



ARTICLE

Towards an Edible Museum: Exploring Foodways as Sociomuseological Practice in a South African Township

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Abstract Museum institutions are rarely recognised for their gastronomic potential, particularly in their efforts to draw culturally diverse audiences. This article unpacks the possibility of exploring foodways through a sociomuseological practice, with the aim to facilitate cross-cultural interaction and tolerance. Following an action research methodology, this study explored the possibility of transforming a township restaurant in a marginalised community in South Africa, into an “edible museum” – a restaurant with sociomuseological aims. The results, however, indicated that the formalisation of the restaurant space in this context further exaggerated cultural difference rather than attempting its engagement towards tolerance through museological means. It is proposed that the “edible museum” concept lends itself to be envisioned as a process, rather than a physical space, through which museum professionals and educators may network with existing food communities and sites towards a sensory interpretation of cross-cultural tolerance both inside their galleries and within broader communities.

INTRODUCTION

Food and foodways are fundamental to human well-being, with the act of eating forming a common thread. Eating, understood through the notion of foodways, is implicated in complex networks of privilege and marginalisation, and communities are often considered the playing field through which these acts are mediated. Considering the orientation of sociomuseology as engaging with cultural practices towards community development, foodways presents itself as a unique subject for museological exploration.

Sociomuseology is a term given to museological practice that considers the real and potential impact of the museum on broader society, specifically in the context of local

communities. Paula Assunção dos Santos argues that sociomuseology as a movement recognises the critical importance of considering culture as a means to contributing to the dialogue of development, and calls for the central role of museology within this dialogue, towards a more sustainable and humane society (2003, 162). Given this philosophical base, sociomuseology thus considers the museum and society as inextricably linked towards the mutual development of well-being for communities, as they make meaning of the world around them. Although this approach to museology is troubling for those museums that consider their core function to remain within the realm of preserving and disseminating cultural heritage, I would propose that a sociomuseological exploration of foodways might allow these institutions an

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alternative avenue through which to experiment with community interaction which is accessible as well as necessarily multi-sensory.

This article examines the possibility of exploring foodways from a sociomuseological perspective, with the specific aim of facilitating cross-cultural tolerance and understanding through sensory means. I draw upon my research context within an ethnically marginalised, township community in Stellenbosch, South Africa, which in its post-apartheid condition presents a particularly relevant environment for attempting cross-cultural interaction. Through an action research project, this study attempted to frame the transformation of a township restaurant into an “edible museum” as sociomuseological practice, where action research is premised on a foundation of participatory inquiry, and focuses on what is considered meaningful by the stakeholders themselves (Stringer 2014, 55).

In the following sections, I firstly contextualise the study against literature and theoretical concepts that consider the intersection of foodways and museums, and the potential role of sociomuseology therein. I also briefly refer to the concepts of culinary tourism and township tourism as relevant and critical pathways for the exploratory aims of this study. I then provide some contextual background which explains the reasoning for choosing a township restaurant as platform for an “edible museum” in Kayamandi, followed by a brief explanation of the methodology followed. The findings of the study are then presented and discussed towards the development of an “edible museum” process, as opposed to a static space, that could be relevant to museum professionals interested in employing foodways towards multi-sensory learning and cross-cultural exchange within their institutions and the communities they serve.

TRACING FOODWAYS THROUGH THE MUSEUM

Foodways as engaged through museology has become of increasing interest to academics, as the diversity in voices discussing the intersection of its territories has grown beyond a traditional understanding of food as simply documented and displayed in the museum (Levent and Mihalache 2017a; Gothie 2015; Mihalache 2016, 2014). Many contemporary interpretations of food-focused topics in museums, however, continue to place emphasis on the social, material, or multisensorial experiences attached to food, without unpacking the complex political web that lies beneath the surface of this experience. This network of meanings surrounding food and its consumption, distribution and production is bound in the term foodways (see Young et al. 2015; Long 2015). Every small food-oriented action is a result of the participation in this network, whether conscious or unaware, and is a determining marker of meaning for both individuals and broader communal groups.

