

**Concluding Workshop for the Nordic Africa Institute's Documentation Project
The Documentation Initiatives on the Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa,**
held on the 26 – 27 November, 2009, University of South Africa, (UNISA), Sunny Side
Campus, Pretoria, South Africa

Workshop Report by Proscovia Svärd

In conclusion of the Nordic Documentation Project on the Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa, the Nordic Africa Institute convened a workshop in Pretoria, South Africa on the 26 – 27 November 2009. The workshop had the following objectives:

- Bringing together the different documentation initiatives and discuss ways in which they can be linked to facilitate visibility and access for researchers and other interested groups in the Nordic countries and Southern Africa.
- Identifying ways in which co-operation between Nordic universities/institutions and Southern African universities/institutions can be established to stimulate further research and to attract the interest of doctoral students in the history of the liberation movements in Southern Africa.
- Exploring and providing relevant information and suggestions for the writing of funding applications for doctoral and post-doctoral research on the history of the liberation struggles in Southern Africa and the contribution of Nordic countries to the struggle.
- Documenting and consolidating lessons learnt from the documentation and digitization initiatives in order to enhance the dissemination of information and the knowledge produced to critical constituencies in Southern Africa and the Nordic countries.

The workshop brought together Social Science Researchers working on the history of the liberation struggles, Activists, Documentalists and Policymakers from South Africa, Namibia, Kenya, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark.

The workshop started on a welcome note with a briefing on the objectives of the workshop and some practical information by Proscovia Svärd, Co-ordinator of the Nordic Documentation Project. After this, the Director of the Nordic Africa Institute, Ms. Carin Norberg gave a welcome speech to the participants. She also mentioned her involvement in the liberation struggles for the period of the five years she worked with the Swedish support for the liberation movements in Southern Africa, Zambia and Angola. She also briefed the audience on the Nordic Africa Institute's research project on **National Liberation of Southern Africa: The Role of the Nordic Countries** conducted by Tor Sellström in 1994 – 2002 which resulted into five volumes on the Swedish, Danish, Finnish and Norwegian involvement in the liberation struggles. The five volume documented the Swedish and Regional Voices. She mentioned that Iceland had also now been added to the liberation struggles documentation project through Proscovia's efforts in interviewing the Icelandic activists. These interviews can now be accessed on the Documentation Project website at: www.liberationafrica.se. She also mentioned the creation of a database with archival lists and directions that could help those seeking information to access archival materials on the liberation struggles at the different archival institutions in the Nordic countries. She also noted the support that the project has extended to other documentation initiatives like the SWAPO Party Archive and Research Centre (SPARC) and the Lució Lara Archives in Angola and the documentation of the ANC in Mozambique by Ms. Nadja Manghezi. She reiterated the need to preserve archives because of their importance in promoting social memory, harmony and providing the people with a sense of national identity. She also postulated that the investments that have been put into different documentation

initiatives to enable the world to understand the history of the Southern African liberation struggles, should also be used to address other challenges facing the region including issues of reconciliation, accountability, transparency, democracy and development.

After the Director's speech, the former Swedish Ambassador to South Africa, Mr. Anders Möllander presented the keynote speaker, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka former Deputy President of South Africa whose address was on the theme: Nordic *solidarity with the People of South Africa: Now and then*. She had been accompanied by the former South African High Commissioner to the UK Ms. Lindiwe Mabusa, who at complimented a particular part of her address. Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka's speech identified the introduction of Apartheid in 1948 as a turning point for many of those who became anti- Apartheid activists, colonization and the plight of the people of Southern Africa, the ANC and its relation with other liberation movements. She argued that the leading liberation movement in South Africa believed the struggle was dependant on three pillars: the armed struggle, mobilization of the people and mass action within South Africa and international solidarity. She mentioned that the people to people relations generated a high level of support from the Nordic governments in the 1970s. This was significant for the work of the liberation movements, the macro socio-political environment, the need to tell the story of the liberation struggles and the role of the Nordic Churches. She talked about the brotherhood between Olof Palme and Oliver Tambo which was characterized by a significant depth of honesty and openness. She concluded her speech by emphasizing the new struggles that face the world today which are; corruption, poverty, political intolerance, a partisan private sector and the need to find a common agenda for matters of national and regional interest such as universal access to quality education and basic health services

The following workshop sessions were held:

Session 1 has been summarized above and included a workshop briefing and a presentation by the Director of the Nordic Africa Institute and a keynote speech from the former Deputy President of South Africa, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka.

Session 2

Theme: The History and Narratives of the Liberation Struggles

Chair: Prof. Chris Saunders of the University of Western Cape

Tears of Courage: Five Mothers, Five Stories, One Victory by Ms. Ellen Ndeshi Namhila, University Library of Namibia.

Learning to See in New Ways by Mr. PR Dullay, Durban University of Technology, South Africa.

Looking back while moving forward by Prof. Lennart Wohlgemuth, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Oral History and the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean conflict by Dr. Sue Onslow, Cold War Centre, UK

(Presented by Dr. Anna-Mart van Wyk, Monash University, South Africa).

