likert scale question on design features. These questions were an attempt to understand which design features could be vividly recalled after participants experienced *Isivivane*, and, subsequently, to determine which of these elements were most effective/powerful in this regard. To assist participants' cross-reference to the questionnaire, a graphic highlighting the main designed features of *Isivivane* was included (Figure 8).

The questionnaire briefly introduced the participants to the researcher and the reasons for carrying out the study. Ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria's Ethics Committee was given for the study and questionnaire. Freedom Park also gave written approval for the questionnaire to be distributed and the study to proceed.

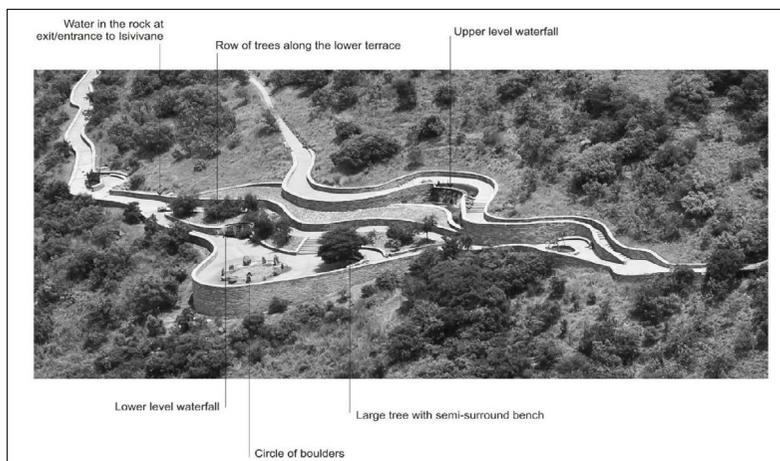


Figure 8: Layout of *Isivivane* used to help participants understand the various landscape elements being referred to in the questionnaire

Source: Young, 2019: 122

## 4.4 Data analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24 was used to measure each question in terms of validity (which takes into account the percentage of people who answered the question and does not take no response into this account), or missing answers to obtain the total number of returned questionnaires, namely 144. This data was then further analysed in terms of frequency, percentage, valid percentage, and cumulative percentage. For purposes of analysis, the 5-point Likert scale questions that measured 'experience' ranged from 'Strongly agree' to 'Don't know' or, 'Extremely powerful' to 'It made no impression at all'. It is important to note that only the single frequencies and valid percentage of those who answered the questions were captured and reported to analyse results for all the tick-box and Likert-type questions. Responses from the open-ended questions on 'experience' were reduced and tabulated to main themes. This included the landscape setting; the cultural/spiritual nature of the place, and the presence of a tour guide to help interpret the place. Responses from the open-ended question on 'design features' were reduced and tabulated to main themes. This included visual, cultural, emotional, and social features.

## 4.5 Limitations of the survey

One of the authors was intimately involved with the design of *Isivivane*, which could have led to a bias in the study. To address this, a quantitative

research design was adopted to effectively remove the researcher from the empirical data collection process. Another limitation may have been the length of the questionnaire and the logistics of having to complete it at *Isivivane*, or elsewhere in Freedom Park before the respondent left the site. Many participants were attending Freedom Park as part of a field trip, and thus had limited time in which to complete the questionnaire before moving on to another aspect of the park. This could have led to the hasty completion of the questionnaire with not too much reflective cognisance taken by the respondent, specifically for the open questions.

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1 Bio-demographics of participants

Table 1: Profile of participants

<i>Demographic</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>N = 144</i>
Age	10-20 years	27	20	Valid 138 Missing 6
	21-30 years	73	58	
	31-50 years	32	23	
	51-70 years	6	4	
Educational level	No formal schooling	1	1	Valid 135 Missing 9
	Grade 7-11	11	8	
	Matriculation	35	26	
	Diploma/Certificate	9	7	
	Degree	39	29	
	Postgraduate degree	37	27	
	Other	3	2	
Non-South Africans' origin	Africa	41	77	Valid 53 Missing 91
	Europe	6	11	
	America	5	9	
	Asia	1	2	
South Africans' province	Limpopo	18	15	Valid 120 Missing 24
	Mpumalanga	19	16	
	Gauteng	74	62	
	North West	2	2	
	Western Cape	2	2	
	Free State	1	1	
	Eastern Cape	1	1	
	Kwazulu-Natal	3	3	
Race	African/Black	83	61	Valid 137 Missing 7
	Asian	1	1	
	Coloured	1	1	
	Indian	4	3	
	White	48	35	

Table 1 shows that the vast majority of the participants (78%) are young, well-educated individuals aged between 10 and 30 years. This suggests that many school and university groups take field trips to Freedom Park regularly. Of the participants, 61% classified themselves as Black Africans and 35% as White; 29% had a Bachelor's degree; 27% had a postgraduate degree, and 26% had completed their Grade 12 certificate. The vast majority of the participants came from Gauteng Province (62%), which stands to reason as Freedom Park is located in this province. Participants who stated that they live outside South Africa came mostly from other parts of Africa (77%), 11% from Europe, and the remaining 11% from the other continents.