From a museological perspective, an interest in foodways has grown along with a more nuanced curatorial understanding of the socio-economic, political and cultural role of food in society and the potential for its representation in the museum. Generally speaking, however, the notion of food in museums has often been conflated with a material approach to food heritage specifically, which is but one avenue in the greater scheme of food studies. The emphasis on the material object as it represents meaning for cultural communities, nation states or other forms of group identity is key in this approach, within the exhibitionary context of the museum. Food heritage, however, requires a much more complex engagement with food beyond its material representation, in considering that “as

a foodstuff travels through a foodway, and an object is transformed into heritage, it is used to indicate, explicate, and replicate important ideological claims on identity, ownership, sovereignty, and value” (Di Giovine and Brulotte 2014, 3). The transformation process from object to meaning, or the travelling of foodstuff through foodway, cannot, however, be accurately represented only through its material capacity, through being seen, but rather requires a sensory interaction that engages all of the senses. This is not only true of food heritage, a subject with which museums are arguably more familiar, but of the greater dialogue around foodways and the food system, which involves questions of socio-political and economic injustice and inequality.

Many scholars have contributed convincing arguments to the need for greater sensory diversity in the approach to food and foodways in museums. Constance Classen shows how multisensorial engagement was in fact an indelible part of museum experiences in the early modern period, where interaction with food in the context of the museum collection was welcomed and accepted (2007). Although these educational practices were deemed “unscientific” from the commencement of the late modern era (Classen 2007; 907), the movement back towards multisensorial museum experiences gained traction in the late 20th century (Howes 2014; also see Levent and Pascual-Leone 2014). Nina Levent and Irina Mihalache, to this end, have recently published a collection of scholarly investigations into the developing dialogue of food (and foodways) in museology (2017a). *Food and Museums* recognises the diversity of perspectives from which its dialogue is emerging – featuring contributions from culinary historians, neuroscientists, artists and chefs. As Levent and Mihalache argue, it is “food’s flexibility to be studied from multiple perspectives –

as a subject of politics, as a form of cultural capital, as gender performance, as global traveller, or as a source of social anxiety . . . [that] facilitates its diverse uses in museum practice” (2017b, 4). There are many examples in this volume of both experimental projects and best practices where food as a subject of museological attention has triumphed and has challenged sensory conventions. One particular field of interest within this dialogue involves the modalities shared between restaurant and museum.

The restaurant has come to be understood as a specific socio-spatial phenomenon, as much as the museum. Fine in his work on restaurant kitchens recognises that the restaurant is a “social system that demands multiple – and linked – interpretations” (1996, 231). Similarly, Beriss and Sutton argue for an understanding of the restaurant as a postmodern symbol which reveals “deeper social trends” (2007, 1–3). Restaurants “form a bustling microcosm of social and symbolic processes” geared towards the construction of identity along sensory lines (2007, 4). Given the potential of the restaurant to function as a lens to gain deeper understanding of locally specific social structures, its affinity to the museum is striking. As Clintberg writes, “[t]he modern restaurant, where food and other objects are put on display and sold in immersive sensory environments, is in dynamic parallel with the design and operation of the museum” (2017, 204), as each of these spaces uses similar rhetorical strategies with their visitors.

Clintberg, like Mihalache, believes that the museum restaurant provides museum institutions with a unique opportunity to engage visitors, although noting that such engagement could be fraught with the problematics of commodifying “the embodied consumption of culture,” especially in the context of rising cosmopolitanism (Clintberg 2017, 217). Mihalache describes the museum restaurant as an

“interdisciplinary space of informal learning, where the menu and the food are multisensorial ‘lessons’ in history and culture” (2016, 319), and visitors are able to “experience the museum content through the food on their plate” (2016, 323). Moreover, she believes that “museum restaurants, if used more intentionally as interpretive spaces, can be laboratories for new methods of interpretation, some more obvious than others” (2016, 324), where a diversity of voices within and outside the museum could make collaborative meaning. Gothie echoes this view by suggesting that the typical restaurant, outside of the museum context, provides as much pedagogical potential if framed as a “food museum”:

“Food representations in museums are often relegated to contextualizing *something else* – be it the serving ware or the furniture. . . In a restaurant, [however], *real, edible* food is the focal point; the meals served are ‘artifacts’ that offer a complete sensory experience” (Gothie 2015, 399, original emphasis).

Gothie argues that it is the *edibility* of food that troubles the shared educational capacity between restaurants and museums – where restaurants operate on a business model often to the detriment of the edible culture in which it is meant to trade, “[i]n museums, food decays”, and thus plastic replicas of food objects stand in for the authentic ones, and edible foodstuffs are relegated to the museum café or restaurant (2015, 403). She proposes that a merging of these two types of institutions could realise a new sensory, educative space for engaging with foodways, “to spark conversations about the pleasures of the palate, but also about the cultural differences and power dynamics embedded in production, procurement, preparation, and consumption of the food shared at tables past, present, and future” (ibid.). Given the increasingly open definition and creative responses to what

constitutes the understanding of “food museum”, I considered how a *sociomuseological* interpretation of a restaurant-turned-museum could seek to engage with the social, political, economic and cultural complexities of foodways as experienced in a marginalised context, such as that of a South African township.

