Feast Your Eyes: An Exploration of Our Consumption of Whales

By Gwynne Liversage

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"The old whaling station is ship-wrecked: corrugated roofs, zinc walls flaking; most of the cataracted panes smashed; the sea clean now, the sand still tarry. [. . .] Intestines, hoses sliding about; vats bubbling; the crane-chains clattering – all that has stilled; the factory closed, but always, I think, a bad prospect."

(Livingstone, 2014:288)

Introduction

This dissertation examines the relationship between whales and humans in South Africa. The way in which whales are perceived by people to be a commodity to be "consumed", and how the nature of this consumption has changed in recent decades is explored.

The term **"**consume**"** refers here to the physical consumption of whales – their flesh and bones being used as an economic resource – as well as to the existential consumption of whales in environmental ventures, as being symbolic of threatened species and as a galvanising icon to be used to promote environmentally friendly values, particularly in business.

The various components of humans' relationship with whales – both visible and invisible – are looked at, with the starting point being the Whaling Station which operated in the Bluff suburb of Durban for more than 50 years. Once hunting had run its course in this region, "consumption" of whales took a different form; and though it seems less destructive from the whale's perspective, whale tourism generates problems of its own. Indeed, whether tourism is a force for good that is of real benefit to whales is still to be determined and the ideas explored here will hopefully contribute to that debate.

With the effects of climate change becoming more evident, it is pertinent that, as a global society, humans seek out ways to fortify ourselves against these effects, namely by building resilience against the potential hazards that are likely as a result of a warming planet. This essentially means that we must find ways to strengthen ourselves socially, economically and in our ecosystems, because hazardous occurrences are inevitably going to have to be faced. One aspect of building resilience against environmental catastrophe is to analyse current human

behaviours and historical human activities and evaluate the ways in which they have contributed to climate change.

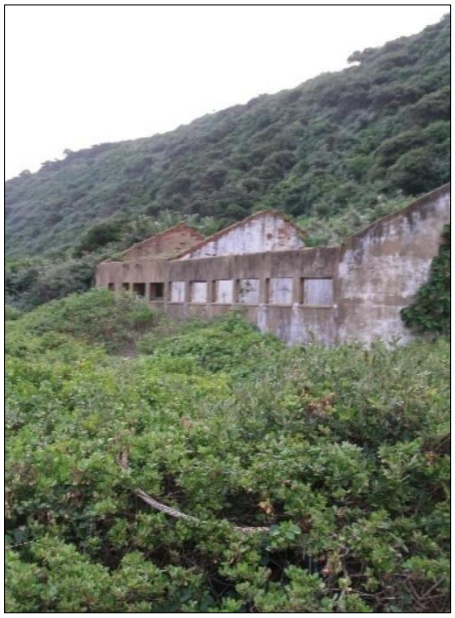

Figure 1: The skeleton of the Durban Whaling Station as it is today. (Liversage, 2017)

I spent a significant part of my childhood growing up in the Bluff area of the South Durban Basin where the old Durban Whaling Station has had a significant impact on the area's history. When exploring ideas to develop into a thesis, the image of the Whaling Station immediately came to mind. I had always viewed the decayed structure as the skeleton of a time and events that happened long before I was born and of no consequence now. To look at it through the perspective of its impact on the environment, on the dune forests that I had grown used to, and the way it had shaped the Bluff / Wentworth communities was something I had not considered before. With new eyes, I tried to imagine how all these things had been affected by the Whaling Station and the events that it was connected to.

As I began to research this topic, I read many accounts of the whale species being an icon of environmentalist movements in the 1980s (which is reflected further later in this dissertation) and a symbol for environmentalism in general (with slogans such as "Save the Whale"). This followed a steep decrease in whale populations due to whale hunting. Humanity's relationship with whales has, for centuries, been defined by a mixture of awe, terror, reverence and our increasing exploitation of whales for their meat and body fat. In the 1800s, this process grew to an industrial level with the growth of international shipping routes; the whales' situation came to a head when experts noticed a drastic decline in the second half of the twentieth century and the practice of whale hunting was ultimately banned in most areas.

Whale tourism has since become a favourable form of interacting with whales on a global scale, and South Africa is part of this growing sector. Whale tourism in this country focuses particularly on following whales as they travel along their migration routes during their mating seasons. Although the South Durban Basin is along this migration route, the local community has yet to capitalise on the tourism potential to the extent that this has been done in areas such as Hermanus in the Western Cape. Nevertheless, in recent years there has been a surge in the growth of the whale tourism industry in Durban.

Figure 2 Abandoned building within the Whaling Station property (Liversage, 2017)

Whale tourism's growth is linked to an increase in public interest, creating a profitable sector along the KwaZulu-Natal coastline. Until recently, the focus of whale watching was in areas along the country's west coast and areas such as Hermanus and Saldanha Bay. However, recently the tourism sector of eThekwini (the metropole containing Durban) has put energy into revitalising tourist activity in the South Durban Basin. The tourism sector has undergone the process of rebranding and developing through methods such as revamping natural spaces to establish whale-watching viewpoints, creating branded architecture that tourists can recognise and putting together a type of brand name for the area, such a process is ironically reminiscent of gentrified areas in New York and the acronyms they are often given (Soho: South of Houston Street, Nolita: North of Little Italy, and Tribeca: Triangle Below Canal Street.); that name is Sodurba (Southern Durban).

This new energy that has been put into the promotion of whale-watching activities around the South Durban Basin provides an opportunity to revisit the area's connection to the history of whale hunting. It potentially reveals much about the area of the South Durban Basin and what practices in the past are hidden or made invisible, and potentially influence the current local community and environment.

This dissertation explores the human impacts on the natural environment of South Durban and whether these impacts are influenced by whaling practices of the past, or even by current and increasing whale-watching activities and interactions along the Durban coast. These practices – both past and present – are all encapsulated in the spheres of consumption; consuming whales physically through the resources that we extract from them, namely blubber, oil and baleen, and consuming whales experientially through whale tourism.

Blubber is a thick, insulating fat under the whale's skin. It is removed and boiled down into a waxy oil which is an ingredient in some soaps, margarine and oil-burning lamps. The "bone" of the whale most commonly used is not technically a bone, but is baleen, a hard material present in large plates, like gigantic combs, in the mouths of some species of whales (McNamara, 2019). The baleen acts as a sieve, catching tiny organisms in sea water, which the

whale consumes as food. As baleen is tough but flexible, it could be used in a number of practical applications and it became commonly known as “whalebone” (McNamara, 2019). One of the most common uses of whalebone was in the manufacture of corsets, which fashionable women in the nineteenth century wore to compress their waistlines. One typical corset advertisement from the 1800s proudly proclaims, “Real Whalebone Only Used”. Whalebone was also used for collar stays, whips and toys (McNamara, 2019).

Baleen whales do not have teeth. But the teeth of other whales, such as the sperm whale, would have been used as ivory in products such as chess pieces, piano keys, or the handles of walking sticks. Pieces of scrimshaw, or carved whale’s teeth, would probably be the best remembered use of whale's teeth. However, the carved teeth were created to pass the time on whaling voyages and were never a mass production item. Their relative rarity is why genuine pieces of nineteenth century scrimshaw are considered to be valuable collectibles today.

Principal dissertation question

What does the recent rebranding of the Southern Durban Basin whale tourism sector reveal, or hide, about the human processes that took place (and their consequences) in the local environment?

To answer this question, a sub-set of questions are posed. These are:

- How have the long-term effects of whaling activities around the Durban Whaling Station affected the environment?

- What are the implications of Sodurba branding? Could this be the potential start of gentrification in the area?

- Were certain aspects of the community rendered invisible and, if so, has this invisibility been passed on to subsequent generations in the local community?

- Are there ways to go forward beyond the effects of whale hunting in a way that is mindful of both local indigenous communities and environmental systems?

Each of these questions is explored in the Discussion section of this paper, and hopefully this aids in our global community's journey of achieving climate resilience.

Literature review

For this dissertation, the literature that has been relied on as a framework for the research has been group into various themes in order to create specific areas of focus on a subject for which there is a vast amount of general literature. While much of this is interesting, the general literature on whales, whale hunting and the history of whaling is less pertinent to the specific research of this paper. Broadly, the areas focused on here are visual ethnographic studies; invisibility vs. visibility; and the consumption of whales.

The literature and research that do exist are important to be able to establish a foundational understanding of the dynamics of whale tourism, the environmental networks it is connected to, and to effectively research their long-term effects. This literature review examines the theme along with the additional themes of "the invisible vs. the visible", and how we "consume" whales. The scope of this review is limited to published works written in English, all focusing on different issues related to whales and hunting, with much of the literature focused on the coasts of South Africa. The period under consideration extends from the present day back to the start of the nineteenth century, when whale hunting was first introduced to this country. However, the literature is somewhat limited in explaining the current state of the ecosystems along the Bluff coastline, an important gap since it is necessary to know how the process of whale hunting has fully impacted the environment; this is something that is explored further throughout this dissertation.

Visual ethnographic studies

Sociologist Roxana Waterson explains how the use of applied visual anthropology is a tool that allows researchers to create a direct experience for the reader so that they can see features which are ordinarily invisible to us (Waterson, 2011:83). This is especially evident when looking at the impact of architectural structures and buildings. Providing visual representations of these different structures can reveal to the reader the scale of the station, the spread of the current touristic branded architecture, and the state of dilapidation of the station. Using visual media to reveal the activities and processes of whale hunting to the reader is crucial. Waterson's writings in a chapter belonging to a book entitled *Made to be Seen: Perspectives on the History of Visual Anthropology* have helped shape how the visual ethnographic study was carried out

in this paper. The chapter delves into the multifaceted relationship between visual anthropology and the physical spaces that humans inhabit.

One of the central contributions of the chapter is its exploration of how architectural spaces embody and communicate cultural values and identities. The author illustrates how architectural designs are imbued with cultural symbols, historical narratives and power dynamics. Waterson argues that the built environment serves as a "text" that can be decoded to reveal insights into societal norms, rituals and hierarchies (Waterson, 2011:82). This perspective aligns with the broader aims of visual anthropology to uncover the hidden layers of meaning present in visual representations (Waterson, 2011:83).

Additionally, the dissertation entitled *Blind Man's Bluff: Cruel Revelations Through the Study of Architectural Artefacts* by Berlein delves into the intersection of architectural artifacts, history, and the often unsettling narratives they carry (Berlein, 2018:44). Central to Berlein's exploration is the concept of "cruel revelations". The author examines how architectural artifacts can hold concealed stories of cruelty, oppression and hidden histories that challenge our conventional understanding of the built environment. Berlein highlights the potential for buildings, monuments and structures to carry narratives of colonialism, exploitation or suffering that have been marginalized or intentionally erased from official histories. This perspective underscores the importance of critically interrogating architectural artifacts to reveal the often-silenced voices and experiences that they represent.

Using visual representations in this thesis is crucial; not only do they create a personal connection between the reader and the content they are consuming, but the images can communicate more effectively the extent of the message that the author is trying to convey. Humans tend to perceive issues and information from their perspective; images are a way for writers to ensure that the reader understands the information they are receiving from the author's point of view. Additionally, certain elements and features may prove difficult to put into words; images are a way to overcome this limitation. With my research, I have incorporated the use of digital photographs which not only serve as a form of data collection but are used to add rich detail to the discussion.

Consumption of whales

An important part of this thesis was generated by the writings of Dan Wylie; specifically, his article entitled *Narrating Whales in Southern Africa*. He poses a new perspective on our relationship with whales and raises the idea that the way we have interacted with whales has mainly been through the act of "consumption". Wylie's descriptions of the exploitation of whales and his discussions around whale consumption are a grim expose of the series of events which led to whales being all but exterminated (Wylie, 2019:38). It was Wylie's framing of these activities as a form of consumption that generated the principal idea for this thesis: whales being consuming visually in whale watching activities and literally in the form of whale hunting (Wylie, 2019:37). His writings highlight how lucrative and therefore beneficial whale watching is for the South African economy and how it is developing into a major drawcard for the country's ecotourism (Wylie, 2019:37). *Narrating Whales in Southern Africa* focuses the reader's attention on this awkward entanglement of "postcolonial" tourism and the health of the ocean's ecosystems (Wylie, 2019:39), along with our need to possess and devour whales, once physically but now experientially.

Another essential reading for this thesis is a source entitled *From Whaling to Whale Watching* (Cunningham et. al., 2012), which delves into the connection between these different forms of consumption, looking specifically at themes surrounding sustainability and cultural rhetoric. The central theme of the publication is the shift from the historically destructive practice of whaling to the more environmentally conscious practice of whale watching. The authors examine this transition through a multi-dimensional lens that encompasses ecological, economic, cultural, and ethical considerations. They shed light on how changing societal values, scientific knowledge, and environmental concerns have driven this shift and have led to the growth of sustainable whale watching as a viable alternative. The authors assert that whale watching is now the new form of consuming whales that are viewed by the International Whaling Commission as a better and more "alternative use" for whales, one that ultimately promotes concern for the environment (Cunningham et. al., 2012:143).

Both these readings offer a good starting point to research the theme of whale consumption for this dissertation; they provide a basic discussion that gives a good understanding of the contested social, cultural, political and economic activities surrounding both whaling and whale watching in a way that allows us to reflect more honestly on our actions (Cunningham et. al., 2012:155-156), (Wylie, 2019:48).

Making the invisible, visible

Roxana Waterson in her chapter *Visual Anthropology & the Built Environment*, mentioned earlier when discussing visual ethnographic studies, also develops the theme of "the invisible vs. the visible". At the heart of Waterson's chapter is the exploration of the way in which architectural spaces embody cultural meanings, social dynamics and historical narratives. By analysing the built environment as a form of visual representation, Waterson bridges the gap between visual anthropology and architectural studies. She argues that architecture is not merely a functional endeavour but a complex interplay of cultural symbols, aesthetics and societal values. This perspective expands the scope of visual anthropology beyond traditional visual mediums such as photography and film to include the physical spaces humans inhabit.

Additionally, the writings of Dag Ingemar Børresen, in a chapter entitled *Three Black Labourers Did the Job of Two Whites*, raises the issue that there are seemingly little to no records of any of the Black labourers and whale hunters who worked within the African whaling industry (Børresen, 2014:127). One of the central contributions of the article is its excavation of the historical experiences of African labourers in the Norwegian whaling context. By delving into this relatively understudied aspect of labour history, the article reveals how African labourers were integrated into the industry, the roles they played, and the conditions under which they worked. This empirical focus is critical in shedding light on the broader socio-economic dynamics that characterized modern Norwegian whaling. It challenges the conventional narratives of a predominantly white Norwegian labour force, offering an alternative perspective that underscores the contributions and agency of African labourers. This perspective aligns with the broader aims of social history, which seek to uncover the often-overlooked roles played by marginalized groups in shaping historical processes. Due to the scale of the processes that were carried out at the station, there had to have been many workers. What did they do and where did they go?

While exploring the different aspects of the Whaling Station's operations, it became clearer how little is archived about the workers and labourers there; only the managers and individuals in "high-tier" positions have a written record. This reflects the way in which some employees were perceived in a particular space of the Whaling Station and this perception is connected to the theme of the invisible vs. the visible, in particular how the theme relates to the labour and is encapsulated in the article *Invisible Labour: Hidden Work in the Contemporary World* by Marion Crain. Central to the article's exploration is the concept of "invisible labour", which

refers to the unpaid, undervalued and often unacknowledged work that individuals contribute to society. The authors shed light on the ways in which this invisible labour operates across diverse contexts, from domestic households to digital platforms, and how it disproportionately affects marginalized groups, particularly women. This theme aligns with broader discussions about the hidden underpinnings of economies and societies, which often rely on unpaid contributions to function effectively. Due to the predominant number of labourers hailing from Coloured, Indian and Black backgrounds, coupled with the prevailing bias of South African historical narratives towards the perspectives of the White population, scant attention has been paid to documenting the experiences of these workers. This historical gap becomes all the more conspicuous when embarking on research. The endeavour to trace individuals from non-White backgrounds and their familial narratives proved to be an arduous task, thereby presenting an inherent constraint for this dissertation.

Ultimately, the fact that some labour has been made invisible is a significant concern, all forms of work should be given value and all individuals who work should get the benefit of decent living conditions; it is very common for there to be a bias towards certain types of work being viewed as more valuable than others (Crain et al., 2016:34). The fact that labour itself can be viewed as a commodity that promotes one's status (i.e. certain jobs are more prestigious than others) shows the materialistic focus of the labour world today, an effect that renders other forms of work invisible (Crain et al., 2016:34).