Discussant: Prof. Håkan Thörn.

Session 3

Theme: Challenges, Opportunities of Digitization and Issues of Access.

Chair: Ms. Ellen Namhila of the University Library

Increasing Diversity of Sources and Expanding Access: Opportunities for and Obstacles to Effective use of Digital Technologies by Mr. Bill Minter, Editor, AfricaFocus Bulletin, US

Digital preservation of Liberation Struggles archival material: DISA: Digital Innovation by Ms. Patricia C Liebetrau, DISA, South Africa.

Nothing lasts forever by Mr. Per Sandén of The Ministry of Veteran Affairs, Namibia

Discussant: Dr. Pekka Peltola

Session 4

Theme: The Liberation Struggles and the Generation of New Knowledge.

Chair: Dr. Anna-Mart van Wyk, Monash South Africa.

The Southern African liberation struggles from the Scandinavian perspective: new possibilities for research by Prof. Harri Siiskonen, University of Joensuu, Finland.

Exploring Opportunities for Research Cooperation between Nordic and Southern African University Institutions: A Perspective from the University of Pretoria by Dr. Thula Simpson, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

The use of the liberation struggles' documentation in stimulating new knowledge: International activism and change by Prof. Jonína Einarsdóttir, University of Iceland.

Discussant: Prof. Lennart Wohlgemuth.

Session 5

Theme: of The Liberation Struggles, Reconciliation and Human Rights

Chair: Dr. Thula Simpson, University of Pretoria.

Sustaining the principles of Equality, Freedom and Human Dignity in the struggle for liberation in South Africa by Ms. Thozama April, University of Fort Hare, South Africa.

The Importance of Reconciliation after conflict – the examples of South Africa and Bosnia-Herzegovina by Anders Möllander, former Swedish Ambassador to S. Africa.

The World Council of Churches against racism in South Africa ca 1960s – 1970s by Ms. Thembeke Mufamadi, Doctoral Student in the History Department, UNISA

Picking the international pieces of struggle: Finnish support to the liberation struggle in Namibia and Mozambique by Pekka Peltola, Finland.

Media Development and the Right to Free Information and Expression. Some Southern African Perspectives by Prof. Helge Rønning, Dept. of Media and Communication, University of Oslo, Norway.

Discussant: Mr. Gerald Mazarire, University of Zimbabwe

Session 6

Theme: Historical sources and Historiography of the Liberation Struggles.

Chair: Dr. Pekka Peltola

Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle Recycled: Remembering the Principles of the Struggle in Political Ways by Ms. Lene Bull, University of Roskilde, Denmark

Archives of resistance by Mr. Maamoe Mosoabuli, University of Fort Hare, South Africa.

Historians and the sources for liberation struggles in Southern Africa by Prof. Chris Saunders, University of Western Cape, South Africa.

Mystery and Machination in the Archive by Mr. Verne Harris, Nelson Mandela Foundation, South Africa.

A disjuncture between policy and practice: Accessing information in the Department of Defence Archives by Dr. Gary Baines, Dept. of History, Rhodes University.

Rescuing Zimbabwe's 'other' liberation archives by Mr. Gerald Mazarire, University of Zimbabwe.

Discussant: Ms. Thozama April, University of Fort Hare, South Africa.

Session 7

Theme: The Way Forward

Moderator: The Director of the Nordic Africa Institute, Ms. Carin Norberg.

Rapporteur: Ms. Grace Ayensu of the University of Cape Town, History Department.

The session participants were:

Prof. Harri Siiskonen, University of Joensuu, Finland

Prof. Håkan Thörn, Gothenburg University, Sweden

Prof. Helge Rønning, University of Oslo, Department of Media and Communication, Norway

Mr. Gerald Mazarire, Dept of History, University of Zimbabwe and The Zimbabwe Oral History Trust

Dr. Peter Lekgoathi Sekibakiba, History Department, Univ. of the Witwatersrand South Africa

Prof. Chris Saunders, History Dept., University of Cape Town

Ms. Carin Norberg opened the session and presented the themes to be addressed as follows:

1. Archives – the issues around the establishment of archives, their access and visibility

2. Research themes – possible research topics and an identification of the possible research areas based on the deliberations of the workshop participants.
3. Research cooperation – Institutional - including educational institutional, regional and South-North institutions.

She informed the workshop participant that since the Nordic Document Project was winding up, its website would be transferred to the Nordic Africa Institute's library where it would be used as a reference source. She also emphasized that more efforts had to be put into salvaging the archives that are still out there both in the Nordic and African countries. She mentioned that the think pieces that have been presented at the workshop will be published by the Nordic Africa Institute both on its webpage and in a book form. Prof. Chris Saunders has been contracted to do the editing of the workshop proceedings into a book. She therefore urged all those who submitted think pieces to revise and resubmit their papers as soon as possible to Prof. Saunders. Her briefing was followed by a discussion of the following themes:

The Archives

Dr. Peter L. Sekibakiba began by pointing out that the Nordic Africa Institute needs more visibility in Africa. In answer to the question “where are the archives?” he informed the audience that the South African Democracy and Education Trust (SADET) has generated hundreds of oral history interviews for the National Archives, to enhance public participation. He also pointed out that some collections such as the UDF collection are difficult to archive because of the nature of the struggle which made it difficult to document and archive; but some work has been done and the materials can be accessed at the University of the Witwatersrand. He mentioned the South African History Archives and the Wits University Archives.