Sociomuseology has come to be understood as the progressive maturation of new museological thinking around the role of the museum in addressing social and developmental issues (Santos 2010, 8). Where the new museology movement was a new way of understanding the role of museums in society, which “emphasised the social role of museums and its interdisciplinary character, along with its new styles of expression and communication” (ICOM 2010, 55), contemporary sociomuseology framed its study as a reversal, arguing rather that society creates the conditions from which understandings of museums should function (dos Santos 2010; 8). Moutinho argues that sociomuseology is also an interdisciplinary practice, giving it the ability to draw museology into sustainable development dialogues along with other scholarly perspectives, and frame the museum as a potential platform for discussion about development (2007, 39). Sociomuseology has therefore developed as a specific evolution within new museology, from a grassroots perspective into a social movement that draws upon the strengths of a diversity of knowledge disciplines both academic and indigenous. Chagas, Santos and Glas also assert that sociomuseology should be considered a “transitory museology”, not bound to permanent states of political being but rather respondent to the fluctuating needs of societies as they change at an increasingly fast pace and across socio-, economic- and cultural-boundaries (2014, 103). Sociomuseology is thus an approach which requires a holistic, flexible and open-minded approach to society in its

complexity of differences in an effort to facilitate the creation of “new processes of empowerment” (Chagas et al. 2014, 103).

Although not specifically aligned with the sociomuseology movement, Elaine Heumann Gurian similarly argues that museums may consider mimicking other social institutions that provide a broader range of social services. This could be done in order to reframe the museum in a contemporary context where the need for attention to community well-being is emerging in a range of problematic geo-political contexts in which some communities are increasingly marginalised. Gurian ultimately advocates for museum spaces to become more akin to community centres. Through a broadening of services to a wider variety of people using the resources at their disposal and vested in the community itself, she argues, museums could transform “into something recognized by all as essential for our collective wellbeing” (Gurian 2010, 83).

Rassool and Witz have also contributed to an on-going dialogue around the social reframing of the museum, especially within the context of local, South African communities. Rassool writes that the marginalisation of community museums, both in terms of the cultural identities that they often represent, and the institutionalisation of their practice as grassroots sites of mobilisation, has in fact allowed them to rethink the boundaries of both “community” and “museum” (2006). This is especially true in the case of the District Six Museum, which he describes as a best practice example for other similar museums dedicated to preserving the memory of marginalised communities and acting as a platform for dialogue about their sustainable futures (ibid.). Rassool argues that in the South African context, community museums are tasked with a particularly complex challenge of balancing

“museumisation” with the socio-political realities of the communities they serve, which often evokes questions of weighing financial against social sustainability (2006).

Witz similarly discusses the competing interests that South African museums face in light of the post-apartheid emphasis on tourism and transformation, specifically as experienced in the township context (2006). He argues:

“Museums in postapartheid South Africa thus appear to be faced with a set of conflicting demands. They are being urged to brand themselves so as to be incorporated into a tourist package that invokes the colonial journey and at the same time are being required to discard colonial histories and reflect new national pasts in their policies, exhibitions, and collections” (Witz 2006, 110).

Witz contextualises his discussion through the development of the Lwandle Migrant Labour Museum, the only museum located in a township in the Western Cape (2006, 123). The particular context of the township prompted problematics and questions of legitimacy for the museum in its development, as it was considered irrelevant to the needs of the local community (2006, 126). Moreover, the museum, in attempting to frame itself as a township tourism destination, has evoked incongruous reactions for visitors and residents alike, as a museum does not “fit” within the narrative of the township due to its “Europeanness” (Witz 2006, 128). Witz rightly states that for South African museums, “the struggle is to ensure that they do not alienate their local communities, and, at the same time, to become part of a tourist economy where the official marketing strategy describes the country’s heritage as one of ‘European influences’ and ‘African tribes’” (2006, 130).

Given the aim of this study to explore foodways within a context which is marginalised and

through a sociomuseological practice which could attempt cross-cultural tolerance and understanding, a brief contextualisation of culinary tourism as well as South African township tourism, and its role in perpetuating or subverting cultural difference, is necessary.