The various readings described in this section help lay a foundational understanding of the area researched. The key elements that were focused on were: invisibility vs. visibility; and consumption of whales. These readings highlight the importance of representing difficult concepts in very tangible forms of visual media and the importance of giving marginalised individuals a voice by creating space for this to happen. We can see in the writings how the consumption can take many forms and how it can influence the dynamics of human interactions with the natural world. Although all the articles offer crucial information, this is understandably limited and so it is hoped that this thesis can further explore the impact of whale hunting and whale-watching on the environment, as well as the harm in making certain aspects of these practices hidden from public view.

Conceptual framework

This conceptual framework for this dissertation will focus on three main components: climate resilience, hauntology and consumption by humans in its many forms. The relationship between these components can be regarded as encompassing the past, the present and the possible future of whales, and human behaviour relative to them. In the context of climate change, the changing nature of environmentalism and the rights of animals and their place in the world, this conceptual framework is used in order to focus on the rapidly changing nature of humans' interactions with whales and the tensions created by this.

Climate resilience

Sustainability practices have become fashionable in recent years with the reasoning behind this growing conversation around climate change and its negative impacts. We are told as a global society that humans will become extinct and civilization as we know it is predicted to have an early expiration date. If this is not the future we wish to have, we need to correct our destructive behaviour. To fortify ourselves, humans as a collective need to look at how we can strengthen our communities against oncoming catastrophes. Climate resilience is one solution for this. Resilience implies going against the flow and an act of strength, yet in the context of the climate, it requires nuance and flexibility.

Developing ways to boost resilience needs to start with an understanding of the linear economies of the past – linear meaning an economy with input and output, rather than creating a more circular system where the processes that we practice result in a complete cycle. Examples of a "linear" economy includes the practices at the Whaling Station, which had a business model that viewed itself as inputting one resource into its process at one end and churning out product and its waste at the other end. Longer-term thinking was required when considering the waste that was created and the outcome of simply dumping waste back into the natural environment. Once the linear practices of our past are critically examined, the focus can then shift to creating a circular economy that has more of a regenerative approach. Hopefully, whale tourism and whale watching fit into this new model and can serve as a regenerative example for other tourism sectors.

There is a need to identify the areas of our community that are potentially vulnerable and, not only that, but to find the root cause of why such areas may be vulnerable in the first place.

Whales would be considered vulnerable in this context, given that they are still recovering from the decimation that occurred when whale hunting was still widely practised. The dunes and other natural vegetation that was shifted around for the construction of the Whaling Station would also be considered to be vulnerable, as would the reefs that are adjacent to the buildings.

The study of whale hunting and whale watching in the South Durban Basin is essentially a case study of climate resilience in the form of ecotourism, and so this case study is analysed within the framework of climate resilience. Analysing the processes of whale hunting and whale watching under the umbrella of climate resilience allows the research to maintain an environmental perspective and to keep the research focused on a specific issue. All the variables analysed in this analysis are researched through the lens of sustainable development, with the purpose of (ultimately) adding to the alleviation of the effects of climate change.

Hauntology

Hauntology, a term coined by Jacques Derrida, describes a combination of ontology and haunting and proposes the idea that certain elements of the past keep returning and are persistent in the present, much like a ghost (Davis, 2005:373). Hauntology describes the essence of subjects that are neither dead nor alive but are stuck in the realm of an "in-between". There is already a feeling of this in the physical environment of the Whaling Station and its surroundings. Although the Union Whaling Company no longer exists, the physical skeleton of that company still stands at the foot of the Bluff dunes; the past processes of the station haunt the surroundings through the debris that has been left behind, and it is the presence of this structure in that specific location that serves as a reminder of its grim past while also referencing the old, segregated neighbourhoods that existed during the Apartheid.

Figure 3 Abandoned structures on the beach adjacent to the Whaling Station (Liversage, 2017)

To extrapolate on the theory of hauntology, the station cannot be fully left in the past because it still affects the community today and, in turn, the community should not want to forget the past as it is what has led us to be what we are today. We can see this in the current whale watching sector and how part of the organised tours for whale watching is often coupled with teachings about our whaling past and the Whaling Station.

At the other end of the spectrum, there is also a sense of being haunted by the future. Humans as a global community are concerned about the future and what may happen to us, as we know that our futures will be affected by the ever-changing climate. There is a connection between the concept of hauntology to the aforementioned concept of climate resilience; we try to make our practices more sustainable in our society because we are worried about what sort of future will be created by our unsustainable practices. We already operate under the assumption that our future could be lost to us and we are haunted by this idea.

All these factors contribute to one overarching haunting; a shadow that is just one step away. This dissertation features data analysis that has this perspective in mind; looking at how past actions impact our present and seeing the tangible and intangible consequences of past actions is educational. This is the framework within which this research was undertaken: the perspective of the past practices of whale hunting as something that still haunts the community today.

Consumption and its many forms

The lens through which we view the practices of whale watching and whale hunting for this dissertation are that of "consumption". That lens, as previously mentioned, was suggested in Wylie's Narrating Whales in the form of whale consumption. This is a perceptive view of how society has interacted with whales and is an interesting perspective that links whale hunting to whale watching in an ironic yet poignant way.

To refer to whale hunting as a form of consumption appears evident. The first meaning of this word is tangentially clear: we physically consumed whales via the products created from processing their bodies, such as whale meat and blubber being used as consumables. When we refer to physically consuming whales, what we mean is that for centuries whales were hunted down for their baleen, blubber, meat and oil, which were "consumed" by processing the resources extracted from them into something more palatable, using these resources for human benefit.

By the time there was an outcry over the dramatic decline in whale populations, it was the 1980s and activists and others forced consumers to relook and redefine how our relationships with whales were viewed and more generally the practice of hunting them.

Thanks to global protective legislation as a result of changes in public opinion on the issue of hunting whales, there has been a shift in the way whales are consumed. The old acts of exploitation have been done away with in favour of a more compassionate form of consumption, that of visual and experiential consumption. For centuries we have consumed whales in such a physical sense, turning them into consumable resources for us to capitalise on, and now we have transitioned into consuming them visually and experientially in a relatively abrupt turn of events.

As information about the brutal practice of whale hunting spread globally, whales emerged as the early, unofficial emblem for sustainable and environmental projects and protests alike. Many people hold a deep emotional connection to whales that for them carry a lot of psychological weight, and this feeling has not diminished over time. Whales are now seen as crucial indicators of our ever-changing climate (Richards et al., 1989:39). Their presence has been reshaped from that of a commodity that we can profit from to be a crucial indicator of climate change and oceanic health (Wylie, 2019:38).

With that in mind, one can see how the global community has slowly shifted from the physical consumption of whales towards the experiential form of consumption. Southern Africa has slowly shifted to a focus on whale watching as it creates increasingly lucrative tourist opportunities; Southern Right, Humpback and Bryde's Whales, to name a few, all congregate off the coasts of South Africa. These congregations are growing in numbers in locations such as Hermanus, Wilderness and Port Elizabeth, with their breeding seasons occurring during the autumn months (Wylie, 2019:38). Each breeding season brings about more and more hope with an ever-increasing population.

Whale tourism branches off ecotourism and aims to allow people to interact with whales in ways that do not harm the animals or inflict any pain. Yet the term whale consumption reveals to us the nuanced ways that whale watching can be interpreted – something of a selfish activity. We view it as eco-friendly, but it could be argued that it is just another way for us to take from whales in a way that makes us feel less guilty about our actions. We are still consuming whales, but this time visually, using them to create a fond image for us to look at and not considering

whether there are any unseen ways that this practice could negatively affect the whales. (Wylie, 2019:37).

Most would agree that our consumption of whales continues to prevail in current tourist spaces and, while it potentially clashes with the idea of whale-watching being a peaceful and non-invasive form of tourism, it is a major drawcard to South Africa's coastline. This branch of the tourism sector is simply viewed as an emotional investment by the local community, fortifying the community's connection to the iconic whale (Wylie, 2019:37). But it is also evident that no thorough research has been effectively conducted on the practice of whale watching and its history, nor has there been an account written on the effects of whaling in the area.

The research conducted for this dissertation was done with the belief that our actions surrounding whales could be classified as forms of consumption. It implies that our relationship with whales has always felt rather one-sided, humans have always looked at whales as something to be profited from.

Methodology

To reiterate, this paper aims to analyse the recent increase in the popularity of whale tourism in the South Durban Basin and determine what aspects of South Durban are rendered visible and/or invisible by this recent activity. This is to effectively analyse the effects and consequences of human behaviour, to see what specific ways we affect the environment around us and to see if we can build resilience against climate change. This section features a discussion on how the research was conducted, first looking at the research philosophy, followed by the research type, strategy, time horizon, sampling, data collection and analysis, and finally addressing the limitations.

Research philosophy

A research philosophy was used consistently in this process to stay focused on a singular interpretation of how data could be collected, analysed and used. The philosophy guided this research and attempts to contribute to a global discussion and academic pursuit. For that purpose, this research was collected and analysed from a Pragmatist approach, meaning that it

takes the view that although there are multiple points of view and ways of interpreting the world, this focus is on the more suitable approach to finding answers for the questions being asked. This is because there can be many different interpretations and viewpoints on the historical events that took place in the South Durban Basin. While this research strives to remain unbiased, it looks at the history of the South Durban Basin through the lens that transparency is key and that certain historical acts inevitably reveal themselves through their consequences, despite any attempts to hide the processes that take place between humans (and amongst them) and nature.

Research type

The research type is difficult, to sum up in one word, but overall, the study was a qualitative procedure taken from a subjective perspective, as it was a space that I was well acquainted with in terms of the area and its history. Additionally, the research was conducted through an exploratory approach and was conducted in a way that provides a better understanding of the existing problem, not to reach a definite resolution, but more to further develop our understanding of an unknown situation. The focus was specifically on the South Durban Basin and meshed with the small pieces of information gathered through personal experiences, although what was already known was also very limited. This research was an attempt to explore the unknown further and to seek out as much historical evidence of whale consumption in the area as possible while at the same time considering what was lost and what was kept, and how this all feeds into the bigger picture of how this affects climate resilience within the South Durban Basin.

Research strategy

Here the discussion focuses on how the research was practically conducted and the form of the research that took place. The first step taken was to visit two key areas in the South Durban Basin and absorb information through a sensory ethnographic technique known as a sensory biographic, wherein the participant chooses a path of great significance to them, focusing on the sensory-environmental relationship by gathering information through sensory memory. This technique allows one to engage with the space fully and without any preconceived ideas. This creates a way to view the space through new eyes by engaging with other senses and gathering new forms of understanding through that sensory information. Many things that were

not considered before were then able to filter through and I was able to gain a fresh perspective on a place that I was familiar with.

Additionally, I engaged in conducting visual ethnographic work at several key areas around the South Durban Basin, as outlined in the literature review. This is because, to put it simply, words are not enough. One can describe a process or place to another person in thousands of ways, but a picture immediately provides a solid way to understand how the space is engaged with, challenging the reader to interact with the dissertation with different ways of thinking. Simultaneously, interviews were conducted to gain first-hand experiences of historical evidence of our relationships with whales in the South Durban Basin and to provide rich detail to the discussion. The interviews were informal and more conversational to allow the interviewees to engage in storytelling and reveal any interesting personal stories that adds colour to the research. Lastly, the research was fleshed out using information and photographs gathered through archival research.

Time horizon

The research falls along a longitudinal time horizon. This would mean that it features an assessment of the community of the South Durban basin and their perspectives regarding a topic that has changed over time, and this can be applied to how they perceive their relationship with whales in the South Durban Basin population, and how this relationship has changed over time.

Sampling strategy

A non-probability sampling strategy was adopted for the research; the sample group was selected based on non-random and therefore specific criteria, so the sample individuals were specific people in the population and not every member of the population had a chance of being included. The type of non-probability sampling conducted was purposeful sampling, whereby participants were recruited based on their ability to provide in-depth and detailed information about the topic under investigation. An attempt was made by the researcher to gather information from specific individuals who either participated in the activities of the whaling station in Durban or the whale tourism development in the area.

Data collection method

Visual ethnographic research was conducted via digital photography at key points around the South Durban Basin, including key whale viewing points and other tourist spots, as well as historical whaling sites on the Durban coast. This provides an opportunity to explore the haunting of the past (hauntology) through a sensory ethnographic approach; the goal here was to walk through the Durban Whaling Station, engaging with the senses and using these observations to discover anything revealing about the space and whether there is any historical evidence of the activities there that persist today. The use of walking through the field site and observing through the senses builds a sense of place and embodiment in the space and maps out the processes that occurred. These sensory walks can also be applied to an investigation of the impact of the station along the reef, offering visual observations on the changes that have occurred within the shoreline, to add to any quantitative research that has been made, as already there are bits of harpoon and general shrapnel being found along this reef by others (Cawthra, et. al., 2012:3).

Ethnographic research was conducted in the form of a sensory ethnographic walk both at the Durban Whaling Station and at the Wildlife and Environment Society South Africa centre at the nearby Treasure Beach on the Bluff during the Welcoming of the Whales Festival in 2022. Interviews were also conducted in the form of semi-structured conversations, with some guiding questions to keep the conversation on the topic but with no specific points that needed to be made or elicited. Lastly, the remaining gaps in the study were fleshed out using details gathered in archival research, specifically in the form of journal articles wherein the authors describe their first-hand experiences of the areas being researched.

Data analysis method

This study takes on the thematic analysis method with its data analysis. An analysis has been conducted on evidence gathered from interviews as well as photographs and sensory data.

From these, evidence was sifted and organised to find common thematic elements across the different sources. Transcripts of the verbal interviews conducted were written up and journal entries of sensory ethnographic walks were also transcribed; quotes were taken from the second-hand experiences described in the journal articles. Lastly, historical photographic evidence as well as journal articles were used to support this evidence gathered and make more meaning of the data shown.

Methodological limitations

- Lack of previous research studies on the topic. There is currently very little research that has been conducted on this topic, creating gaps in the literature that present the need for further study and research. This thesis aims to partly fill that gap by itself contributing to the body of research generally available.

- Time constraints. Due to the nature of this thesis and its two-year lifespan, the number of interviews that were conducted, there was limited time in which to interview people who do not live close to me. Potential informants were difficult to reach or were only available during certain periods, so it was only possible to achieve a limited perspective on the community and its reactions to whale hunting and whale tourism. Further study is needed, wherein more members of the community are interviewed to get a fuller picture of the situation in the communities of the South Durban Basin.

- Sample size and bias. Due to the timeline of whale hunting in the South Durban Basin, most of the individuals who worked at the Whaling Station or who participated in other related events were either not alive anymore or are in a frail physical state; those who were alive were not readily connected to the communities within the South Durban Basin or were not easily found online, thus making them difficult to track down; and most people did not record their experiences during that period. Therefore, the sample size of the participants was limited.

- Cultural bias. Additionally, there was evidence of a cultural bias, as some of the individuals that this research was primarily attempting to seek out were from marginalised communities. The author of this paper is from a relatively affluent, middle-class community, and was not readily connected to the marginalised individuals around the Durban Whaling Station. Some time and effort were taken to connect to some relevant people. Those who were in managerial positions at the Durban Whaling Station were also from a relatively affluent background, thus providing only a limited perspective on the whale hunting and processing industry.

Some background…

Durban, the city

Before we can conduct the research analysis, we need to take a step back and establish a foundational understanding of the area in question both geographically and culturally. Background knowledge is then developed by looking at the basic timeline of whale hunting in South Africa and merging it with the history of whale tourism. These elements provide a more nuanced understanding when looking at the impact of whale tourism and whale hunting.