## 5.2 Reasons for visiting

This section's range of questions produced data to confirm whether the visitor came for purely tourist, traditional, memorial, faith-based or educational reasons (as part of a school or university group) or for reasons related to experiencing the beauty and serenity of the place. The vast majority of the participants (79%) were visiting *Isivivane* for the first time without prior knowledge of it; 57% said that they were not aware of it, or arrived with any pre-conceived prospects of what to expect, and 61% indicated that they did not expect what they would experience at *Isivivane*. This suggests that most of the participants would have entered *Isivivane* with a relatively fresh perspective.

The primary reason for visiting was given as educational, as part of a structured group outing (44% were with a school or university group). A combined 33% indicated that they visited for the beauty of the place or because it was a tourist attraction; 18% indicated that their visit centred around a memorial, ritual, political or faith-based ceremony, reflecting Freedom Park's indented purpose for *Isivivane*.

An overwhelming majority (93%) stated that they wished to return, primarily to experience the calm and serene nature of the place, to share the experience with others, or for educational reasons, respectively.

## 5.3 Experience of *Isivivane*

Table 2 shows the experience participants had on visiting *Isivivane* to understand whether the visitor identified with the space; felt a sense of familiarity or curiosity about it, and whether the place made them feel uneasy, or emotionally alienated.

Table 2: Overall experience with Isivivane

Isivivane as a place	Experience										N=144
	Don't know		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Valid N
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Will remember	5	4	3	2	5	4	61	46	58	44	132
Relate to	6	5	9	7	21	17	56	45	33	26	125
Feel safe	14	11	8	6	6	5	68	53	32	25	128
Comfortable	5	4	5	4	22	17	60	47	35	27	127
Interest and curiosity	2	1	7	5	5	4	63	49	52	40	129
Sacred associations	9	7	6	5	9	7	60	47	43	34	127
Emotionally alienated	12	9	17	13	46	36	37	29	15	12	127
Quiet and reflective	1	1	2	2	8	7	51	42	60	49	122
Intimate	7	6	4	3	18	15	61	50	33	27	123
Solemn	12	10	3	3	21	18	54	47	26	22	116
Spiritual	7	6	1	1	19	15	47	38	49	40	123
No meaning	7	6	15	13	50	42	27	23	21	18	120
Identify with	16	13	9	7	21	17	39	32	39	32	124
Heal past inequalities	18	15	6	5	21	16	51	43	24	20	120
	<i>Somewhat dissatisfied</i>		<i>Dissatisfied</i>		<i>Neutral</i>		<i>Somewhat satisfied</i>		<i>Satisfied</i>		
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Overall experience	0	0	3	3	15	12	52	43	51	42	121

Results in Table 2 show that *Isivivane* projects a strong sense of place, in which most of the participants feel safe (78%) and comfortable (74%); in other words, 90% of the participants agreed that their experience of *Isivivane* would easily be recalled long after their visit. Following on these themes, 89% of the participants indicated that *Isivivane* engaged their interest and held their curiosity, reinforcing its strong character and perhaps suggesting that participants would be open to engaging with the symbolic and cultural meanings of the place. This claim is reinforced, as 49% of the participants indicated that they did not feel alienated in any way, despite *Isivivane*'s overt cultural or spiritual symbolism.

The data also shows that *Isivivane* is a place with which the vast majority of the participants identified, both individually (71% of participants mentioned that they could relate to the space and derive meaning from its character and form, and 81% indicated that it is a place of sacred and spiritual associations) and collectively. Of the participants, 64% agreed

that *Isivivane* is a place with which all South Africans can identify. Finally, the overwhelming majority of participants (85%) indicated that they were somewhat satisfied or satisfied with *Isivivane* as a place.

When asked how they emotionally relate to, or identify with *Isivivane*, 91% specified that it was a reflective space; 78%, a spiritual place; 77%, an intimate place; 69%, a solemn place, and 41%, a pleasant place with no specific meaning. It must be noted that these answers are not mutually exclusive (that is, the occurrence of one outcome does not supersede the other), but when compared against each other, it becomes clear that the vast majority of the participants believed (given the variety of descriptive terms in the questionnaire) that *Isivivane* is a reflective place with spiritual overtones.