FROM CULINARY TOURISM TO TOWNSHIP TOURISM

Lisa Long describes the diversity in opinion of the nature of culinary tourism among scholars to range from a domineering, colonialist or hegemonic interpretation (see Heldke 2013) to one which aestheticises foodways into an art form (2015, 445). She goes on to acknowledge that it is “[a] more optimistic interpretation [that] sees culinary tourism as a willingness of humans to experience the culinary worlds of other people, as a result of curiosity about other experiences and other ways of life” (2015, 445). Such curiosity, however, needs to be interrogated for where it originates, as “culinary tourism is also always specific, depending on who is eating, who is feeding, the cultural context of consumption, and the kinds of power relations that are produced across the table” (Molz 2007, 78).

The complexity of tasting Otherness and difference is also often interpreted only from a purely subjective perspective, to the neglect of the impact of this consumption on others. As Molz argues, it is “about playing with the cultural and bodily boundaries through which such differences are produced, challenged, and reinforced” (2007, 85), where these boundaries are often only relativised to the self. While the personal ingestion of food can be transformative, the interactions with others in this process is often ignored as contributing to this transformation, and results in a distancing between self and

Other, rather than the facilitation of intimacy through the sharing of food. Duruz similarly writes that feeling guilt and unease can be transformative toward understanding how foodways are implicated in the greater operations of power and privilege in consuming foreign foods (2004, 440). She argues that “a different kind of analytic journey – fraught, complicated, guilty – with its promise of different companions and ‘conversations’ – generous in moments of reciprocity and perceptive in acknowledging strategic uses of identity performance – is necessary” (Duruz 2004, 441). Duruz suggests, indirectly, that the spaces in which culinary tourism is enacted, including museums and restaurants, should become the platforms for complex and difficult conversations about cultural difference and tolerance thereof.

These problematic aspects of culinary tourism are particularly relevant to the context of this study, where a significant aspect of township tourism in South Africa revolves around the experience of township foodways, and the diversity of reactions this experience provokes between local residents and visitors.

South Africa’s history of racial oppression as institutionalised first through colonialism and subsequently the racial classification system of apartheid, has left deep and divisive impressions in the current landscape. Even though the country is now experiencing what would be termed a postcolonial and post-apartheid era, the legacies of oppressive governmental systems continue to affect socio-economic, political and cultural conditions. The problematic repercussions of these systems are most evident in the townships, predominantly ethnically black communities where the spatial and social legacies of apartheid have made a negative impact. Considering the understanding of townships as “communities”, according to Rassool, what was

once considered a demarcation of legislated ethnicity, has now become a contested marker of struggle and at times empowerment (Rassool 2006, 312).

Township tourism, in turn, can be described from a variety of both positive and negative perspectives with diverse objectives. According to Butler (2010, 16), township tourism has most often been investigated from two academic viewpoints that independently critique this phenomenon for its colonial voyeurism, on the one hand, and its lack of significant contribution to supposed local socio-economic development on the other. Given the argument against its genuine transformation of local community socio-economic welfare, “[t]ownship tourism is [nonetheless] often regarded as a strategy for local economic development in areas where poverty abounds and few alternative economic development options are foreseeable” (Booyens 2010, 282).

In the case of Kayamandi, the focus community for this study, tourism is more frequently quoted as a viable pathway towards local community development than as an activity that exploits the “sociality that characterizes township street life” (Bremner cited in Butler 2010, 18). More specifically, township tourism in the context of Kayamandi has also in some cases been geared towards reconciliation efforts, in an attempt to draw a wider variety of local communities from Stellenbosch to experience the cultural products offered by the township.

Due to the objective of this study to engage with a sociomuseological practice to explore foodways with the ambition of seeking cross-cultural dialogue and tolerance, the context of township tourism presented a useful avenue towards entering the Kayamandi community as an academic and outsider. Given the contested nature of township tourism, however, I was aware of the complexity of engaging

with this subject in the context of Kayamandi. While township tours can and must be critiqued on many levels, “they are nevertheless part of a larger postapartheid project of re-imagining and remaking the townships and public discourses about them” (Butler 2010, 26).