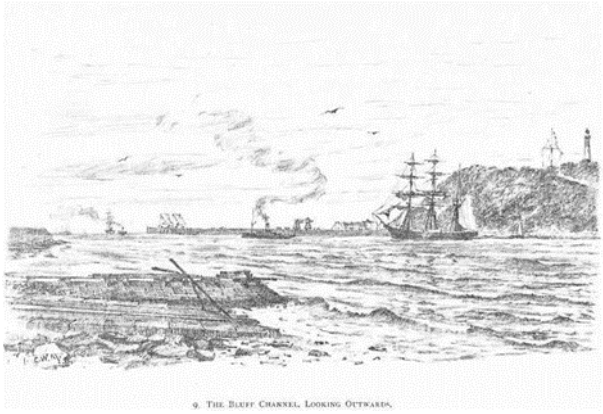

Figure 4 Sketch of the Durban Harbour with the Bluff dunes in the background (Unknown, 1891)

The city of Durban is located on the east coast of South Africa and is a major urban area in the province of KwaZulu-Natal on the Indian Ocean. Durban is the busiest shipping terminal in sub-Saharan Africa and the fourth busiest port in the southern hemisphere (I Love Durban, 2015). The harbour was formally established as a major commercial port in 1855 and from there it has become a buzzing container port and point of entry for bulk raw materials such as coal, sugar, minerals, and oil; all of which are transported around the country (Britannica, 2020). The city's central business district is still located on flat land and from there the suburbs rise up the slope to the Berea. The area's lush, green flora is evidence of the humid subtropical climate, with hot and humid summers coupled with warm, dry winters that have no snow or frost.

The city boasts many parks, including the Botanic Gardens, Mitchell Park and Jameson Park. The parks are among the city's many tourist attractions and Durban's economy depends heavily on its popularity as a tourist destination. The city's tourism is centred around the area's proximity to KwaZulu-Natal's popular game and nature reserves, Hluhluwe and iMfolozi, a popular oceanarium (uShaka Marine World) and the beaches with the pedestrianised areas running alongside them that feature many cafes and bars. All these features have fed Durban's image as a popular seaside resort, an image that was originally marketed by Durban's Beach

and Entertainment Committee, which encompasses its Retailers Council, Chamber of Commerce, and Railway Administration (Maharaj et. al., 2008). The railway was reliant on stimulating this industry; the more fun activities there were to do across the country, the more people wanted to travel, leading to more trains being part of the national tourism network (Maharaj et. al., 2008). Thus, a mutually beneficial relationship was born. Tourism is further encouraged during the winter season (May-September), where winter is much less harsh in the Durban area relative to the rest of the west coast and inland areas of the country.

An overview of Durban's whaling history

Whale hunting is usually associated in the public mind with its cultural ties to countries in the northern hemisphere, but whales have been in the waters around the Cape for millenia – the name Walvis Bay is due to this. From around 1790, whalers were hunting in the area from small boats, until eventually the colonial administrator of the Dutch East India Company, Jan van Riebeeck, proposed to the company that whale hunting might be lucrative. However, since it was an expensive business that required specialised equipment, whale hunting was only seriously considered around 1792. This could be due to the cheap labour, the surplus of whales, the fact that there was a whale migration route along the South African coast, and because of Norway's ties to South Africa through missionary work (De Jong, 2017).

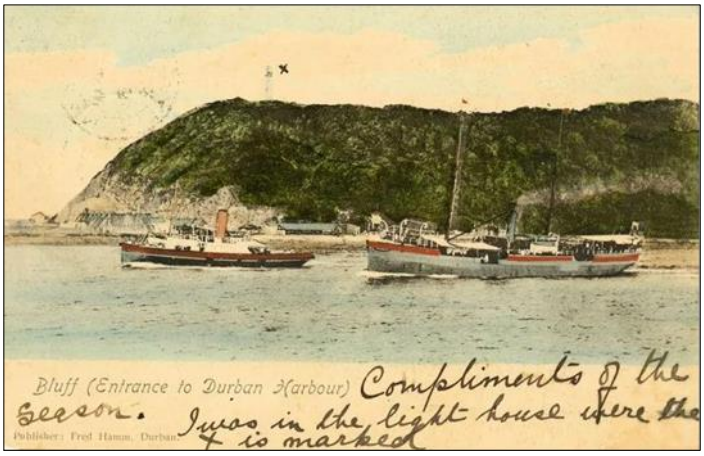

Figure 6: A view of the Bluff from the harbour, Durban. Graham McCallum, 2014

Norwegians have a long history of whale hunting going back to the ninth and tenth centuries. They hunted whales primarily for the oil that could be used to make many products and as stocks of whales were depleted, Norway's whale barons expanded their area of whaling interest. At the same time, expert whalers in Norway passed on their skills and the culture of whale hunting to entrepreneurs in places such as Japan, the Faroe Islands, New Foundland and Ireland. South Africa was also a place of interest.

Whaling seems to have ceased completely after 1766 in France, and so Louis XVI sent whalers to the coasts of Africa between 1786 and 1793 in the hope of reviving the practice (Richards et, al., 1989:234). Hunting whales was mainly conducted from Cape of Good Hope to Delagoa Bay, although its popularity spiked once more around 1805 (Richards et, al., 1989:234). However, when whale oil became increasingly scarce and prices began to soar, the pressure was on to expand the search for whales globally, including a thorough search along southern Africa (Richards et, al., 1989:234). Britain and America were considered the first to officially set up whaling and whale processing businesses in South Africa in 1785, focusing on areas such as Saldanha Bay, False Bay and St. Helena Bay (Richards et al., 1989:234).

Historical records show that Southern Right Whales were once plentiful in these aforementioned areas, their numbers spreading widely across a section along the southern oceans (Richards et al., 1989:248). Each summer in the southern hemisphere, pregnant Right Whale cows would move north, some accompanied by young calves, so that they can give birth to new calves in milder waters where there were bays and inlets that provide shelter (Richards et al., 1989:248).

Whale hunters of those eras were only successful due to the knowledge they accumulated on the seasonal north-to-south migration of the Right Whales to the same sheltered bays each year to breed, making the whales vulnerable targets (Richards et, al., 1989:248). Right Whales had followed these patterns and revisited the same protected bays along the southern coast of Africa each breeding season since before we were aware of them, and so the destruction that they faced at these locations took place across 10 breeding seasons (Richards et, al., 1989:249). However, the success that stems from such practices could only end in disaster; and indeed, the whalers' success ultimately leads to their downfall. At a certain point, around 60 per cent of the populations of the Southern Right Whales were completely wiped out; the whale hunters' methods had led to their focus on breeding mothers exclusively, which made it extremely

difficult for whale populations to recover (Richards et, al., 1989:249). As a result, numbers stayed low and did not recover, a situation made worse by the modernisation of whale hunting.

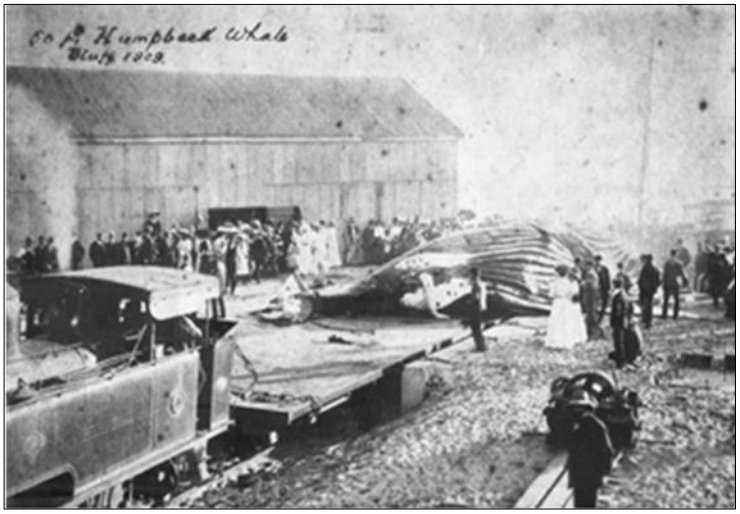

Figure 5 Dead Humpback whale loaded onto train near Whaling Station (Margaret Surmon, 1919)

Between 1792 and the 1850s, several whaling ports were constructed along the Cape coast (De Jong, 2017) but when the whale populations began to dwindle production was slowed down. As a result, whale oil prices soared, which drove the industry's desire to expand globally in search of whales in other pockets of the world (Richards & Pasquier, 2008:248). Norwegian shipping magnate Svend Foyn capitalised on the industrial revolution's modernisation of technology to galvanise the dying whaling industry and between 1864 and 1870 introduced steam-propelled ships (whaleboats), armed with a swivel harpoon gun, operating from land stations where a factory converted whales into oil, meat meal for fodder, bone meal for manure and steaks for food (Tønnessen & Johnsen, 1982:502). After 1904 the floating factory was introduced, installed in a mother ship which served as a base to a fleet of whaleboats (De Jong, 2017). All these factors helped to increase Norway's prominence as a whaling nation (Tønnessen & Johnsen, 1982:502). Whaling factories along the coast returned to operations, converting whales into products such as oil, meat meal, bone meal and steaks. (De Jong, 2017). It was around this time that it was discovered that Southern Right Whales frequent several bays along the South African coast during winter (including Saldanha Bay and False Bay). This is interesting given how rare it is to see Southern Right Whales there today – records show that they "once spread across a wide belt of the southern oceans" (Richards & Pasquier, 2008:248).

From Norway, modern whaling spread to all coasts overseas frequented by whales, including African coasts. Between 1900 and 1914 some 14 land stations were founded scattered along the coasts of the continent south of the Equator and the gunners, mates and factory managers were mostly Norwegian (De Jong, 2017).

The first whaling company in South Africa, named the South African Whaling Company, was established in 1908 and from there the devastation experienced by the whale populations only worsened (De Jong, 2017). South Africa was not an isolated location for whale hunting practices that decimated whale populations, and by the 1980s whaling was declared illegal globally by the International Whaling Commission (De Jong, 2017). Nowadays, whale populations are still recovering from the impact of whaling though it is still legal in Iceland, Norway and Japan.

Durban's whaling station and its surroundings

A visit to the Durban Whaling Station site has an immediate impact. Its bare, face-brick walls seem to grow out of the surrounding vegetation and dune succulents. The structures stand solemnly and solidly, still present despite being weathered by the environment. Most of the buildings are now dilapidated, being slowly weathered away by the salty ocean air. This used to be the main hub of whale hunting along the country's east coast.

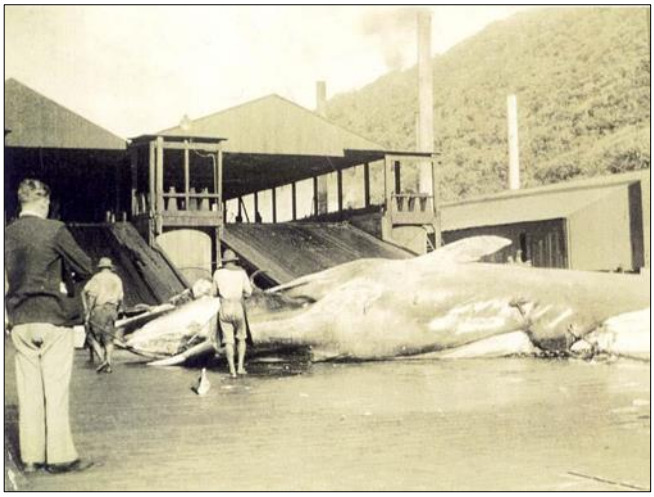

Figure 6: Dead whale laid out near Whaling Station, Bluff dunes in background (Margaret Surman, 1947)

Building of the station began in 1908 by ex-pat Norwegians, their culture being the driving force of whale hunting in South Africa. This station at one point was the biggest whaling operation on land in the world (Liversage & du Preez, 2022).

The South African Whaling Company was established in 1908 by Norwegian whalers Jacob J. Egeland, Abraham Larsen and Johan Bryde (the same Bryde after which the resident South African whale, the Bryde's Whale, is named (I Love Durban, 2019). The company brought over two ships to Durban from Sandefjord, Norway, with the intention of catching whales, and managed to catch and kill 106 of the huge animals that year.

The company's first factory was established in Durban with additional stations later being set up in areas such as Saldanha Bay (De Jong, 2017). By 1912, six more stations were set up by the company, though many had to close down due to World War I (De Jong, 2017). Despite

the war, the company continued to function, and in the 1960s when Bryde's Whales were in a decline, they switched to species such as Minke Whales, Baleen Whales, Fin, and Sei; when these too became endangered they switched to Sperm Whales (De Jong, 2017). The company was the only one to be allowed by the government to kill Sperm Whales and did so for many years, even when there was international pressure to stop whaling (De Jong, 2017). Later, however, it was taken over by a new company formed by Johan Bryde, known as the Union Whaling Company. The company continued to expand and modernise itself, becoming, for a moment, the largest most modern whaling station in the world (De Jong, 2017). Although this was temporary, eventually the company succumbed to the pressure and restricted its activities in 1968, selling large amounts of its equipment and whaleboats (I Love Durban, 2019). In October 1975, the last station officially closed its doors due to low funds and high restrictions, and South Africa banned whale hunting in its waters in 1979 (I Love Durban, 2019).

In its prime, the factory had approximately about 1,000 employees to help with the large-scale production, creating 26 different products overall (including whale meat, oil, and fat) (De Jong, 2017). The whales were shot with 165-pound metal harpoons loaded with explosives and then the bodies were pumped full of compressed air to "float" them back to shore (De Jong, 2017). The whales were then dragged up a slipway, loaded onto a carriage and transported to the Whaling Station using a train track specifically created to transport them across the distance. The track can still be seen at the Whaling Station today, although now it has completely rusted

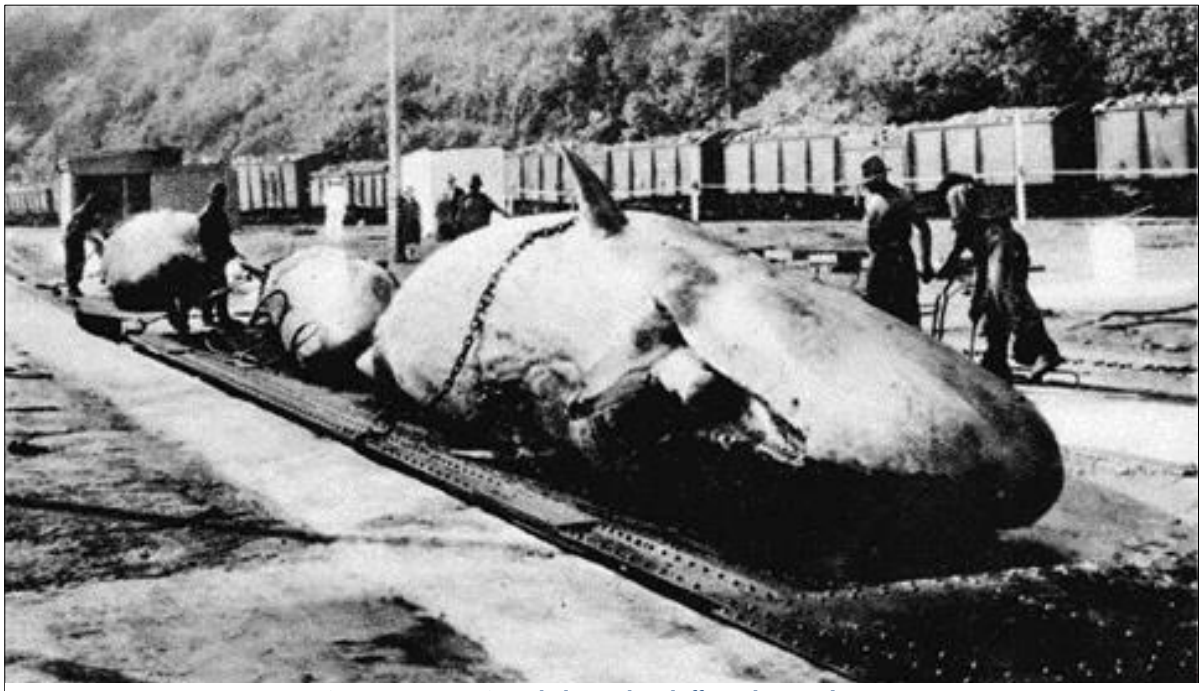

Figure 7: Processing whales at the Bluff, Durban, Unknown

and is bent and buckled (De Jong, 2017). The slipway is also still by the ocean despite the building having fallen into shambles. Once at the Whaling Station, the whales were gutted and stripped of the various components deemed useful; the process was physically intense and all the work on the carcasses created an awful smell which residents complained about (De Jong, 2017).[1]

In the surrounding area, a stone's throw from the Whaling Station lies a sewage treatment plant which, for many decades, churned out intense odours that mingled with those from the Whaling Station. Just over the hill lies and large oil refinery, its large cylindrical gas pipes spew flames at the top and add significantly to the overall air pollution of the area, still operating to this day. About 15 minutes away from these buildings lies a huge shipping container yard. Therefore, huge numbers of large lorries and container trucks lumber through the Bluff area, picking up and dropping off the containers and adding stress to the roads and noise pollution to the area (as well as air pollution from all the exhaust).