Prof. Harri Siiskonen added that in Namibia, as in other countries, resources are an issue. He also argued that it is important not to exclude information about the “colonizers” as well. In addition, he emphasized the importance of continuing to include oral histories of “ordinary” people, including histories of life on the home front is of paramount importance.

Mr. Gerald Mazarire, in summation of his own presentation on Zimbabwe, reiterated that there are archives “out there” but because people have lost confidence in the national depository; the archives are being kept privately. He argued that whilst confidence needs to be restored, sustaining the archives that exist now is important.

Prof. Lennart Wohlgemuth commented that the archives “out there” need to be kept track of and that for this to happen, co-ordination was important. He added that contributions of ‘other’ research need to be included emphasizing again the need to coordinate the different kinds of research being done. He lastly stressed that the issue of access needs to be addressed.

Prof. Chris Saunders’ contribution underlined the importance of training archivists regarding the holdings in the archives because the new generation of archivists does not know what is in the archives.

Research Topics

Prof. Håkan Thörn spoke about the bias towards research focusing on anti-apartheid struggles and argued that this should be broadened to include a trans-national context of struggle histories. He also remarked on the importance of considering continuities and discontinuities of

old and contemporary liberation struggles. He argued that more interdisciplinarity was needed and observed that the Nordic participants to the conference were mostly social scientists and the African participants, historians – speaking to the possibilities of cross-disciplinarity. He also commented that a lot more research needs to be done on the role of the media.

Prof. Helge Rønning, picked up on the issue of the media and argued that in order to understand what is happening with media today with regard to electoral processes in Southern Africa, it is important to consider what happened before and after the elections. He was of the view that in order to understand these electoral processes, we need to understand what kind of media access national populations have. He also argued that bias and neutrality on coverage focus tended to be an elite issue – as the coverage often does not reach beyond the urban areas.

In response to the issue of ‘new’ areas of research to be explored, Mr. Gerald Mazarire argued that there needs to be a focus on gaps in the archives and they need to be thematically unpacked.

Mr. Bill Minter commented that the most obvious gaps in terms of digital documentation of the liberation struggles histories are South Africa – that there is a need for more capacity building. He also mentioned the need for more dialogue between people working with different national histories and a balance of the North – South inequality as well as within individual countries.

Prof. Chris Saunders offered that Aluka was a good resource that helped balance out the difference in access to resources between the North and the South.

Mr. Gerald Mazarire spoke about the Hashim Mbita initiative which collects, writes out information and disseminates it. The project is a regional initiative.

Dr. Peter L. Sekibakiba talked about the necessity of re-emphasizing transnational perspectives in new research, particularly in South Africa. He also brought up the issue of methodology and argued that the focus needs to be on the study itself. Just as there has been much discussion on oral histories, theoretical issues also need consideration. Another theme he highlighted and that he would like to see considered is the place of women in the struggles histories. He posited that the struggle histories have tended to focus on the ‘big’ men and triumphalists and that this needs to be corrected.

Ms. Carin Norberg in agreement on the importance of considering the gender dimension, mentioned Raymond Suttner’s work on masculinities within the ANC as a new approach in research.

Research Cooperation

Prof. Helge Rønning, on the topic of research cooperation argued that it should be seen from two perspectives: first, in terms of institutional cooperation, which needs funding to make it achievable; and second, peer-to-peer cooperation, which is cheaper and should be done as co-operative effort between researchers and also between graduate students. He suggested that institutional cooperation needs clear, formalized objectives in order to make it work.

Prof. Chris Saunders put forward the question “how do we know what research is being done in the Nordic countries?”

Prof. Håkan Thörn, in response, offered that interdisciplinarity was an important way to address this problem. Reiterating that the conference exemplifies (though it could go further) how social scientists like him could cooperate with researchers from other disciplines such as historians.

Ms. Patricia Liebetau added that fundraising skills could help with this, particularly for librarians and archivists.

Dr. Peter L. Sekibakiba added that language also played a role in issues of cooperation. He commented that most of the work that came out of the African countries was in English (which often excluded contributions in other languages). Beyond that, if collaboration between researchers on the African continent and those in the Nordic countries was to be efficacious, then translation needs to be considered.

Ms. Carin Norberg added that political support from national governments is also important to access transportation funding. In addition, we need to get those who control resources to understand the importance of the work being done. Beyond that, individual researchers need to communicate more; and interdisciplinarity again needs to be emphasized, particularly if history is used as a medium to understand contemporary political developments.

At the end of the deliberations, Proscovia Svärd delivered a vote of thanks to all contributors and the workshop was declared closed by the Director.