UNDERSTANDING KAYAMANDI AS GASTRONOMICAL DESTINATION

In the local isiXhosa language, *Kayamandi* translates to “my nice home” or “home sweet home”. For many residents of this township, located approximately three kilometres outside of the city centre of Stellenbosch, “home” is a relative term. With an estimated population of 40 000 (Ewert 2012, 257), but likely many more due to the variability of informal settlement, Kayamandi is a densely populated community of largely African descent. A large number of its residents originally relocated from the Eastern Cape up the coast, but many others from elsewhere in the country and continent as well, in search of employment and a better life for their families than what a rural existence could provide. Many have had to leave their families behind, often straining familial bonds and causing a distancing from indigenous community kinship, with only the promise of potential financial stability and a more “modern” life waiting in Kayamandi. The rapid growth of Kayamandi has caused enormous stress on its already meagre resources, and many of its residents live without access to electricity, running water or proper sanitation facilities. Given the large percentage of unemployed and poor people in the community, food access is a daily struggle for many. Kayamandi is nonetheless characterised by a resilient sense of community, with a rich and diverse cultural heritage (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The township of Kayamandi. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Given the potential of exploring Kayamandi's foodways through a sociomuseological approach, I attempted to gain a preliminary understanding of the commensal landscape as experienced by its residents, where commensality refers to where, how, and with whom people share their meals. From initial conversations conducted with participants active in the food system of the community, a need for public spaces in which to socialise around and with food emerged. Commensality, it seemed, is most often consigned to the sphere of the home, hindering the opportunity to socialise beyond the family table, to communicate across different socio-cultural and racial groups. From there, the possibility of an "edible museum" started to emerge.

Besides a handful of informal vendors, called *chisa nyamas* (Figure 2), selling mostly barbecued meats and other takeaway foods by the taxi rank and scattered throughout the township, only one restaurant-type venue exists in Kayamandi, which is mainly focused towards tourists. *Shebeens*, also known as taverns, offer communal spaces for gathering; however, they are sometimes associated with the societal afflictions of excessive alcohol consumption. The home thus becomes the primary site for sharing food – and on average is a space only large enough to seat a handful of people at a time. However, out of necessity a meal is shared among many more. Dining out at a restaurant is a luxury few can afford on a regular basis, and it then would additionally necessitate the taxi fare



Figure 2. *Chisa nyama* vendors by the Kayamandi taxi rank. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

to Stellenbosch central or beyond, to a space which can accommodate a big family or a group of friends.

The need for a restaurant-type space became evident, more so for its ability to gather both residents and potentially non-residents of Kayamandi in commensality than for the purposes of culinary tourism. The concept of a restaurant in the township, however “foreign,” could possibly serve as a starting point to broader interactions with the foodways of Kayamandi. In considering this concept, however, it would be necessary to critically reflect on the complex social, economic and cultural underpinnings of the restaurant space itself, as it could potentially reinforce the exclusionary distinctions that underpin the restaurant as a

“microcosm” of symbolic practices (Beriss and Sutton 2007, 4).

I recognised that a township restaurant has close affinities with and would share the same set of problematics as a township museum. As Witz (2006) cautions, the “fit” of a museum in the context of the township is problematic and requires an approach which is sensitive to the questions of legitimacy which it could provoke. Given that foodways could communicate through the shared language of the senses, however, I considered the pedagogical potential of the restaurant as a hybrid space informed by sociomuseological principles, to be a relevant and unique potential starting point. The seed of an “edible museum” could be planted in the restaurant, yet its developmental growth would

be measured in the community itself, through the cross-cultural interactions which it could prompt.

SETTING THE TABLE

Unstructured interviews were conducted with seventeen individuals from Kayamandi as an initial measure to gain a sense of the culinary landscape of the community, as well as to gather insight regarding the potential purpose and place of an action research project in answering the study aims. Reason and Bradbury propose the aim of action research to be creating knowledge that is useful in the lived or “everyday” context of people, which in turn increases the overall and holistic well-being of communities (2001, 2). A working relationship with a community-based arts organisation furnished initial introductions with the first few interviewees; whereafter a snowball sampling method (Atkinson and Flint 2001) was used to find willing participants in the action research project and the group interviews that formed its basis.

The action research project itself consisted of ten group interviews taking the form of group meetings. These meetings were intended for participants to share and test ideas and strategies, as well as feedback, as the project progressed. As researcher I facilitated each meeting and prompted discussion where needed, however, let the participants lead decision-making. Most participants in the group interviews, all residents of Kayamandi, had a background in either hospitality, catering or preparing food (whether professionally or informally), as the purpose of the action research project was to investigate the possibility of transforming an existing township restaurant space into one which could also function sociomuseologically, that is to say with the aim of contributing to the

well-being of the community of Kayamandi. Group interviews were conducted between November 2015 and March 2016, and the sample included a total of twelve participants. This sample group consisted of four female (four black), and eight male (seven black, one white) participants.