All of this is juxtaposed with the Bluff Nature Reserve small nature reserve as well as the Bluff Eco Park – both being areas where recycling and off-grid living is prioritised. The combination of this with the industrial area makes for an interesting layout and perhaps hints at an attempt from the community to reclaim the Bluff, stepping away from being known as an industrial area and trying to recreate a more sustainable identity. Not too far from the oil refineries is the Treasure Beach Education Centre, a place that is mainly open to students where they can learn about the ocean and its ecosystems it also encompasses large parts of the natural area of the Bluff and they strive to keep them thriving in the name of conservation.

[1] The original site of the station was not next to the sea. Because of complaints about the awful smell from nearby residents, the station was re-positioned on the seaward side of the Bluff where there were fewer people to complain and where the high tides could swirl into the building and wash the blood and waste back into the ocean.

Durban's whale tourism

Figure 8: Musician stalls set up at the Whaling Festival (Liversage, 2022)

The history of whale tourism in South Africa is somewhat elusive, and the history of whale tourism in Durban is even more so. Whale tourism had its beginnings in South Africa approximately during the 1980s, starting in Hermanus in the Western Cape. The town reinvented itself as an "ecotourism destination centred around the return of whales to their coastline" (Rogerson et. al., 2019:16). From there, many other spots along the west coast followed suit to cash in on their whale history. Towns use the "high profile attraction" of whales to draw in visitors and further tourist activity by providing additional events such as fishing, golf, hiking, and visiting vineyards (Hoyt, 2001:102). Currently, it is recorded that at least 20 communities in South Africa are now participating in whale-watching tourism, though it is important to note that most of them are seen as being in the early stages of tourism development; Hermanus is the exception (Hoyt, 2001:102).

Most of the tourists are international, coming mainly from Europe although there are many domestic tourists evident as well. Tourism has been extremely beneficial to coastal South African towns as it has extended traditional tourism beyond warm seasons into winter, and this sector is expected to grow exponentially and perhaps continue to create jobs (Hoyt, 2001:102). The Kwa Zulu-Natal coast specifically "can easily boast the highest number of whale sightings" (Far and Wild Travel, 2021), with Humpback Whales being the most common whale to sight along this coast. Overall, it is estimated that nearly 30 different species of both whales and dolphins can be witnessed off the coast of South Africa. Whale watching season coincides with the South African winter, starting as early as May but sightings can be expected as late as early July. This aligns with the Sardine Run, where millions of sardines start spawning in the Agulhas Bay area before swimming in search of warmer waters in the Durban oceans (Far and Wild Travel, 2021). The whales' migratory route does not only go in one direction; they make their way back up along the same route towards the Antarctic around early December, passing

through Marine Protected Areas such as Sardinia Bay and De Hoop Nature Reserve (Far and Wild Travel, 2021).

Durban, a city known for its frequent whale sightings, has witnessed the majestic passage of these incredible creatures. Despite this abundant natural spectacle, Durban has yet to fully harness the potential of these events. It was only in 2017 when the South Durban Tourism Organization began to seize the opportunity presented by these awe-inspiring occurrences. Taking a more proactive approach, they delved into the rich history of whaling in the area and directed their efforts towards creating a warm and inviting atmosphere for both the whales and visitors. By capitalising on this unique natural phenomenon and showcasing the region's whaling heritage, Durban aims to unlock the full allure of its marine treasures, enticing travellers from all corners of the globe.

The birth of SoDurba

Sodurba began its life in the year 2012 as an attempt to revitalise the dwindling tourism sector in the South Durban Basin. As previously mentioned, the organisation's name was created by combining South Durban to create a colloquial term for all tourists and community members alike to use about the South Durban Basin and is reminiscent of references in tourism discussions in America with areas named "SoCal" and "TriBeCa".

Sodurba is a community organisation that aims to develop tourism in the South Durban Basin specifically but also to focus this energy along tourist routes across KwaZulu-Natal, in particular the so-called Whale Coast. The organisation aims to do all this in a responsible manner that will create "exciting, creative and sustainable tourism for the benefit of all Sodurba stakeholders" (Liversage & du Preez, 2022). It is an organisation that would describe itself as the "only CTO" (Community Tourism Organisation) in the south Durban area, and it targets a niche market by offering services such as walks through the Whaling Station, tours through the Durban maritime museum, and the Welcoming of the Whales Annual Festival.

It is notable that rebranding areas' names in this way has become strongly connected to the idea of gentrification, so much so that many references and memes are referring to the phenomenon.

Sodurba would ultimately like to provide information to both tourists and the local community and to make itself available as a marketing platform for local businesses to promote themselves and their facilities, resources or activities so that they may gain exposure within the South Durban Basin (Liversage & du Preez, 2022). The organization's ultimate goal is to become a public beneficiary organisation that would stand for creative and sustainable tourism for the benefit of the community, young people and economic development (Liversage & du Preez, 2022). It would ultimately want to do this by promoting the empowerment of communities along the Whale Coast route, which from Cape Town takes you along the False Bay coastline through the small seaside towns of Betty's Bay and Kleinmond to Hermanus the 'Whale Capital', over Stanford to Gansbaai (for White Shark diving) and Cape Agulhas where the Atlantic and the Indian oceans meet, and then continues up towards Durban. and through the development of tourism, awareness aims to create opportunities for tourism business development for all local entrepreneurs in the area (Liversage & du Preez, 2022). More so, SoDurba would like to market Durban in general and promote awareness around the Whale Coast route and make this the city's prime tourist destination and place in which to do business or to reside (Liversage & du Preez, 2022).

Sodurba aims to do this by publicising the advantages of south Durban and the Maritime Heritage region as an area that not only has excellent beaches and nature reserves, but also a unique mix of residential development ranging from informal housing to luxury mansions. The organisation would also like the region to be viewed both as industrially and commercially active due to its proximity to the harbour (considered one of the busiest ports in Africa, as previously mentioned). The organisers in Sodurba aim to achieve these goals by undertaking the promotion, organisation, and management of Sodurba and being responsible for whale tourism and sustainable development throughout the area (Liversage & du Preez, 2022). They wish to get the local community to become involved in local events, as well as become engaged and educated about whales and the marine environment. This was all to promote ethical and sustainable community-based tourism centred around this iconic species (Liversage & du Preez, 2022). The individuals involved in this tourism project are all current volunteers for the organisation, but all have a stake in the tourism sector and have individual passions for tourism (Liversage & du Preez, 2022).

SoDurba had its first major event back in 2017 when it hosted an official guided tourism walk through the Whaling Station. They arranged for the ex-general manager and last employee of

the Union Whaling Company, Peter Froude, to give a talk on the general history of the station and other anecdotes about the station's history (Liversage, 2017). He also provided insightful historic photographs of the building, with only the vehicles in the picture as an indication that these were images from before his time there (as indeed the physical buildings themselves had virtually gone unchanged since their conception) (Liversage, 2017). The tour of the Whaling Station also allowed visitors to freely explore the area and take a look at the old ruins of the area (Liversage, 2017).

Since the birth of Sodurba, the organisation has grown successfully. Among its achievements are that it obtained the very first International Whale Heritage Site accreditation for the Bluff in South Africa (Liversage & du Preez, 2022). In 2017, Sodurba officially launched the Maritime Heritage Route, which allows tour operators and guides to operate and create packaged experiences that catered for whale tourism, such as dining experiences by the ocean, walking tours through the whaling station and/or the maritime museum, and boating tours through Durban Harbour (Liversage & du Preez, 2022).

Unfortunately, due to Covid and the lockdown that took place, the growth of this tourism sector was put on hold. However, on 25 June 2022, Sodurba was able to relaunch itself with regular tourism activities and hosted and widely promoted a Welcoming of the Whales Festival, which approximately 2,000 people attended (Liversage & du Preez, 2022). The festival entailed live music, a viewing deck, lots of small businesses promoting themselves and selling their products, performances such as dancing, educational stations to educate people on the ocean and the history of the whales, as well as food and drinks. The festival was deemed a success, providing an opportunity for many local businesses to sell their wares as well to promote local arts and cultures, all in a natural setting located within the grounds of the Wildlife and Environment Society South Africa (WESSA) Educational Centre located in Treasure Beach within the Wentworth area. There were also plenty of opportunities for children to participate in interactive and educational events that were provided by Ocean Volunteers, who educated children about the local ecosystems as well as the history of whaling and whale tourism in the area (Liversage & du Preez, 2022).

The organisation has also made plans to revitalise the area by using architecture and some minimal adjustments to create viewing points along the Bluff where one can appreciate the nature of the area and afford spectacular views of any whales that may be potentially passing by. This was done by paving small sections of a potential spot, placing branded benches in the

shape of whale tails and providing an information board that discusses the brief history of the area and some information on whales and their travelling patterns. As a result, three of these official viewing points have been established along the Bluff ridge.

The next goal of this organisation is to establish the Whaling Station as a museum by refurbishing and making the buildings safe and to use the buildings as historical pieces themselves while at the same time using them to house some artefacts that have been saved from the whaling era. Their hope is to one day turn it into the largest Whaling History Museum in the country (Liversage & du Preez, 2022).

The organisation has grown to encompass more whale tourism activities, such as hosting annual whale festivals and boat tours around and outside of the Durban Harbour. Sodurba has been recognised by the World Cetacean Alliance which is currently based in Brighton, England.

They aim to further their media presence and public awareness of Sodurba through sources such as newspapers and social media platforms such as their website, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (Liversage & du Preez, 2022). They have also engaged with local artists and commissioned to have an art piece created (specifically a whale structure) and installed during a high-traffic area of the Bluff, affectionately referring to it as Destiny Island (Liversage & du Preez, 2022). They feel that all these efforts have managed to help boost the local economy and provide the necessary support for local businesses in the area (Liversage & du Preez, 2022).

Sodurba has a long-term plan to include the Whale Heritage Route at a national tourism level, and make it a part of the Indi-Atlantic Route as proposed by national tourism organisations, and to be combined with other major tourist draws such as the Sardine Run and other participating whale festivals along the east coast of South Africa (Liversage & du Preez, 2022). The organisers are believers in ensuring that there are policies and regulations in place and that they are strictly adhered to so that they can protect the species and reduce any stress that may be caused to the mammals. They advocate that whale-watching tours are strictly controlled and boats must conform to standards to be entitled to a permit to conduct tours around and out of the Durban harbour (Liversage & du Preez, 2022). At present, there are only two legal permit holders in the city; the organisation strongly supports fines for those who operate without a permit (Liversage & du Preez, 2022).

SoDurba was started because, according to the staff, there were so many hidden gems in the South Durban Basin that neither tourists nor locals knew about and they wanted to raise awareness of this. On top of this, they realised that no one in the South Durban Basin had taken full advantage of the whale migration routes that pass along the east coast, at least not to the extent that places such as Hermanus have done (Liversage & du Preez, 2022). They felt that they should try to create seasonal events that align with the migration route, such as a yearly whale festival. The organisation saw the overall situation as a major opportunity and realised the massive potential it held. Accommodations, restaurants, tour operators as well as the local community could all benefit from this.

Sodurba sees its organisation as being different from what could be offered in Hermanus. The Humpback Whale migrates from the Antarctic up, as far as Tanzania, along the East African coast and this is the longest mammal migration on Earth. The main point of this migration is to breed during the summer seasons when the Indian Ocean is warmer and then to travel back along the route, providing support for their newly produced calves. At the same time, the Sardine Run occurs and so two great phenomena happen in the same general location which makes it a unique and interesting experience (Liversage & du Preez, 2022). Humpback Whales are the main species of whale that visits Durban's coast. They tend to put on more of a "show" compared to other whales; slapping their large, rubbery tails against the sparkling reflective ocean waves, they also leap out of the water with their entire bodies, suspended in the air for a second before they crash back down with a splash that is seen from some distance away. Even the calves can be seen participating in similar activities. It appears that Humpback Whales are much more energetic when compared to Southern Right whales. These things, tied in with the viewing points created by Sodurba, make for an exciting viewing experience for tourists and locals and are a way to visually consume whales from afar.

Discussion

The focus of this section is an attempt to separate several threads that make up the story of whaling in Durban with the overall aim being to make visible some of the aspects of whaling that have been rendered invisible due to a variety of factors. The main aspects I will refer to are the history of whaling in this area, the people who were involved in whale hunting, Norwegian colonialism, humans' perception of whales – both in the past and in the present – and how our relationships with whales and other animals is part of the increasingly urgent debate on our use and abuse of the planet we live on.

My journey through the story of the sleepy Bluff beach area has revealed so much; I realise how I had already absorbed all the nuances and events that occur in such a small town, specifically some knowledge around whales and their history in the South Durban Basin. Getting to know the area well allows one to pick up on the subtleties of past events; what decisions were made that led the Bluff to be what it is and the way in which is it seen today.

A major component of this is how people chose to interact with whales and their ecosystems; how people chose to ultimately consume whales, albeit using different methods over time. We can see how the relationship started as a physical consumption; consuming whales through their flesh, oil and fat (to name a few), then as the decades passed this shifted to a more intangible consumption; consuming these gentle giants visually through tools such as cameras, phones, pen and paper. Such a tumultuous relationship does not happen without consequences. A dominating relationship such as the one described will ultimately place the environment under large amounts of stress.

What has been made visible?

Our understanding and perception of whales

At the Welcoming of the Whales Festival of 2022, as I walked through the festival grounds, I noticed that educational facilities were constructed for the children who attended. These were facilities manned by educators prepped with seashells, bits of harpoons, and photographs to show to students who come to visit the education facilities, so they may learn more about the local oceans and the animals that reside within. As I read the informational sheets and watched from afar, I witnessed plenty of discussions about the Bluff's whaling history.

Figure 9 Delapidated building structure with graffiti, located at the Whaling Station (Liversage 2017)

It made me consider whether SoDurba's attempts to revitalise whale tourism in the area have brought about new interest in the history of whaling. So many people who call Durban their home have memories of themselves as children going for walks along the beach and ending up at the skeleton that was once the Whaling Station. But so many of us do not know about the events that took place in our community many years ago. This, in combination with the resurgence in tourism, has made people suddenly wonder about their own community's affiliation with the whaling industry and how the Whaling Station "disappeared" so quickly.

One of the reasons for this could be our awareness of whales in general and our perceptions of them as environmental icons. At first, whales assumed the role of a natural resource to be consumed, yet gradually over time they became an iconic symbol for the global society, pioneering as an early mascot for environmentalism. Over time they have been known to hold deep emotional meaning for humans across the globe; we look to them almost as a barometer of the ocean's wellbeing (Wylie 2019:52). As an example of this shift, during the era of whaling, whalers paid little attention to the whale songs that were frequently performed right beneath their boats (Wylie 2019:52). Not only was the discovery of whale song impactful, but the spread of awareness of that suddenly made people begin to take notice of them and begin

to take care of these animals in ways that we had not before. Suddenly this act of singing took on an emotional hue and was easy to connect to as a human; it put whales' lives into perspective – it was discovered just what intelligent creatures they can be.

Eventually, as whale tourism gained popularity, “whale song” became popularised and more fascinating for human beings to listen to, adding to the overall effect of them becoming iconic images for conservation. Yet this may be just for our benefit – tourists would want to calculate the best times to potentially sight whales up close.

Nonetheless, the way that the global community put large amounts of emphasis on saving the whales and prioritising them as an environmentally friendly tourist activity influenced the academic sphere and sparked a surge in research around the whales and how humans have impacted them. Thanks to this research, we are now more aware of the migration patterns of whales – establishing that the whales tend to migrate from north to south between summer and winter to explore different feeding grounds (Wylie 2019:50). The Humpback Whale was a particular target of whalers from Durban and had suffered catastrophic declines until the International Whaling Commission (IWC) imposed quotas in 1949 that would cap any over whaling in the area (Wylie 2019:41). Since then, the recovery for the Humpback Whales is also evident, especially along the eastern seaboard; an update of the population figures in 2003 estimated there were approximately 12,000 whales off the coast of Mozambique (Wylie 2019:42).