The open-ended question established that the landscape setting (physical characteristics) of *Isivivane* and the participants' perception that it is an inclusive place of spiritual and cultural meaning reinforced their positive experience thereof. On the other hand, fewer participants cited that not being able to associate with the cultural/spiritual nature of *Isivivane* or the physical discomfort they experienced were the reasons given for weakening their experience. Most of the participants who visited *Isivivane* in a group with a tour guide indicated that they did not find the presence of the guide an annoyance. They appreciated that the guide enabled them to delve deeper into the symbolic references found at *Isivivane*.

## 5.4 Landscape design elements of *Isivivane*

Table 3 shows the designed features to which the participants responded, in order to gain insight into how powerfully a designed feature embedded itself in their mind and, therefore, contributed most to their understanding of *Isivivane*.

Table 3 shows that 81% of the participants indicated that the circle of boulders with its mist came vividly to mind; 77%, the place in its totality; 75%, the extensive use of stone; 70%, the hand-wash bowl in the rock at the exit to *Isivivane*; 68%, the upper level waterfall; 59%, the lower level waterfall; 54%, large tree with a semi-surround bench, and 54%, the row of trees along the lower terrace. This pattern holds when participants were asked to indicate which features contributed most to their understanding of the meaning of the place. The results show that the circle of boulders with its mist (*Iesaka*) rated the highest (88%) along with the place in its totality (also 88%). The extensive use of stone also rated high (81%); the hand-wash basin, 76%; the large tree with a semi-surround bench, 72%; the row of trees along the lower terrace, 69%, and the upper waterfall, 68%, also contributed substantially to the designed intent of the place. The lower level waterfall (56%) was considered the least effective in conveying meaning.

Table 3: Design features of Isivivane

Isivivane design features	No impression						Experience						N=144			Contribute to understanding			N=144			
	F		%		F		%		F		%		F		%		F		%		Valid N	
Circle with boulders	3	3	1	1	17	15	39	35	51	46	98	88	13	12	111	111						
Lower level waterfall	7	6	9	8	29	26	43	39	22	20	61	56	47	44	108	108						
Upper level waterfall	7	7	6	6	21	20	46	44	25	24	72	68	34	32	106	106						
Large tree	6	6	8	7	29	27	36	33	30	21	80	72	31	28	111	111						
Stone	4	4	4	4	19	18	35	32	46	43	88	81	20	19	108	108						
Row of trees	7	7	14	13	29	27	36	34	21	20	69	65	38	35	107	107						
Water in rock	5	5	7	7	20	18	43	39	34	31	80	76	25	24	105	105						
Total place	5	5	4	4	15	14	48	45	34	32	96	88	13	12	106	106						

The final tick-box questions asked the respondents to describe the type of place that *Isivivane* is, based on their experience: 87% said that it was a place of remembrance; 81% indicated that it was a spiritual place; 72% suggested that it could be a place of collective significance to all South Africans, and 63% described it as a place of ritual.

In their answers to the open-ended questions, the participants emphasised the fact that they found the place to be reflective and peaceful; others suggested that the collective significance of *Isivivane* was important to all South Africans and that the guides helped them in their understanding of and meanings behind the symbolism. It is interesting to note that three participants, however, suggested that they would have liked the opportunity to interpret the place on their own; one participant suggested the following: "I think monuments are more powerful with interpretation if left open".

## 6. DISCUSSION

It must be noted that the study was not about whether participants were able to give meaning to the place. The intended significance and meaning of this memorial place are conveyed on signage boards, in FPT literature they may have collected on their way into Freedom Park, or as expressed by a guide. Neither was the study designed to delve deeply into the politically charged aspects of post-apartheid commemorative places as they relate to nation-building, healing, and national identity. Instead, the study attempted to 'unpack' the ability and effectiveness of landscape design to stimulate an emotional response to *Isivivane* and intensify the experience of the place, thus enabling visitors to interpret and identify with it through recognising personal meaning.

*Isivivane* was designed primarily by landscape architects with a directive from the FPT to create a meaningful, commemorative place that deferred directly to African symbolism and ritual as well as referenced universal archetypes with which South Africans could identify. The study addressed the issues of identity, narrative, and unified meaning by engaging with the theoretical aspects linked to landscape architecture as a process and narrative, as well as the engagement with those who experience the place.