I planned the project with insights gained from the initial phase of interviews conducted with community residents with knowledge of local foodways, where it became apparent that there was a perceived need for communal gathering space similar to a restaurant in Kayamandi. In envisioning the possibility of a sociomuseological practice, the idea of a dedicated physical “museum” space where foodways could be experienced cross-culturally seemed to me an ideal solution. There was an existing tourism-focused restaurant and event space in Kayamandi that had recently ceased operation due to various strategic difficulties. Following conversations with its owner, and testing the idea with other community-based participants, the possibility arose to dedicate the action research project to the restaurant’s revival. Hence, the project was set up specifically with the purpose of re-imagining the previous space through the action research process, working with participants from Kayamandi who were knowledgeable about its foodways, as well as having some hospitality or restaurant expertise. The group commenced with weekly meetings to discuss the various aspects of the new project, which needed to be addressed and revised from its original format, to rather focus on gaining a local, Kayamandi-based audience, as well as attempting to create a space for cross-cultural interaction through museological means. Although as a museologist I had certain ideas and strategies in mind as to how this could be achieved, the purpose of the action research project was to let the participants themselves

propose solutions relevant to the local community context.

IF YOU CAN'T STAND THE HEAT, GET OUT OF THE KITCHEN

From the first few group interviews, it became apparent that there were conflicting views on who the intended audience for the restaurant should be – the focus on customers from outside Kayamandi continually came up in discussions, as well as the challenge in catering for different tastes. As one participant noted, “It’s not about people from Kayamandi. This place will be only for white people. Ten to fifteen percent of Kayamandi will come. . . . The main issue is how to get people from [Stellenbosch] town to come here.” When asked about concerns or cautions when thinking of targeting the local community from the township, one response was, “We are local, there’s no place like this, people must know they must come and spend – they can’t just sit around and watch people eating.” From his comment, I understood the participant to mean that some people may not have the financial ability to eat at the restaurant, but may still want to visit to “watch other people eat,” to participate in the social gathering without spending any money. This response seemed to indicate the potential local perception of the restaurant as expensive, and that the barrier to acceptance might take some time to overcome, as this kind of concept was foreign in the local context. The caution which Witz (2006) proposes in attempting to align a “European” space such as a museum, or in this case, a restaurant-turned-museum, within the township context became imminent.

The disparity in audiences also translated into differing opinions on the menu design, as the township market would likely prefer “modern” hamburgers and pizza, whereas those from

outside the community would want to sample some “traditional” African food. One participant said, “When we make food, I believe that, when it is black people, I’m sorry guys I must be honest, we know what we eat, if it’s ‘*boere*. . .’,¹ it’s different food that they want. If it’s English, then it’s different.” Another participant confirmed, that “[i]f you come from Cape Town or Stellenbosch town, and say ‘I want to go to Kayamandi’, you want to eat something that is not in town.” Thus it was clear that the group felt that different menus would need to be developed to cater to different audiences, as opposed to attempting to conceptualise one menu that could satisfy a diversity of tastes. For example, the menu the group suggested for customers from Kayamandi included dishes that were typically associated with “Western” or “modern” food, such as beef burgers, chips, wraps, and roast chicken. This differed from the types of dishes that were thought to appeal to tastes from outside of Kayamandi, which included “fusion” items that packaged traditional “African” tastes into cosmopolitan dishes. Cultural difference as embodied in taste was readily observed in these exercises, and affirmed what Molz and Duruz describe as strategic acts of inclusion and exclusion in the construction of cultural stereotypes based on flavours and food preferences. This was particularly evident in the conceptualisation of fusion dishes, where, as Zilkia Janer writes, “[T]he practice of fusion is not free from power relations as it establishes hierarchies between the different traditions that it merges” (2007, 396).

Although the initial intention was to continue planning and developing the new concept with weekly meetings, the time of year brought an urgency to formalise the restaurant as quickly as possible. This rationale was based on the fact that it was December, when many Kayamandi

residents received bonuses or had additional income to spend on food and drink, otherwise “we’re missing out on sales,” as one participant noted. With only the most basic logistics in place, the restaurant started trading with chicken wings and chips, using broadcasted soccer matches to encourage local attendance. During this trial period, I observed a few problems with teamwork and communication, but I decided to let the participants voice their own interpretations of the progress achieved as the trial period transpired, in accordance with action research methodology (Figure 3).