In an interview with Peter Froude, the former manager of the Whaling Station and the last official employee of the Union Whaling Company, we discussed the global community’s changing perception of whales and how whales became icons of environmentalism. I asked him whether there is the perception of whale hunting itself had changed and he said, surprisingly, that it had. Many people at the time he was working saw the practice of whaling in a more positive light. He had originally come on board at the Union Whaling Company as an intern with a background in chemistry, and his research for the company focused on the way one could reduce whale blubber into gelatin (Liversage & Froude, 2022). He said that at the time, everybody was fascinated with the whole process, and anecdotally described the Zoology Department at the university he attended asking for several specimens from his work (Liversage & Froude, 2022). As Froude became more and more involved with the company he was ultimately seen as an expert in the community. He claimed he was “always in demand” to

give talks in various locations and settings, such as lectures, book clubs, tours and on panels, and said he does not recall anyone in those being critical about whaling.

Froude said that as far as he could remember, every single newspaper ("without exception") would claim that whale hunting was a wonderful thing that provided employment for many people in the area and created another financial source for many South Africans. By 1971, opinions changed literally within the space of a year due to new studies being released by the International Whaling Commission and all of a sudden there was "very little other than condemnation of whaling" (Liversage & Froude, 2022). He described how from there this surge in the anti-whaling movement reached its peak at around 1980 but that before then the Durban Whaling Station had already shut its doors two years prior. From 2000 onwards there was growing interest in whale hunting history and what it had all been about and "they began to create museums at this point" (Liversage & Froude, 2022).

Some individuals had wanted to purchase old whale-hunting vessels and potentially turn them into museums that would reside along the Umgeni River (Liversage & Froude, 2022). However, it seems at one point that the interest died away. The current revival of interest in whale tourism and this visible form of whale consumption reveals the changing form of opinion that people have towards whaling, and how public opinion is not static and can be changed.

The education facilities present at the Welcoming of the Whales Festival in 2022 were complex but perhaps more context could be added to them, such as the details that Froude could provide. It is important to not forget that at one time, whaling was not universally condemned in the way that it is today; rather the general population was fascinated by the practice and thought there was a lot of potential in the whaling industry. Knowing that the local community was a lot more accepting of these practices could aid in our understanding of how whaling impacted the environment in the way that it has. Teaching each other this will give more context to the actions of our past and guide tourist organisations in the South Durban Basin as they create an industry in ecotourism.

Ultimately this newfound interest in the whale tourism sector has allowed us to view and analyse both the changing opinions of the global community as well as provided us with an opportunity to explore further the movements and patterns of whales in a way that allows us to further understand them and see how our actions can have any potential effects on them (and indeed, this is evident in their sharp decline that we have thus far recorded).

The potential of ecotourism

Tourism had its start in the industrial revolution when mass tourism was initiated. By 1980, it was becoming evident how unsustainable mass tourism was (Lew et al., 2004:511). As a result, new forms of tourism were created and ecotourism was developed. Sustainable tourism was developed by drawing ideas from sustainable development and under the umbrella of sustainable tourism lies ecotourism. The burgeoning whale-watching industry could be an example of eco-tourism, it just needs to be nurtured along the right path.

Ecotourism is essentially a field that operates on within the realms of sustainable tourism, piggybacking off the principles of being consciously aware of our economic, social and environmental impacts on the environment as tourists. It also embraces including local and Indigenous communities in touristic processes, interpreting natural and cultural heritages, and actively contributing to the preservation of these features (Lew et. al., 2004:485).

The natural environment has also over time become a tourist attraction; many people seek out ways to engage with natural phenomena such as through hiking, tours or sea sports and other leisure, activities. In the late eighteenth-to-nineteenth century, the West brought about large-scale nature-based tourism as a result of the Industrial Revolution, leading to a reduction in the natural environments of Europe and North America (Lew et al., 2004:426).

Growing up, I was familiar with a lot of the tourist attractions in the Bluff suburb of the South Durban Basin. The Bluff Nature Reserve along with the Bluff Eco Park did give a sense that the community had some ecotourist attractions. Seeing these attractions along with the general natural vegetation that grew virulently along the sides of the roads and behind garden walls, made one feel as if it was a more sustainably inclined community. The sudden surge in whale tourism has revealed the hidden potential of areas such as the Bluff and their untapped potential in the ecotourism industry.

The newfound interest in whale tourism has shown us the potential for bringing sustainability to the tourism sector. This increasing demand for experiences in nature has led to an increasing awareness of the impact that we as a global community have on the Earth. How Sodurba has allowed us to engage more with whales and their behaviour has also allowed us to analyse further the human-environment relationship.

Humans have exhibited an interest in animals that are "exotic" to them – animals that are deemed as foreign and unlike any of the creatures that one would typically see in either Europe or America. This is where whale tourism fits in, as humans do not live in the same space as whales and are not used to their behaviours; it is indeed an awe-inducing experience when one gets the chance to experience a whale up close. People often attach meanings and personal interpretations to animals; this ultimately has a very significant influence on the choices that they make regarding sustainability as well as their motives and behaviour as tourists.

Nature tourism has always been a very self-centred act for humans, as is evident with this new interest in whale tourism in the South Durban Basin in combination with the increased global awareness of our impact on the environment, we are starting to seek out new ways to engage with nature tourism. One of these ways could be ecotourism and this is certainly a viable option for the South Durban Basin,

One must consider that despite being considered an inclusive form of tourism, the people who are in a position where they can afford to engage with ecotourism are often more affluent and from more developed countries, so consequently any tour, travel or accommodation they may experience, has to live up to their high standards (Lew et al., 2004:490). Evidence has shown that in terms of long-term sustainability, too many eco-friendly projects have failed as a result of there being no investment in marketing (Lew et al., 2004:490). The local tourism organisations of the South Durban Basin must therefore ensure that they avoid neglecting these areas to avoid having to seek out financial support or endorsement by outside businesses who may wish to dominate the space.

Any development in ecotourism could have the potential to draw in new businesses from outside places, this puts the local community and environment at risk of being exposed to individuals who are merely profit-driven - they could neglect or even abuse the local nature and culture.

Indigenous cultures are frequently pulled into ecotourism attractions for the Western visitor, to the point where it becomes a form of Western-constructed ecotourism that assumes an artificial, performative display (Lew et al., 2004:492). In addition to this, ecotourism tends to ignore local people's feelings in favour of profits and the benefits of development, persuading locals with a precarious source of income that stems from these ecotourism attractions (and one that is seasonal) (Lew et al., 2004:493).

At the Welcoming of the Whales Festival, this issue is evident in engaging Indigenous Zulu dancers to perform traditional dances as a performance for the tourists. On the one hand, this could be seen as an opportunistic moment that uses the whale tourism space to draw tourists to other fields of the tourism industry, or, more negatively, it can be seen as exploitation.

Ecotourism risks commodifying the very thing that it seeks to protect. Nature is reduced to another source of products to be sold – experiences that cannot be missed and souvenirs to take back home with them. Ultimately, for ecotourism to continue to exist it will inevitably have to attach a financial value to nature. This could be by providing activities such as cruises, tours, walks, sporting, or any leisure activities in the ecotourism space. In the South Durban Basin, whale-watching tours were provided at a discount in collaboration with the Welcoming of the Whales Festival. The tours do have an educational element to them, but at the end of the day the tourist has paid for an experience, and from my own experience on one of those tours, the boat crew do prioritise trying to get you as close to the whales as possible, rather than prioritising education. This is not necessarily problematic, but does indicate where the priorities of the organisation are, trying to optimise the tourist experience, rather than focusing on education.

As lucrative as ecotourism may seem given that nature is supposedly a never-ending supply of resources, it may not last. Should the nature available to us suddenly become unattractive in whatever way, the investment then appears to be a lot less appealing, and fails to create a competitive advantage; entrepreneurs will shift their focus to other forms of tourism, whether it may be environmentally and culturally considerate (Lew et al., 2004:493).

Thus, the whale watching industry shows great promise for the South Durban Basin and reveals to us the future potential of the area as a place for ecotourism to thrive. However, if it chooses to venture into this industry, it must tread carefully as there are a lot of potential risks that will need to be avoided. Overall, community involvement is crucial to ecotourism. However, the South Durban Basin must be specific in who it defines as belonging to the local community - how can one even begin to define such a broad term?

The Racialised History of South African Tourism

When embarking on a journey to South Africa, the majority of first-time Western tourists are inevitably drawn to the captivating allure of game lodges. However, this seemingly enchanting experience is unfortunately rooted in a complex fantasy that delves into the exploration of

imperial histories (Mathers & Landau, 2007:527). The allure lies in the opportunity to revel in the serenity of protected, unspoiled environments, often oblivious to the fact that such landscapes owe their existence to the legacy of colonial land acquisition (Mathers & Landau, 2007:527). Concurrently, a significant portion of the hospitality and services extended to foreign visitors are facilitated by black staff, yet from the tourists' vantage point, these workers often appear as nameless and faceless entities, poised solely to cater to their whims (Mathers & Landau, 2007:528). This dynamic underscores an unsettling demonstration of cultural dominance within the realm of tourism, illuminating how Western visitors can traverse the expanses of South Africa with ease, while paradoxically, as aptly put by Kathryn Mathers & Loren Landau, extending a "halt" sign to impoverished Africans seeking employment or refuge within the same space (Mathers & Landau, 2007:526).

Hidden corners of our landscape

The new tourist activities that are promoted by Sodurba inevitably allow the local communities to engage more with their surrounding environment. By having access to the new viewing points and the skeletal remains of the Whaling Station, locals and tourists alike can actively engage with the physical surroundings and notice things that they may not have been aware of before. As a result, landscapes and architectural pieces that are often tucked away and hidden in areas that are not frequented by people are now brought into focus. There is a secretiveness to the Whaling Station, it is nestled away in a jungle of tropical plants situated in the corner of a dune forest. It stands next to a former sewage treatment plant, concealed at the edge of an area that once was a segregated area for Coloured people, hiding the acts of violence that took place, churning out a product rid of any of the wastes of the process (Berlein, 2018:44). Thanks to this newfound boost in the tourist industry is revealing landscapes and architecture that were once hidden.

Growing up as a child, my family spent many Sunday mornings venturing into the shell of the old Whaling Station – but never really understanding or knowing about what events took place on those grounds. Structures are crucial for humans when it comes to place-making. Whale hunters have essentially excavated into the land in the Bluff beach area, leaving behind a physical landmark of the skeleton of the Whaling Station. The building also serves as a visual reminder of the natural resources that Norwegian whaling techniques extracted from South African oceans, pulling out large sea mammals and leaving in their wake a destroyed

ecosystem. With that said, we do not truly have a grasp on the nuanced processes that took place.

Interestingly in this archival aerial shot of the Whaling Station shown in Figure 14, we can see a prominent shelf of sand on which the Whaling Station rests. This shelf of sand was in fact man-made – pushed up from the sea to create a more extensive platform for the station to rest on. However, I know from my own personal experience of the station that this shelf no longer exists and has been completely swept away. The act of placing that platform of sand in the first place would have been no easy task and would have doubtlessly had an effect on its surrounding environment. Figures 14, 15 and 16 are images of the station as it is now; truly nothing but its skeleton remains.

Buildings are a point of reference for many, especially in an inhabited landscape, and thus are an important aspect of considering cultural meanings (Waterson, 2011:80). They reveal nuances of the cultural significance of whaling and the Durban Whaling Station, as the placement of these structures often indicate what areas are favoured within a community, and

what areas are often neglected. We can see an example of this through the placement of the whaling station in the formerly segregated neighbourhoods of the Wentworth area.

Figure 10: An aerial view of the Whaling Station. (Margaret Surmon, 1954)

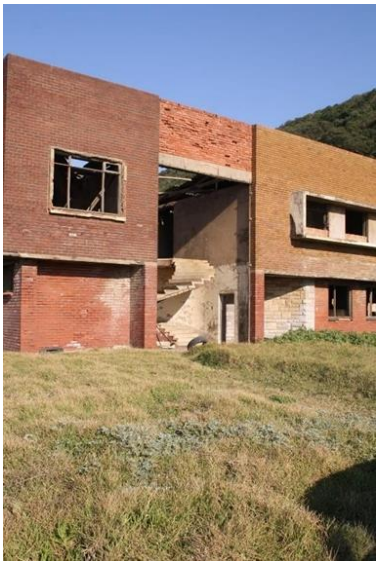

Figure 11: Abandoned Manager's Office in Old Whaling Station (Liversage, 2017)

Figure 12: Hole in Whaling Station Warehouse, overlooking Durban ocean (Liversage, 2017)

Figure 13: Abandoned building, with old tyres littered everywhere and the Bluff dunes in the background (Liversage, 2017)

In Figure 14 note how solid the railway tracks were when the station was built and how completely rusted and withered away they have become. In areas beyond the recent image given, the railway tracks can be seen barely holding themselves together on spindly stilts.

Figure 16: Archived image of railway tracks that were used to transport whaling goods and resources (Unknown)

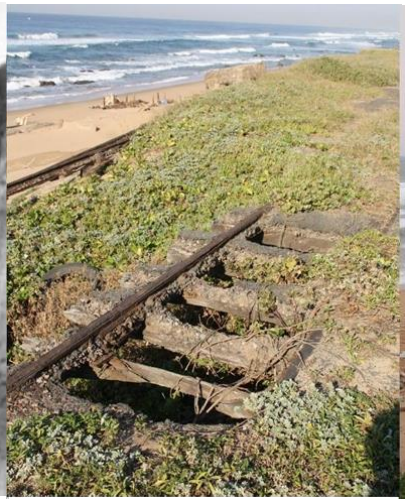

Figure 145 Old railway with overgrown dune succulents, near the Whaling Station (Liversage, 2017)

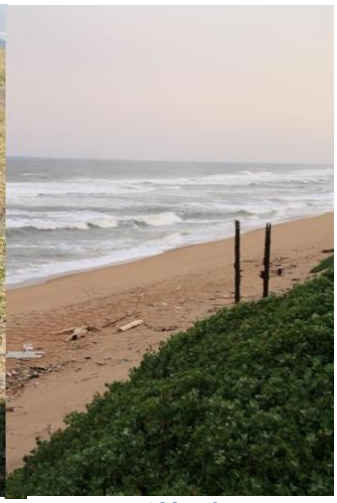

Figure 156 Old railway structures further down from Whaling Station (Liversage, 2022)

Figures 17 and 18 are images of artwork that is displayed prominently on a traffic island in the middle of a road junction on the Bluff. Both are forms of human expression and creations that reflect the values, beliefs, and ideas of the societies and individuals that produce them. Both the whaling station and aforementioned artwork structure can be considered expressions of

cultural, societal, and individual identities. They represent the values, histories, and aspirations of the people who create them.

It is a model of a whale (playing into the iconography of whales) created out of recycled plastic bottle caps. Not only does the recycling of the materials evoke themes of sustainability, but the whale itself is a universal symbol of environmentalism, with global cultural meaning.

Figure 17: Tourism artwork of Whale, funded by SoDurba (Liversage, 2022)


Figure 18: Close up of artwork structure, made with recycled plastic bottle caps (Liversage, 2022)

With the tourism activities ramping up, part of those activities include having walking tours take place within the old Whaling Station. This is particularly interesting given that in recent years the South African Defence Force has unfortunately closed off the grounds of the station to the public because security at the nearby military base is compromised by allowing the public access through the base to the station. Not only does this close off a prominent historical feature from the public but huge chunks of natural land area also closed to the public.

In 2017, when SoDurba hosted a walking tour through the Whaling Station, I took the opportunity to investigate. The Whaling Station was only accessible by driving through the entrance of the military grounds and down a long, winding road (access was allowed on this day only). Seeing how much of the natural land was closed off from the public was surprising.

These are just one of the few spaces that are now being revealed to the local community. On top of us getting a chance to visit the space around the old whaling station, Sodurba has also

Figure 19: Lookout benches designed as whale tales, with an information board in between; overlooking the Durban ocean (Liversage, 2022)

created small viewing points around the area, which ultimately bring tourists further into the area and reveal viewing places that they would not have normally ventured to. We can see this through the viewing points shown below.

Figure 20: Close up of Lookout bench (Liversage, 2022)

Figure 19: Close up of Information Board at Lookout Point (Liversage, 2022)

All viewing points are branded using themed seating in the shape of whale tails, paired with an information board that gives highlights of the local history of the area, touching on things such as the Bluff Lighthouse and the Whaling Station.

These benches create a repetitive theme throughout the landscape, homogenising the space through its branding. The homogenisation of an area through acts such as the touristic branding shown above, can lead to locals feeling a physical loss of the original character of the place, including the attractiveness of its natural environment; the representation of nature itself may become abstract and placeless, losing all personal connection towards the place that they were originally excited to market (Lew et. al., 2004:445). This can be referred to as "an erosion of place", where a change in the original natural and cultural landscape and a loss of its unique and authentic sense of place (Lew et. al., 2004:445).