The theory demonstrates that perceived meaning and identity, when cross-referenced to the landscape design processes, can be induced when the design of the place is derived from an appropriate combination of narrative and standard design principles. These perceptions can be immediate and contribute to a sense of place, as "cognitions are situated in relation to the environment, the individual, and one's socio-cultural context" (Raymond *et al.*, 2017: 28). From a phenomenological perspective, the designed landscape also plays a pivotal role in establishing character and

sense of place, as place meanings are derived from embedded stories and metaphors. However, these meanings are dependent on context and rooted in an evolving set of circumstances (Patterson, 1998, in Raymond *et al.*, 2017: 17) tied to the relationship between individuals and the lived experience of the places they visit. The phenomenology of the place is, therefore, closely intertwined with the identity of an individual and the value s/he attributes to a landscape, resulting from his/her connection to that place through these experiences.

This realisation and the theory suggest that landscape architecture is ideally suited to creating places where feelings and emotions can be evoked through the creation of what Pallasmaa (2009: 43) suggests are "frames of perception and horizons of understanding". These perceptual lenses sensitise the user to the intended meaning of the place. Meaning cannot be created through the physical landscape alone. Meaning and identity can, however, emerge when symbolic representations are provided to address the relationship between peoples' values and their culture or ritual of commemoration.

The case study shows that the design was driven by knowledge derived from the interpretation of traditional and cultural practices gained through a community participation process carried out in the early stages of the conceptualisation process. Place can be derived from the notion of 'perceptual lenses' and is, therefore, an abstract concept that evolves as a complex aspect of the daily encounters people have with the world in which they engage. To best describe a place, one needs to use "phenomenological methods which proceed from experiences rather than concepts" (Relph, 2018: 2). Landscape narrative is essential to making commemorative landscapes, as it configures cultural symbolism and meaning; the concept of 'opening' in landscape narrative holds the greatest potential for a unified meaning of place to emerge from the wide-ranging aspects of landscape design.

The survey results confirm that *Isivivane* is a quality place to which people can easily relate without any feelings of discomfort or concerns for their safety. They also indicate that people's experience was successfully informed by immediate perceptions relating to *Isivivane*'s landscape features, the activities that take place there, and the inferred meanings embedded in the place. The findings suggest that *Isivivane* is a place where a crosscultural, unified understanding behind its meaning has emerged. The findings also show that *Isivivane* in its totality (in other words, not one feature stood out) contributes most powerfully to a strong sense of place and identity, thus enabling visitors to enjoy the place, understand its symbolic representations, and ultimately make sense of its meaning, both individually and collectively.

When integrating the theoretical aspects linked to landscape design, with a detailed description of *Isivivane* and the processes that brought it into being, as well as the study survey findings, the narrative that emerges suggests

that *Isivivane* is an important and meaningful place for many South Africans. The process of its realisation can be traced back to its conceptualisation when engagement with various focus groups provided pertinent cultural and symbolic information to the design team. The team was then able to create a place where those symbolic and spiritual references were incorporated into the landscape features of *Isivivane*. This created a situation where the project's narrative was in tune with the characteristics of the place and the people who visit it. *Isivivane* appears to function on an intellectual, emotional, and spiritual level and is understood as a place of reflection, commemoration, and collective meaning.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has clarified the role that landscape design plays in elucidating the meaning and significance of commemorative sites in post-apartheid South Africa. It supplements an understanding of the relationship between the concepts of commemoration, identity, and landscape design. While it did not intentionally focus on the relationship of a group or 'African' identity as they relate to commemorative places in South Africa, the study found that a cross section of society could understand and relate to the inferred meaning of *Isivivane*'s various landscape elements and, in so doing, enabled people to attribute an individual and a collective meaning to the place.

Despite some aspects of Freedom Park being fraught with political issues as to its purpose and significance and its overt focus on African values, the study clearly shows that, by inserting sacred African stories into a public open space, their meanings have had a positive impact on most peoples' perception and reaction to the place.

The study confirmed that *Isivivane*'s features create a strong sense of place, which effectively serves its intended emotional, spiritual, and communal functions. Although many reflect a specific African cultural perspective or set of values, they can be understood in universal terms.

It can be deduced that *Isivivane* is an important post-apartheid South African commemorative place that successfully functions as a place for memory; a place for mourning; a place for reflection and healing; a place for ceremony; a place that engenders collective identity; a safe and comfortable place, and a place of aesthetic beauty.

The study offers unique insights into the profession of landscape architecture in terms of commemorative places. It is recommended that further research into the relationship of national identity, nation-building, and landscape design and the power relations associated with commemorative places in other post-apartheid projects be considered.

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