It was after the group had conducted a few trial days that one participant declared at a meeting, “This working together thing is not gonna work. We end up disrespecting each other you know?” They decided that a teamwork model was difficult given the demands placed on the group, as many were participating in addition to holding full- or part-time jobs. From this point, the group decided to have less kitchen staff, also focusing its efforts on targeting the takeaway food market in Kayamandi as a supplement to the restaurant space.

At this stage of the project, the group continued to plan its takeaway business, as well as crafting a mission and vision statement, which I facilitated, to start a process of establishing a new restaurant identity that could guide its sociomuseological activities. It was presumed amongst the group that involving different stakeholders within the community would not only be positive for financial sustainability, but could achieve social aims such as facilitating cross-cultural interaction. As one participant mentioned, “Once you try to involve them [people], definitely they’re going to start knowing about us and then they’re going to come.” As the project started to formalise into a functioning restaurant, however, I noticed that tensions

emerged that supported racial and class distinction or difference between the participants, and their interpretation of the restaurant purpose. Issues of ownership and decision-making became less democratic and resulted in feelings of disrespect that emphasised negative cultural and racial difference. The tendency towards formalisation also translated into a lack of engagement with the sensory aspects of developing the new restaurant model. Due to the urgency of attending to the operational issues, experimenting with recipes and considering the sensory and educational environment of the restaurant space itself were neglected until the operational requirements were met. There was no time to discuss these sensory issues, for example, by having a meal together as group, and meetings devolved into clinical discussions of Rands and cents, and debating the value of one piece of kitchen equipment over another. At this point, the race- and class-based group dynamics that emerged in an attempt to formalise and commercialise the restaurant were recognised as a critical inhibiting factor to the establishment of an “edible museum” in its space. The restaurant alone would not be able to form the base of a sociomuseological practice as initially proposed (Figure 4).

FINDING THE EDIBLE MUSEUM

Foodways is a complex and vast subject, entangling social, economic, cultural and political contexts, even though it speaks at its elemental level to a basic human need. Translating this complexity, through a sociomuseological voice, into the operations of a township restaurant business proved much more difficult than anticipated. It became evident following the first group interview that a local restaurant as a concept was yet unusual in the context of Kayamandi, and was met with some reservations. In



Figure 3. Inside the restaurant kitchen during the action research project. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

anticipation of developing the concept through the action research process, however, I remained positive that a community-led translation of the idea could yet transform the site into a hybrid one, to resonate with both local residents and those from outside the community simultaneously. Even though the collaborative process of the group interviews attempted integration of foodways' complexity with the daily commercial activities of the restaurant, its museological implementation was neglected when financial and logistical issues took precedence. This is not to say that this change in agenda was unnecessary or ill-conceived; it was rather a reflection of the reality of running a financially sustainable food and drinks business.

Most significantly, however, by focusing all efforts on the commercial development of the restaurant itself, the complexity and richness of the other foodways in Kayamandi disappeared from view. I had initially thought that the restaurant could operate as a hub as opposed to a

dominant player, integrating a network of foodways activity rather than packaging it into one location. The practicalities and logistics of operation, however, prevented its development as a hub, in favour of a township tourist destination. More importantly, the formalisation of the restaurant and the increasing hierarchical tendencies of its operation devolved into a lack of engagement with the sensory capacity of cross-cultural interaction that could take place in its space. Among all the discussions of menu items and debates about kitchen equipment, almost no cooking or eating took place which could form the basis of a sociomuseological practice. Moreover, where I had envisioned the restaurant as functioning as a physical platform from which a sociomuseological practice could be developed, the particular complexity of the racial and class dynamics experienced within this specific project and within the broader context did not create the necessary conditions for this to occur.



Figure 4. A few Kayamandi locals attending one of the restaurant's trial days. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Taking into account the learnings from the action research project, I revised my initial proposition of a single location-based “edible museum” platform towards one which could be visualised through a network of foodways sites in Kayamandi. This approach involves acknowledging the existing spaces in which local community members experience foodways, rather than attempting to synthesise a space which could “package” foodways into one location. In the case of Kayamandi, this means connecting with local informal food vendors such as *chisa nyamas*, *shebeen* and *spaza* shop owners, and food gardens, and creating a visualisation which could educate foodways

users, whether local or foreign, to their interconnectedness and the meaning which each of these sites holds within the greater cultural framework of the township. Korsmeyer (in Korsmeyer and Sutton 2011, 463) argues that “vision is the habitual instrument to resolve the ambiguity of taste sensations”; by visualising a network of foodways as a web of sensory experiences, an “edible museum” could also assist in pre-empting reactions to foods which may delight or offend in a cross-cultural encounter.