As mentioned earlier in this essay, the Whaling Station is in the Wentworth area, located in the southern parts of Durban. During the Apartheid era, It was designated as a Coloured and Indian area under the Group Areas Act of 1950 (South African History Online). This suddenly paints a clear picture of the ongoing events of the larger Wentworth area. The combination of the Whaling Station with the sewage treatment plant and the oil refineries created a potential long-term health hazard for its surrounding community. As noted by University of KwaZulu-Natal student Brijnarian, "These industries pollute the air, with minimal governmental policies to regulate air toxicity levels within the area" (Brijnarian, 2019:12). It is not a surprise that these spaces were then allocated to the Coloured and Indian communities, an indication of how both ethnicities were viewed and treated during the Apartheid era.

Even Peter Froude commented on the placement of the Whaling Station. When describing how he was the last employee of the station and was tasked with closing down the station for the overall Union Whaling Company, he recalls how the residents were probably elated to hear the news. When pressed, he also revealed how the smells from the station tended to permeate the air, in combination with the fact that the station lay right by the shoreline at the bottom of large dunes, and atop those dunes is where the residential area was (Liversage & Froude, 2022). The result would be a north-easterly wind coming in from the ocean side, blowing through the Whaling Station and sewage treatment plant, and up towards the designated Coloured residential area (Liversage & Froude, 2022).

These are all crucial points that give the full context to the area, and yet it is not discussed within the educational facilities, or in the informational boards placed by the viewing points. To not talk about this part of the area's history would be almost evasive and we must continue to pass on the history accurately.

The station was built, nestled in a discrete dune and tropical jungle on the slopes of the Bluff area neatly tucked away out of sight from the public eye. Being so out of sight leads the structure to be out of mind. One can also see in old historical photos of the Whaling Station, the man-made sand banks that formed parallel to the whaling station and the railway track, creating a sharp ridge along the property. This bank has shifted and been swept away as the decades pass, showing how temporary and unsustainable the property had been.

All buildings ultimately tell stories of the human beings that once interacted within them, passing through the hallways, entering and exiting. Ultimately buildings, with time, can become a point of reference for cultural meanings and changes within society (Waterson, 2011:74). But what happens if such a visual reference is not accessible to the public? It seems that without the visual reminder of the Whaling Station for the community, the impact of whaling on the local area begins to drift off into oblivion. By revealing areas such as the station to the local population, we can then begin to understand how such a space may have impacted the local environment that we occupy today. Not only this, but we must try and understand all the nuances and hidden corners that our local landscapes may hold.

Account of Welcoming of the Whales Festival 2022

Our journey begins with us being met by Whale Festival officials. We park and take in the bustling scene; many people are getting off the official taxis coming back from a morning beach walk and clean-up which forms part of the festival's activities. Getting upon one of the taxis, it slammed its doors shut and shuttled us off to the main area of festivities.

The Whale Festival hub opened a whole new section of the festivities to us, revealing even more liveliness and bustling. Loud music thumping over stereo speakers mixed with the excited shouting of both adults and children alike, with the whooshing of the ocean waves and the rustling of the trees laying down the background sound. The sun was bright and beating down, even though it is July and technically winter, this is Durban and can still be hot in the middle of winter. Sunglasses were held upon the faces of many, often accompanied by the occasional sun hat. Braai smoke lingered in the air along with other food tents nearby, adding to the overall ambience.

Walking through the festivities takes you through a large open-field market that has been set up in the WESSA educational centre. Normally such areas are closed off to the public, so this Whale Festival does present an opportunity for many locals to get a glimpse of the inside of the centre. Many local businesses have their tables already set out, welcoming the large tourist buses that pull up to the entrance. In the nearby background, a large mural of a sea turtle overlooks the festivities. The wind blows against all of us, scattering our hair into the wind. Going up the stairs of the old educational centre, one can see classrooms that would most likely be used to facilitate any local school trips. One can climb up towards the top, where they find themselves on the roof of the educational centre, overlooking the Bluff's natural scenery. Whale Festival volunteers are at the ready, armed with educational tools and posters to give small presentations and interactive learning experiences to any children that come by and are interested in participating. They speak about the local ecosystems, the migration routes of the whales and the area's whaling history. Radio station antennas sit atop the roof, looming over the educational discussions and the views of the skies are limitless.

Back at ground level, the festivities continue, with performances set to occur for around half a day. When they do, they begin with a professional dance troupe, a group of people comes rushing through to the centre of the main space - excitement ripples through the space as they take up space in the small clearing. A display of traditional Zulu dance takes place, kicking off with singing and then gradually it turns to dance. The crowd is amazed, shouting and filming the scene, while music fills the air and vibrations can be felt in the ground from the pounding of the dancers'

feet. It goes on for several minutes, with individual dancing moments suddenly switching to group performances in which everyone moves in unison across the space – and then back to individual moves once more. Once the main dancing event drew to a close, other live musical performances took over and continued for the rest of the event. Once the festivities began to wind down, we made our way back once more to the shuttles that took us back to the parking lot and made our way home.

What has been made invisible?

Black labour rendered invisible

I touched on this subject briefly in the Literature Review section, but doing my archival research led me to realise how there is little written evidence of there being Black staff in the whaling station. This is most likely a result of the apartheid government where Black staff members are often paid under the table and are not given formal employment. As a result, their labour gets hidden. Hiding labour can ultimately negatively affect the individual, creating a knock-on effect of negatively impacting the local community, which can spread into the natural environment. It is important to recognise what is invisible work, essentially it is valuable work that has been pushed to the side-lines; if this work goes unrecognised the labourers are less likely to lobby for more support or challenge their working conditions (Crain et. al., 2016:5). Certain aspects of labourers and their identities are often neglected within historical accounts, and in this section I have highlighted how certain races and ethnicities are often not mentioned in historical accounts. So, we must ask, why is certain work made to feel less visible than other forms of work?

This creates such a huge disparity for Black people in the job market; which can have a long-lasting effect on the community and can spread across generations. Generational wealth is such a key part of our community and is often what we rely on to further ourselves and create more development. However, colonialism and the hiding of Black labour have made it incredibly difficult for indigenous communities to build up wealth, making it difficult for future Black generations to fortify themselves against the changing climate. The fact that this process has been rendered invisible means that it has not been made a priority for our global community and is continuously being pushed to the sidelines and further rendered a marginalised topic.

The only concrete information that exists on this subject is gleaned from informal of the previous Union Whaling Station manager's journal entries, in which he describes finding labour for the station, and how "the price" (wages?) of a Black labourer during the 1900s are so cheap, and how much it cost to feed them (Børresen, 2014:130). Beyond this, there is no evidence that any workers were ever hired; there is no register, which reveals how Black labour history is severely under-documented specifically in South Africa's whaling history. There is no doubt that African labour was used extensively in the greater part of the whaling workforce up until the station's closing in 1975 (Børresen, 2014:127). From this, one wonders what other

processes have taken place in the South Durban Basin that could potentially have been erased by activities such as whale tourism.

Through my interview with Peter Froude, I was able to uncover more information about the Black staff that was hired by the Union Whaling Company. What was also hidden was the slow automation of the whaling industry – as a result, many indigenous staff members were losing their jobs to machines. Froude also revealed to me another aspect of these dynamics that were hidden – and that was the displacement of Black staff when the Union Whaling Company officially began shutting down in 1978. This led to many Black employees having to be let go and ultimately left without a job (Liversage & Froude, 2022). Black staff members were made vulnerable, they were offered no way to transition from being let go as a result of changing global policies.

Aside from the above-mentioned accounts, little evidence has been put forward on the presence of Black labourers within the Whaling Station. By having one's work erased, the individuals themselves will often feel rendered invisible as well. The "global South" is often an area that is used as a case study to discuss communities being made to be invisible and taken advantage of.

As we learn in Peter Froude's writing, most of the staff that worked at the Union Whaling Station during his time came from the Natal South Coast and some became very skilled, with years of experience (Froude, 2021:148). By the 1970s, many of the Black staff were third-generation employees (Froude, 2021:149).

During Froude's time at the Whaling Station, only two members of the senior staff were Black people, the rest being White people. Interestingly there was a person called Johannes Msomi, the manager of platform labourers who had been in the company for over 30 years (Froude, 2021:150). It seemed that Msomi was of Zulu royalty, described to have a deep, resonant voice and was recognised as a man of integrity.

There have been many discussions surrounding the representation of labourers in the past, and how they are included in historic photos (Crain et. al., 2016:134). In the historical photos dotted throughout this essay, we can only just make out the Black staff members in the background, though we can see their faces we have no clue who they are. This makes us question media representation, especially if we are to look at historical photos of the Whaling Station which included individuals in the backgrounds of the photos from many different walks of life.

Seeing that this labour has been rendered invisible, one can only assume what other aspects of the Whaling Station have been made invisible. Often hidden labour is unofficial labour, meaning that there is no formal registration of this job, and staff are mainly being paid under the table. As a result, these types of informal jobs go unregulated, leading to slack safety regulations that could lead to major potential hazards. When looking at invisible Black labour, it is important to make a note of the structural violence that occurs. This speaks to how even a space such as the Whaling Station can be influenced by social institutions such as the law and can perpetuate inequality within the workplace environment. Overcoming invisibility is essentially the key to breaking out of structural violence (Crain et. al., 2016:130).

While it is necessary to analyse how hiding Black labour has affected the environment and the community, we must also pause and reflect on what is ultimately lost. The whaling station would have been rife with interesting personal stories, facts and conversations. Although the station was designed around the death of an animal, there was still life among the labourers, all of who had built a community within the station and had their ideas, thoughts and opinions. We mourn for the lives that we will never know, and the intimate details that we could have gained about the Whaling Station.

As I walked through the ruins of the Whaling Station, there was evidence of old “hostel” or dormitory rooms that were presumably the ones indicated by Peter Froude in his writings, wherein he describes how many of the staff lived in accommodation on the station site (Froude, 2021:149). This truly shows how there was a community at work there, the people who worked there would spend almost all their time at this location. It is these types of details that we may miss, along with all the interesting anecdotes of the staff that could add some life and colour to the information we currently have on the Whaling Station.

Anecdotes have been recorded by Froude. One was that in 1967, the company suffered great losses which lead to much of the staff being retrenched. As a result, people believed there was witchcraft being enacted upon them, and that the company was beset with severe hostile supernatural problems. They engaged the help of a renowned sangoma to solve the problem (Froude, 2021:153). The staff also let senior management know that if they were to be forbidden from doing so, that riots would ensue (Froude, 2021:153). Management was instructed to provide immediate payment and to provide company transport to immediately take the offenders to the nearest railway station, other than that they were requested to keep their distance (Froude, 2021:153). After several weeks of these events taking place, in the end,

the sangoma found the two offenders who immediately departed in one of the company vehicles within the hour – never to return. According to Froude, he considers the money well spent as the company's problems did seemingly disappear within a year (Froude, 2021:155).

From Froude's accounts we can see that, despite official documents from the station showing no indication of Black staff, they have not only been prominent in the workforce but had their autonomy to the point where they influenced the dynamics of the workplace. Without the personal accounts of Froude, we would not have known about the impact of Black staff at the station; this shows how crucial it is to give representation to indigenous workers, and how going forward within the ecotourism of the South Durban Basin, we must ensure that indigenous staff get appropriate representation and recognition for their labours, and to make sure that they are present in any accounts of ecotourism in the area.

The hidden presence of Norwegian colonialism

During my discussions with Froude, he described the Whaling Station's ties to Norway and the significant Norwegian community in the Durban area. Whaling in the South Durban Basin was originally introduced by Norwegian colonials with all the hunting and processing practices deriving from Norwegian culture. However, Froude said that the Norwegians' presence in Durban went back further than just whaling entrepreneurship. Norwegian families had been part of South African history for hundreds of years, yet their presence has hardly been commented on nor thoroughly analysed.

I had never been consciously aware of any Norwegian presence in the Durban area and was intrigued to find out more. Froude said that many Norwegians had originally travelled to South Africa as missionaries, particularly in areas such as Saldanha Bay in the Western Cape. However, the majority of Norwegian colonials eventually settled in the KwaZulu-Natal region, mainly near Durban.

Until the early 1800s, Norway had no prior connection to South Africa and only began to engage with the country's missionaries on the advice of a prominent Scottish missionary who had extensive missions in the Southern African area, known as Robert Moffat (Bloch-Hoell, 1982:54). The Norwegian missionaries were not met with a warm welcome and it seems they were not permitted to practise their religious teachings by the Zulu King, Mpande (Bloch-

Hoell, 1982:54). The missionary work only truly began in 1850 and took hold in 1879 as a result of British presence and wars. The journey towards developing this did not prove easy as the Norwegian missionaries initially lacked any ways to communicate with Zulu people, however as time went on, they translated texts and provided missionary schooling in isiZulu. Settlements near Durban were established, within which were churches, schools, a town hall and even a newspaper business that featured Norwegian news, all for the Norwegian colonials (Kjerland, 2014:xv).

Given Norway's long coastline, it seems logical that the nation would lean towards developing its maritime industry. It used its presence in South Africa as an entry point into expanding its seafaring industries into other territories, suggesting that shipping, sea trade and creating a maritime labour force was a top priority for the nation (Bertelsen, 2014:2). Norwegian colonials took advantage of the many natural resources of South Africa, participating in activities such as forestry, shipping, trade and whaling (Eidsvisk, 2012:2). The Union Whaling Company on the Bluff was established by Norwegian colonials who came to South Africa to find whale populations to capitalise on.

According to author Erlend Eidvisk, Nordic or even the larger Scandinavian encounters on foreign territories are rarely analysed and critiqued from the perspective of decolonial theorists (Eidsvisk, 2012:2). These countries were part of a general trend in which European powers have exploited marginalised communities to extract land, labour and produce in ways which were becoming politically impossible and less feasible in the domestic arena (Eidsvisk, 2012:3).

Scandinavia was a significant contributor to broader European colonialism. One could argue that around the seventeenth century, the Danish-Norwegian monarchy had colonial ambitions and attempted to challenge the metropolitan powers in Europe by expanding its whaling techniques (Eidsvisk, 2012:6). In fact, it is estimated that among the number of emigrants travelling to the South African region, there were approximately 5,200 residents of Scandinavian origin (according to a 1904 consensus) (Eidsvisk, 2012:8).

It is interesting to note when looking at Norwegian literature on the topic of South Africa, the significant emphasis that is put on what Scandinavian writers refer to as the national liberation of South Africa, and that they frequently credit themselves as having aided South Africa to

repress the force of the Apartheid Government as well as colonial forces as a whole, painting a picture of themselves and their past actions as “non-colonial colonials” (Bertelsen, 2014:5).

It is important to reflect on the “hidden” impact of the Norwegian community, as their presence and influence are what ignited the whaling industry in South Africa. This is what led to the devastation of the whale populations of the world, and what makes whales such an uncommon sighting for us today.

Figure 20: Whale education stall at the Welcoming of Whales Festival 2022 (Liversage, 2022)

The hidden impact of our actions

The revitalisation of the whale tourism industry in the South Durban Basin has led to us revisit the past practices of whaling, and ultimately, we uncovered the amount of death and domination that took place. Whale tourism in the Bluff revisits past practices such as whaling through education centres, and it is interesting to see the conversation being brought up once again. Now the next question to turn our attention to is whether or not this revitalisation reveals any negative impacts that could arise from whale watching and affect the surrounding environment.

Hidden process of whaling

Especially once we get to lesser-known areas of the world, such as the South Durban Basin we see even more limited research and data on how impactful whaling has been in the area. What we do know is, at first, whaling was a small, manually-driven operation that was small-scale enough not to impact the ocean and its ecosystems. However, around the early 1860s is when the advancement of whale hunting began, ultimately industrialising the practice; creating tools such as the exploding harpoon and steam-driven ships. All major whale populations have been severely reduced in size due to human hunting, with several species considered endangered and some (like the Atlantic grey whale) being extinct (Butman et. al., 1995:462).

