

VANSA: 2010 Reasons of living in a small town Project "UP and Down"

Venues: Gauteng (Bekkeersdal) and Western Cape (Masipumelele)

1. Introduction:

The research project initiated was done in two weeks (From 1st to 7th November in Bekkeersdal/Gauteng and from 15th to 21st November in Masipumelele/Western Cape) with the participation of members of communities, the age group varied between 19 and 35 year old, all youth from the near environment, black predominantly. And the research project overview was much positive compared to the enthusiasm and commitment of each participant and facilitators.

2. Concept:

The project aims to create an experience of participation somewhere between sport and artistic site-specific interventions. Steve Bandoma and Maurice Mbikayi aim to build two soccer pitches, one in **Gauteng and one in the Western Cape. Playing with the metaphor of the 'level playing field', they will be** traditional soccer fields with a difference: one will be built on a hill and the other in a valley with the fields conforming to the shape of the landscape. The project intends to foster dialogue between foreign nationals living in the town and local residents through soccer matches on these pitches.

UP and Down is one of the diverse projects supported and initiated by the Visual Art Network in South Africa (VANSA). UP and DOWN is runned by Steve Bandoma and Myself(Maurice Mbikayi)It's actually still in its research step as we didn't yet get all funding required for its realisation.However for the research funding we got, we runned two different workshops one in Bekkeersdal-Gauteng(Down)and another one in Masipumelele-Western Cape(DOWN).

In May 2010, VANSA put out a call for proposals for the project **"Two Thousand reason to live in a small Town"** and Ten Reasons to Live in a Small Town, with a deadline for submissions in August. A series of project briefing and proposal writing workshops were held across the during the course of June and July. Please visit <http://www.vansa.co.za/2010-reasons-to-live-in-a-small-town-submission-guidelines-1/>

to find out more about the brief for the project.

For ongoing updates, insights and images related to the project posted by the artists and curators, visit: <http://www.vansa2010reasons.blogspot.com/>

3. Narrative:

As mentioned above, the workshop was realized with an amount of at least 22 participants on each side.

Bekkeersdal (Gauteng) FAZE A:



Participants in workshop at Bekkeersdal, Gauteng



Maurice Mbikayi animating the workshop at Bekkeersdal, Gauteng

The first part of the research took place in Bekkeersdal, a suburb at 45 kilometer more or less from Johannesburg. The three first days were scheduled to find community leaders, discuss with them about the concept in order to facilitate the workshop.

-The workshop:

The third day we succeed with the help of community leaders to gather a fair amount of youth from the near surrounding to attend the workshop. Facilitators (Steve Bandoma and Maurice Mbikayi) along with community leaders help to introduce the concept and facilitate the workshop. The work plan, following by **a precise explanation of concepts (VANSA's concept and goal "UP" and "DOWN")** and understanding of the involvement to our participants: How an individual can become involved in the actual project when it will be founded and realized. And that will supported with a major support of VANSA who initiated and launch the call.

The workshop was effectively filmed and well documented. And in addition, names and details of different participants can be found in the workshop lists. Therefore we ended the workshop outdoor to localize a relevant site. All participants showed an enthusiastic sense of exchange and involvement in the project. Although questions were asked about the realization of this particular concept, we sensed a determination of participants to be involved in the final project
Community leaders of Bekkeersdal were very supportive through the workshop and seemed very much keen to see the project happen. **Though, we couldn't find a hill as meant to be, likely after a long research of site identification we had an alternative of doing the "DOWN" on the unique valley find in Bekkeersdal.**



Lunch time and exchange



Participants in front of the bus around the site, Bekkeersdal, Gauteng

The fourth day was a follow up with the community assistance to confirm with the site picked. We drafted a documentation to be joined with Faze B

Masipumelele (WC) FAZE B



Steve Bandoma running the workshop, Masipumelele, WC

-The workshop:

- We schedule the workshop at 14:00, because youth going attending school in the morning. As mentioned above the workshop took place at the Community Hall. After gathering 25 participants we normally started with the introduction of facilitators and participants and went on introducing **VANSA and its goals, explained further more both concepts of "UP" and "DOWN"** and explained it properly. Photographs were taken as record. Although the enthusiasm of the participants , pertinent question were ask about the project being realistic or not and the involvement of the community in terms of the protection of what it meant to be their *"site specific work of art"*
- We ended the workshop outdoor trying to localize a site. And found couple of site which happens to be optional according to the challenge we encountered.



Maurice Mbikayi running the workshop at Masipumelele, Western Cape



Lunch time, at Masipumelele, WC

- The final steps of both faze A (Gauteng) and B (Western Cape) were perceived with more some admin and documentation and compiling a draft of the written part of the research



On bus tour / Masi



One of the suggested sites Masipumelele, WC

4. Challenges:

We encountered various pertaining challenges as we proceed with our research, challenges such as finding appropriate representatives, the venue, a fair amount of the participants (we had lots of help from the community leaders), we had to explain properly and specifically the theme and goals of our research and workshops. As the subject matter appeared to be a little conceptual for the taste of either community. And the last but not the least is funding the site specific for the actual work to be done. We planned to do the "UP" concept in Bekkeersdale and face a natural problem for the fact that there is no hill to be found nearby the area and we then found Western Cape appropriate for hill and ended up shifting concepts on either side ("UP" in Bekkeersdale and "DOWN" in Masi). Although in Masi whereas the hill is appropriate for "UP", we still have to accommodate and redefine the area properly.



Steve B. explaining again the outdoor concept at Masipumelele, WC



5. Way forward:

All participants showed a very positive attitude toward the project and were willing to continue if more opportunities were offered in terms financial support (with submission of the project to various founders) And for those who are willing to pursue and support the idea a list was drafted as a record to keep them in touch.



The site that will need to be accommodated at Masipumelele, WC

6. Design (model)

“UP” in Masipumelele



“Up” from bird eye view

- “*DOWN*” in Bekeersdale



- We implemented the research project with the collaboration and support of all VANSA staff member who tried their best to push the research forward. We were also grateful and thank all municipality authorities and NGOs as well as the all participants, for their orientations and assistances toward our demands,