Practically, the concept of a network of foodways sites as a sociomuseological practice means that the sites themselves, when considered collectively and relationally, form a multi-

location “museum”. Users or “visitors” to this notional “edible museum”, by being able to perceive the network of foodways sites, and its potential sensory implications, may then consider how and to what extent they wish to interact with these sites when they enter Kayamandi. This network could be mapped and communicated either through a physical exhibitionary format for display at a museum, or other public spaces such as libraries, community centres, or even restaurants or supermarkets; it could also take on a digital format, which could additionally integrate social media reactions and suggestions in the process.² Ultimately, the movements and sensory experiences of visitors between foodways sites also become part of the museum itself, as a networked practice thrives on these mobile modalities. Hence, it is only when a visitor engages with multiple sites of foodways, and moves between them through the senses, that he or she could fully understand and appreciate the complexity of foodways, and thus of the “edible museum” of Kayamandi. It is through this bodily movement in the complexity of foodways that the visitor could ultimately achieve a transformative experience towards greater tolerance and empathy for cultures different from their own (Figure 5).

To this end, I envision the notion of an “edible museum” to be an adaptable model, taking shape as a sociomuseological practice. An “edible museum” as a practice is contextual and dependent on the complexity of each system of foodways as relevant to that context. Although a restaurant as an “edible museum” as defined in a formal, operational structure did not realise in Kayamandi, I acknowledge that in other contexts it could well possibly be achieved. Conflict Kitchen in Pittsburgh serves as example of a project that, although not considered a museum, successfully operated a functioning restaurant as part of a greater goal of

community interaction through cross-cultural exchange (see Conflict Kitchen 2017). Whether through employing action research or other methodologies that focus on inclusive research practices, an “edible museum” process could be employed by educators, specifically in museums, towards creating various creative responses to the multiple understandings generated by a complex, tolerant, and empathic engagement with foodways. The results that could emanate from these processes could include, but are not limited to, exhibitions (digital or site-specific), workshops, publications, pop-up restaurants, cafés, food trucks, artworks, and so on. However, an “edible museum” would never be defined by any one of these outputs, but would perpetually re-invent itself across its various responses, as it continuously adapts to its contextual dynamics in ascertaining the search for transformative sensory experiences across cultures.

CONCLUSION

This article has investigated foodways from a sociomuseological perspective both theoretically and practically through the example of an action research project, and thereby has contributed a novel way of approaching cross-cultural understanding and tolerance. My initial reasoning in choosing a restaurant space as sociomuseological platform had been for the benefit of its possibility to gather strangers across cultural backgrounds and races in commensal community, to experience the sensory richness of foodways. The results of the action research project made clear that a restaurant was perhaps not a suitable platform from which to practice a sociomuseological exploration of foodways in pursuit of cross-cultural tolerance and understanding, in this context. Reflection upon the learnings from the action research



Figure 5. Sharing a meal at a local *chisa nyama* vendor in Kayamandi. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

process brought to light that the negotiation of foodways and their complexity, especially in the context of culinary tourism, is a practice that is often fraught with tense and disruptive encounters (Duruz 2004). I propose that a sociomuseological network of foodways, which allows its

users to visualise its potential sensory disruptions and understand them, as mitigating adverse negative responses to such critical engagement. I suggest that if visitors to an “edible museum” are afforded the chance to prepare for sensory disruptions, they might be more

open to the social interactions and personal transformations that may result from such critical and intimate sensory experiences of foodways in Kayamandi. Moreover, I encourage other scholars and museum practitioners to consider the possibility of harnessing the cross-cultural potential of foodways in their own contexts, and to continue building on this dialogue through their own interpretation of the “edible museum” concept as sociomuseological practice. **END**

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NOTES

1. I understood the participant to be referring here to white, Afrikaans-speaking people, who are sometimes referred to as “boere” (meaning farmers) in South Africa.
2. As an experiment, I have created a temporary digital website as an example of how an “edible museum” project could be set in motion for the township of Kayamandi. This website can be accessed at <http://arcg.is/2hAXKNh>. It should be noted that this platform is an illustration of one attempt through which to approach an educational project for this context, and should not be considered an end solution. The goal, with such an intermediary platform, is to educate visitors to the point where they feel comfortable enough to visit the foodways sites in person, to engage in sensory immersion and, importantly, cross-cultural interaction – it is the inter-personal, sensory interactions that inform the “edible museum” process, where the digital platform should be considered a visualising tool used in this process.

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