When we think of whaling, we only think of the hunting process, and rarely think of the processing that takes place afterwards. Too many consumers of whale products at the time, the

commodities that were produced as a result of whaling (e.g., oil and baleen) appeared on the shelves with no context, history, or backstory. The processing that takes place is visceral, bloated corpses of whales are dragged into the factory, slit down the middle with organs being pulled out and waves of blood spilling out. All these by-products get washed, ground and processed to an unrecognisable state. Any evidence of the waste produced by this essentially being washed away and made invisible to the consumer (Berlein, 2018:63). This method of disposal would have a lasting impact on the surrounding environment.

Moreso, the Union Whaling Station had a major shareholding in Natal Oil Product. Here they would manufacture margarine using whale fat, as well as candle manufacturing from the wax that gets separated from sperm oil during the purification process (Liversage & Froude, 2022).

Figure 21: Archived image of dead whale being transported using the railway tracks (Unknown)

Anecdotally, Peter Froude described how these candles were mainly purchased by the Catholic Church. The products would also get reduced into fatty acids and fatty alcohols, such as liver oil (the main source of Vitamin A for many individuals in Europe), as well as fertiliser, as occasionally they would create soap with these fatty chemicals, and this would all get exported overseas (Liversage & Froude, 2022). Getting such a singular resource ended up decreasing the sperm whale population by 2-3% according to Peter Froude, quite the blow to their overall population.

Along the Whaling Station is a pipeline support structure that once upon a time aided in the disposal of waste around the whaling station itself. From there, a modern beach rock developed in a seaward direction, extending from an older beach rock formation. What is interesting about this beach rock is that it is coated with a thick layer of debris sourced from both the whaling station as well as the nearby military (Cawthra et. al., 2012:1-2). The artefacts found dated between 1908 and 1975, comprising items from harpoon heads to bricks, and unexploded hand grenades (Cawthra et. al., 2012:2). Even more outwards to the sea, there is a shallow reef just

off the Bluff Ridge. This reef is referred to as Blood Reef, obtaining its unique name due to the plumes of whale blood that would often blanket the area between 1908 and 1972 (Cawthra et. al., 2012:291). Decades of this could have disrupted the delicate balance of the ecosystem. Tides were crucial for the process of cleaning waste material from the whaling station, using the high tides to draw out the waste as far out into the ocean as possible (Berlein, 2018:44).

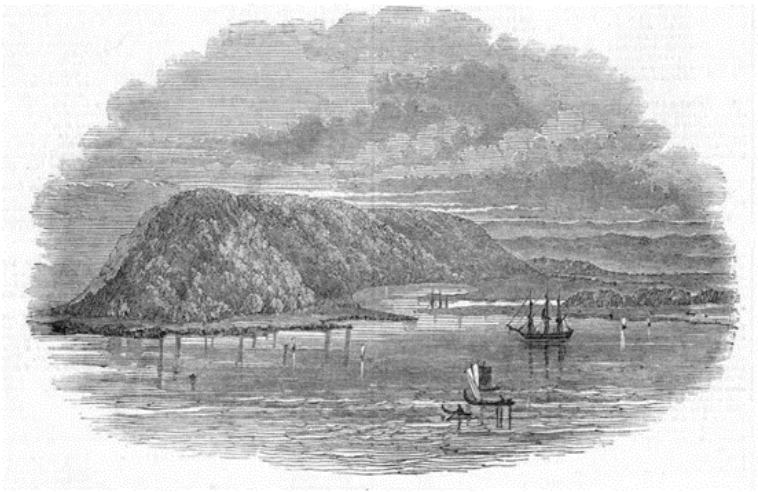

Figure 22: Drawing of Durban Harbour with Bluff Dunes to the left (Unknown)

Whales are vital to the ecosystems of the ocean; they are a crucial step in the cycle of life. As whales grow old and less able to move through the currents, they pass away. This is where the process known as "whale falling" takes place. Their falling bodies sink to the bottom of the ocean, where they serve as important sources of organic matter. These decaying whale skeletons support deep-sea 'communities' of bacteria found in hydrothermal vents, referred to as "falling whale" ecosystems. The bodies provide much-needed nutrients for the creatures that reside in the deep sea (Butman et. al., 1995:464). The overhunting of whales meant less nutrition for these ecosystems, impacting their vitality and essentially destroying the bacterial communities.

Peter Froude countered these points by describing how, from his perspective and experience within the company, he felt that everything was run legitimately and followed by the International Whaling Committee (Liversage & Froude, 2022). Every year, the committee sets caps on how many whales can be hunted per business. Froude said that the company always followed these regulations, but he felt that time has revealed that the IWC overshot the caps that they had set for the whaling sector, and said they should have been much more rigorous with the data and research that they were collecting. He said it was due to the carelessness on their part that lead to the dramatic demise of many whales across the region (Liversage & Froude, 2022).

Froude described how part of their research would have potentially led to them being less reliant on whales and possibly having less of an effect on whales, though it is hard to say now

whether that would have truly had an impact. Nonetheless, his research was trying to find out a way to move away from sperm oil, and find a way to create something synthetic to replace the costly sperm oil resource (Liversage & Froude, 2022). Sperm oil seemingly was crucial to the American car industry at the time, and they mainly used it to lubricate their gearboxes (Liversage & Froude, 2022). Additionally, he explained that people preferred using sperm oil for their lanterns as it "burnt with an almost smokeless flame", something that was desired by many chemical manufacturers (Liversage & Froude, 2022).

There would be another point where these hidden processes need to be revealed and not further hidden by education centres not properly representing the information completely.

Knowing about this artificial placement for sperm oil could have been vital for the oil industry, and should have been prioritised over finding alternative ways to hunt whales.

Research on the impact of whales on our global culture provides a foundational understanding of the negative effects of whaling, showcasing the catastrophic decline in population numbers, which only showed signs of recovery in 1949 when the International Whaling Commission had strategized to impose caps on the number of whales that could be hunted each year (Wylie, 2019:40). However, this species and many other ocean creatures are still vulnerable to threats such as climate change, illegal hunting (legal hunting in some areas), as well as mass beaching. These findings reveal how crucial it is to monitor the effects of our actions and to learn from the actions of our past. Not so coincidentally, these days looking at whale populations you can clearly see the patterns of dispersal along the South African coast, and how these have been influenced by the progression of animal-rights activism and changing public opinion, as well as the development in local and global conservation policies (Wylie, 2019:39). In the name of whale consumption, tourism organisations prevent these elements from being mentioned in whale education spaces, and choose to avoid such grim topics. Ultimately all these acts have been rendered invisible to the global community.

Sensory Ethnographic Walk to the Whaling Station

My journey begins at the top of the stairs of Fynnmore Place. Fynnmore Place is located at the edge of the Bluff suburbs, jutting off of Marine Drive and offers a well-known lookout spot for locals to sit and view the Old Whaling Station from a distance. The sky is overcast and even though it is winter it is still warm and humid. The wind is gently blowing on my face, we have arrived in the late afternoon, having to work against the setting sun. The stairs are solid wood painted a specific shade of brown that is reminiscent of the old architectural style of tourism structures created in the 1970s. Going down the long steep flight, we enter a tunnel of thick, tropical trees that grow alongside the thick dune forest into which we are immersing ourselves. On the beach, the sands are loose and difficult to walk on, slowing us down. At the shore, the wind picks up and the clouds hide any visuals of a sunset. We walk across the sands, walking past litter that has washed up on the shores from the recent floods, litter that is thick and mixed with driftwood and other "natural" debris. Usually, thousands of little crabs scatter along the shoreline in the area, but due to recent storms and it being a particularly cloudy day today, none were seen. The wind carries salty ocean particles that leave a taste on my lips and mist up my glasses. We walk past the deteriorating metal fence, corroded by the salty air, and find large gaps in the mesh that are easy to walk through. A large tree trunk of driftwood sits in the space of one of the gaps. The waves are crashing to the right of us, slightly deafening and requiring us to raise our voices. After a short time of walking on this sand, we follow a trail that leads from the beach onto the grassy dune. We pass by someone smoking dagga and follow an old jeep trail to the Whaling Station, passing by burnt tires and abandoned vehicle beds. The buildings are reminiscent of 1970s architecture with bare redbrick, and are in an advanced state of deterioration, with tropical shrubs, prickly pears, grass, and wild fig saplings overgrowing and overtaking the space once again. Old World War II architectural pieces still stand, mainly concrete lookout bunkers. The bricks are crumbling and the roofs of the buildings are largely gone. The walls are pockmarked with bullet holes and there is graffiti on the walls, some simply tags, some political and a notable one of a large whale is painted on one of the walls. The main warehouse where the whales would have been kept has no roof. Its large structure somehow still stands against the wind and sea spray, showing signs of corrosion but still unrelenting. The slipway is still present; however, the old railway tracks have completely corroded here. The ocean is a lot quieter as the shrubs and dunes muffle the sounds.

The buildings of the Union Whaling Company now stand empty, with no one walking through the hallways anymore, save for the occasional individual who needs to make a home out of the space,

even if it is for just a short while. Sometimes walking tours are hosted in this space and, during those, the yards echo with the sounds of human voices before dying back down to the rhythmic crashing of waves. Wild fig saplings grow through the cracks of old tiles on the wall, and sunlight dapples through the slights of the old wood beams hanging overhead.

In the centre of the building lies the largest of all the structures, the main warehouse where the whales would have been completely taken apart. Now the structure stands with its roof gone and patches of the brick walls fallen in. The red bricks frame the ocean nicely. The space gives a general feeling of being left for dead, but this is juxtaposed with the feeling that there is a lot of history here, and many things have happened within these walls. It is up to us to keep a record of these events and make sure the knowledge from these events does not get lost.

Little of the Whaling Station's history is known. One thing that Peter Froude seems certain of is that these buildings have always been under the management of a whaling company, both the old Union Whaling Company as well as the new. There were even some buildings that were still referred to as the Shark Liver Factory or the Margarine Plant, with little knowledge as to why (Froude, 2021:26). It is seemingly difficult to get any detailed or comprehensive account of what exactly all the old buildings were for and what part they played in the whole. There were also several of the seagoing and ship repair staff around who had been with the company before the war. Many of the Norwegians in the company in 1958 had been recruited in Norway for service on the catchers or factory ships located there (Froude, 2021:27).

The processing activities began with whales being pulled up the slipway by the powerful steam-driven winches, and they were then flensed in a mostly traditional Norwegian method, (except for the use of winches that cut out a lot of heavy manual labour) (Froude, 2021:47). The blubber meat and bones of the carved-up whales were then hauled up onto these raised platforms and fed into the cooking vessels (Froude, 2021:47). These cookers were of two main types – open vessels for cooking blubber and pressure cookers for processing meat and bones.

(Froude, 2021:47). The blubber pots were filled with chunks of blubber then heated to boiling point with live steam. The liquefied oil and condensed steam were then continuously emptied into separating vessels while the steam continued to be fed into the cooker. It took upwards of three hours of steam extraction to release the oil. The cookers then had to be allowed to cool before they could be emptied of the residue which was known as grax. Live steam was again used to bring the cookers up to pressure and they were kept under pressure for up to 24 hours. The oil was then run off into tanks and the whale soup known as glue water consisting of condensed steam, dissolved protein and fine particulate matter was discharged into the sea. The oil was separated into decanting vessels and then filtered into drums. Oils from the two processes were usually kept separate as the

blubber oil was of very superior quality. In later years, the grax was dried and sold to farmers as fertiliser.

Train tracks follow the natural contours of the dunes, once upon a time a train would follow these tracks, dragging a carcass to its respective whaling stations; the practice continued right until the end of operations in the 1970s. It was the first time that whales had ever been transported by rail (Froude, 2021:48).

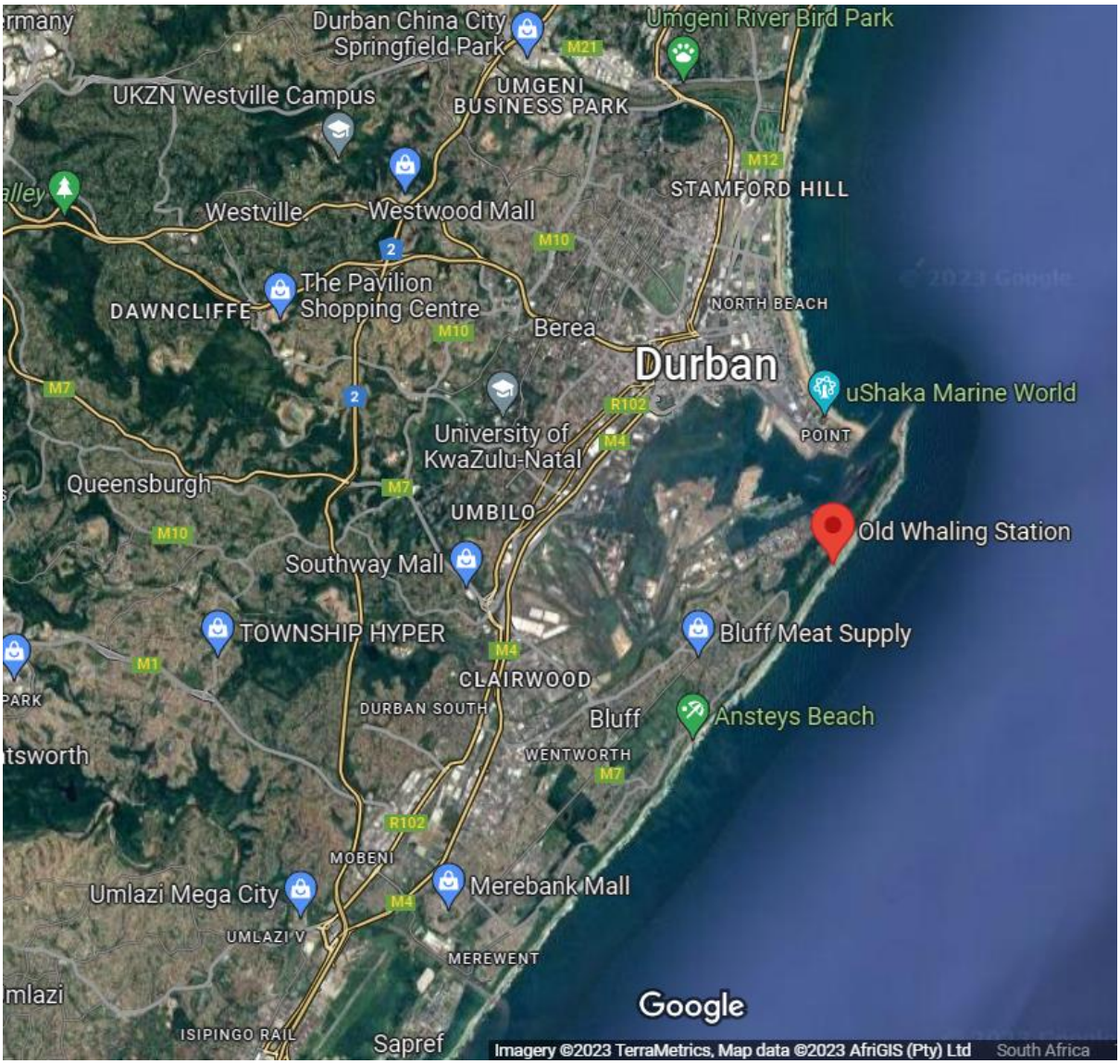

Figure 23 Zoomed out view of the Old Whaling Station in the Bluff

Whale tourism

When I think of tourism activities centred around whales, I think of a vacation at the beach, soaking up the sun rays and tasting the salty ocean air – and lots of leisurely activities

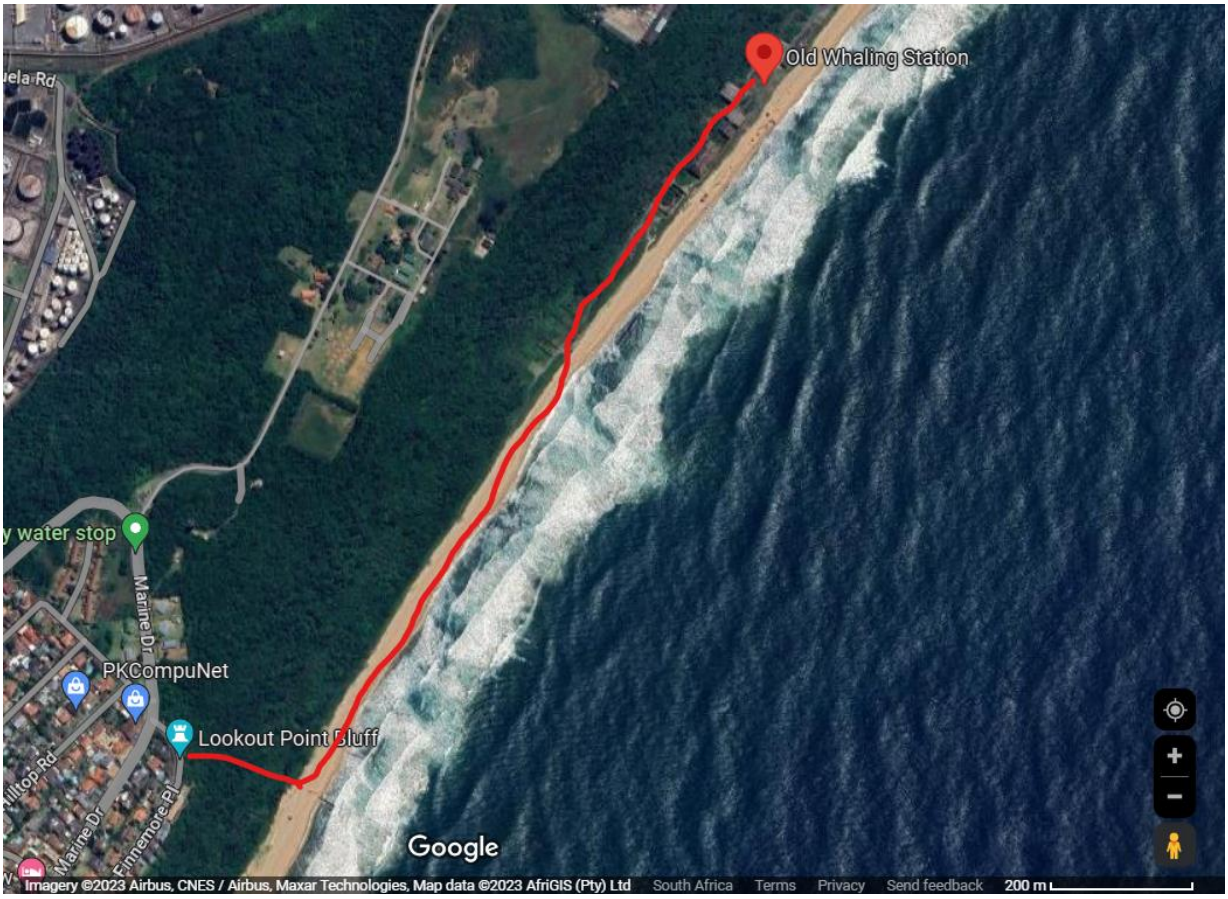

Figure 24: Walk from Fynnmore Place to the Whaling Station (Google Maps, 2023).

supplemented with the viewing of the seasonal migrations of whales. What did not jump to mind was how all of this makes the whales feel; how do they feel about tourists constantly entering their space? Are there any factors that we are not considering? Whales are still being viewed as a natural resource to benefit off of, but now it can be paired with a deep emotional connection to the environment. This form of consumption is celebrated greatly in our country and is seen as a more compassionate form of consumption, one that seemingly causes no visible damage to the environment.

Ever since its inception, whale tourism in the South Durban Basin has only grown in popularity. However, there is a concern over whether this will ensure a decline in environmental quality. This can be likely if they start to receive a high volume of tourists; if the environment is particularly vulnerable in that area; how sensitive the developer is towards the environment and; the effects of the development of recreational activities on the area (Lew et. al., 2004:432).

Tourists these days seek to gain unique experiences that none of their peers has experienced before. With ecotourism, they want to feel as if “pristine” nature is becoming rare and hard to come by; they are experiencing a rarity. The presence of whales somehow means to us that this

piece of nature is still in pristine condition and that the whales themselves are an example of raw, untouched nature. This is what contributes to the fact that whale watching, in combination with dolphin watching and dolphin swim programmes, is a rapidly growing ecotourism activity on a global scale (Cunningham et. al., 2012:153). More and more people are becoming curious about the deep blue, and are keen to observe whales and dolphins in their natural environment, they are seen creatures that hold great amounts of emotions (at least for the viewer), evoking a desire in us to protect them from the threat of climate change (Cunningham et. al., 2012:155). Ecotourism enters the scene by occupying a moral grey area and using the observation of animals to commodify wildlife and its habitat, placing human leisure at the centre of the experience.

Tourism is built on the idea of creating experiences for the individual, this showcases how the production of experiences, even staged experiences, and memorable events are what make individuals engage with nature tourism in the first place. Engaging with nature in a way that creates a unique and almost magical experience is what draws the prospect. People often attach meanings and representations to icons such as the whale, a creature that for the most part exists in a faraway place relative to us, and yet we create such a deep emotional connection with them. All of this has a very significant influence on the choices and destination goals of tourists, as well as affecting their motives and behaviours.

The term “ecotourism” first became popular around the mid-1980s, suggesting the balanced relationship between tourists and the natural environment (Lew et. al., 2004:433). There have been many critiques of the development of theories around this relationship, some questioning whether tourism is truly sustainable, while others counter this with the fact that one could argue humans are never a separate entity from the natural environment and are just as much a part of it as any other species or organism (Lew et. al., 2004:433). These discussions bring to light the fact that we must recognise the “social component” of the natural environment, and how we use or absorb resources (Lew et. al., 2004:433).

Globally, we can see some impact of tourism, starting with the use of unsustainable transport for travel which contributes to the increasing sources of greenhouse gas emissions and biodiversity loss, leading to habitat loss, consumption of resources and degradation of various types of environments such as coastal areas; all these translate into environmental changes that affect the overall air, land, and water of the Earth. These effects have shown that they have distinct geographical patterns, following the intensity of tourist fluctuations, indicating a

"temporal intensity" (seasonality) (Lew et. al., 2004:450). If the size of the crowds keep growing each year, the environment will have less time each time to recover what was lost, creating a cumulative damaging effect on the environment.

Two key aspects of ecotourism that fits into Sodurba's practices are that it needs to be educational, and small-scale. Educative in that there must be an educative element to the ecotourism practice, and should use education to inform tourist, community and industry behaviour in a way that promotes longer-term sustainability of tourist activity in natural areas (Lew et. al., 2004:487). This slots into Sodurba's ties to the WESSA Education Centre located in the Bluff, as they aimed to create a space during the Whale Festival wherein children were invited to interact with ocean experts and engage in conversations surrounding the ocean's ecosystem. Small-scale businesses are an essential aspect of ecotourism, and SoDurba relies heavily on them to sustain their whale tourism (small business boat tours, Education Centre teaching experiences, small business walking tours) though it must be added that the link between scale and sustainability has not been strongly correlated, therefore one cannot argue too heavily against the benefit of increased participation (Lew et. al., 2004:488).

One fallacy is that one should not view ecotourism as an isolated alternative, it should be viewed as complementary or even supplementary to other touristic and economic activities, and not serve as a substitute. It is common to accept the fallacy that ecotourism being a nature-based tourism means that it is ecologically sound, socially responsible and economically viable, which is certainly not the case (Lew et. al., 2004:489). It is vital to consider the interactions in ecotourism and ourselves who would benefit from its economic activities. It is crucial to move beyond a tourism-centric view, as one cannot hope to achieve sustainability in one sector alone, it must be linked to and dependent on other factors as well (Lew et. al., 2004:490). Finally, it is essential to connect this all back to a global context. Although ecotourism is often viewed on a local level, it originated in more developed countries, and so this dominance has led to accusations of ecotourism being a form of "eco-colonialism" (Lew et. al., 2004:490).

When assessing the impact of touristic activity, some effort must be put into looking into biophysical impacts, which focuses on the impact of these activities on factors such as soil, plants, and wildlife. Although with that in mind, biophysical impacts do need to address other key issues, such as the long-term effects of tourism on the ecosystem and local animals, the regional effects that result from cumulative local impacts which leads to the physical and biological effects that eventually change species abundance and diversity (Lew et. al.,

2004:457). So, with the growing demand for ecotourism, there needs to be more consideration given towards impact studies and seeking ways to minimise biophysical damage. Theoretically, ecotourism presents an opportunity to indulge in non-destructive leisure and amusement, making conservation pay and in turn paying for conservation (Lew et. al., 2004:484).

These are just the impacts that we know about. This is due to the complex nature of nature and how it reacts to our actions, as most forms of impacts are non-linear, and can build up slowly and cumulatively, as a result these effects often go unnoticed until the long-term results suddenly lead to dramatic changes; which once evident are too late to intervene with (Lew et. al., 2004:453). There is a call for more research to be done. Unfortunately, research on the environmental impact of tourism tends to skew geographically, favouring the United States, Europe and the United Kingdom (Lew et. al., 2004:454). Additionally, the types of research that are conducted are namely from the fields of ecology and natural sciences. Some argue that a truly multidisciplinary approach may never be possible, but we must still try, nonetheless.

What can we learn from this?

Studies such as this one involving informal interviews tend to vary in style; some take on the form of asking limited close-ended questions, while some interviews are more detailed, open, or even in the form of focus groups. Whatever the style may be, all can be useful in gaining nuanced understanding of the issues at hand, such as recreation and tourism, and will help us to understand the individual experience as well as perceptions of environmental impacts. Social scientists prefer to use informal interviews as their preferred form of methodology, as they feel it has the potential to allow investigation into how critical our changing behaviours are, and to hone in on specific issues (Lew et. al., 2004:454). However, studies on the environmental impacts of tourism would thrive more from combining traditional research techniques with techniques from across multiple disciplines and the development of new procedures such as the sensory walk shown in this thesis Reflexivity has been mentioned in this thesis, where the tourist must acknowledge that they have a role in tourism, and are not merely observers. It is the tool that we need to consistently maintain consciousness in social awareness, and to be aware of social structures and how they may be influenced by outside factors (Lew et al., 2004:504). Such a tool is crucial for creating a sustainable tourist space, one that allows us to regulate our actions and minimise our impact on both the whales and the overall environment. Perhaps when embarking on the journey of creating a more inclusive and sustainable form of ecotourism, this tool must be included and it has to be ensured that we keep using it the entire time.

Figure 25: Dead whale laid out near the whaling station (Unknown)

Once reflexivity can be established, the tourist can then act on this idea and hold themselves accountable for their actions. Sustainable tourism unfortunately does bring about many concerns for government bodies and can easily create division. This could be in part since ecotourism and sustainable tourism needs to set processes in place that allow accountability. While nations devise more and more environmental laws and regulations aimed at controlling risks, no one seems to be held specifically responsible for anything. This is referred to as

organised irresponsibility (Lew et al., 2004:505). As usual, when something goes wrong, it is usually marginalised individuals who are blamed, rather than the system.

Although whales are highly regarded amongst scientific and biological circles, there still seem to be limited to the comprehensive social history of Southern African whales and how we have consumed them (outside of some dated Norwegian findings); global historical accounts focus on Northern hemisphere whaling exhaustively (Wylie, 2019:38). Studies on the impact of whaling would do well to place more importance on the Southern Hemisphere and expand the context of what we know so far.

Indeed, we consume whales, either by following their migrations or by listening in to their otherworldly forms of communication. These large sentient creatures that slowly glide through the currents of the ocean, these mammals or indeed giants of the Earth can pull together global communities, transgressing boundaries of culture and evoking emotional responses like no other non-human megafauna.

But rather than showcasing a deep-seated concern for the environment, tourists tend seek out ecotourism to travel "alternatively" to the usual norms of their lifestyle, making them feel more environmentally conscious and use this as claim to moral high ground and to downplay their participation in the exploitation of nature (Lew et al., 2004:503). We are inevitably left with the unanswered question of whether it is possible to truly be a reflexive tourist.

The discourses surrounding ecotourism in general, work the angle of nature as a luxury boutique experience, one where individuals can witness nature in its most pristine condition, as well as primitive culture and historical heritage – in other words, an experience for those who have access to enhanced living situations that allow them to be more mobile and consume commodities while in nature (Lew et. al., 2004:328). This is a form of experiential consumption, wherein we consume whales as souvenirs, either for our gain or to even monetise them. Not only do tourists enjoy collecting souvenirs from their travels, but they must also collect experiences and record them in photographs.

Many argue that if effective planning, design, and management were implemented, one could truly create a state of coexistence or symbiosis between tourists and the environment (Lew et. al., 2004:433). We must try and achieve this sense of balance between the two, for the sake of the "sustainability" of the environment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the South Durban Basin has a long connection with whales and has great tourism potential. Potential comes with risk, which should be looked at with real concern and analysis. This dissertation set out to look at the rising interest in whale tourism in the area and what it reveals as well as hides processes related to our ways of consuming whales. This raised questions about the effects of whaling activities on the ecosystem, invisible labour, the impact of tourism, as well as the potential of sustainable tourism.

The research was done through an exploratory approach, where the aim was ultimately to further develop our understanding of an unknown situation and to provide a better understanding of an existing problem. This was conducted through ethnographic research methods such as visual ethnographic work, sensory ethnographic work, and interviews, supplemented where appropriate with archival research.

As a result of the findings, I covered topics around conservation, education, and knowledge of whales, as well as debates around sustainable tourism. As for what is deemed hidden by the newfound drive for tourism, it can be observed that labour both past and present was rendered invisible, as well as the influence of the Whaling Station on the surrounding land, Norwegian influences and the environmental impacts and consequences of both whale hunting and whale tourism.

It was crucial to look at the overall representation of whales and the different forms that it takes on, and to turn this thesis into an interactive representation of whales, showcasing how our perspectives of them have changed over time. I also attempted to use the photographs to compare the different states of the environment within which the Whaling Station sits, and how that may have been impacted by the changes brought on by the Whaling Station and the processes that took place within it.

Including the sensory ethnographic accounts allows us to glimpse into a moment experienced both within a space of whale tourism and a space of whale hunting, but ultimately both spaces of whale consumption. The sensory ethnography can also hopefully allow the reader to have a moment where they can visualise these places for themselves despite the shortcomings that written accounts may present.

The research adopted the stance that our interactions with whales are a form of consumption and looked at all past, present and future activities as such. Additionally, it also explores the data collected through themes of invisible vs. visible representation and exploring visual ethnography in general. It adopts the perspective that we must take on responsibility for our safety in the oncoming era of climate change and must fortify ourselves against the ever-changing climate.

These findings show us that much evaluation and caution are needed when deciding to embark on new touristic adventures. So much in the past has been overlooked or has not been reflected upon thoroughly enough; now we must ensure there are systems set in place that help us to continuously check ourselves and ensure that we analyse all possible outcomes before embarking on new paths. We must be socio-culturally responsible, and it is especially important to make sure we connect all of this back to a global context. As briefly touched on in the previous paragraph, it is our duty as citizens of the Earth to adopt a defensive strategy against the cumulatively changing environment, and seek ways to either improve our living situation or correct our past errors.

To do so, we must reflect on our past historical events, look more closely at them, and analyse the consequences of the processes that took place once upon a time. Choosing to look at the South Durban Basin seemed so fitting as this researcher had grown up near the Bluff Whaling Station, and had personally witnessed the growing presence of whale tourism in the South Durban Basin. Researching this specific case study allows us to not only research a topic and area that is not widely researched, but to also learn about the specific ways in which we can protect and enhance the environment while embarking on a journey of creating sustainable tourism or even ecotourism. We must look at our actions and see how they may impact our surrounding environment and consider what type of relationship we want to have with our local ecosystems or, on a larger scale, with the Earth itself, and where we want it to go from this point onwards.

The memories of long walks to the Whaling Station with my family hold much sentimental value to me, and something is humbling about a space holding so much personal value for one individual while at the same time being so rich in historical value. Having the opportunity to experience the Whaling Station in this way was a remarkable experience: seeing it in its current state, unchanged from how it has been since my childhood when I viewed it from a completely uninformed perspective, then peeling back the facade and seeing the full history of the station

and all its processes. Having the complete picture of the Whaling Station has been an immersive experience and has made me feel more connected to the neighbourhood in which I grew up.

Ultimately sustainable development has never been a surgical procedure, the reasons behind driving it further are often personal and sentimental. Humans view the Earth as a home and therefore have an emotional connection with it; we do not want to see our home destroyed and are compelled to try and save it. This is what I have attempted to showcase through the case study of whale hunting and watching in the South Durban Basin – the reasons for this research are not purely clinical but are sentimentally driven. I have noticed changes in my home neighbourhood – mainly in the forests and environment. This has led me to look at my home through new eyes – not as I saw it as a child, but to see it now for what it is – a vulnerable ecosystem that is at threat thanks to our interactions with it.

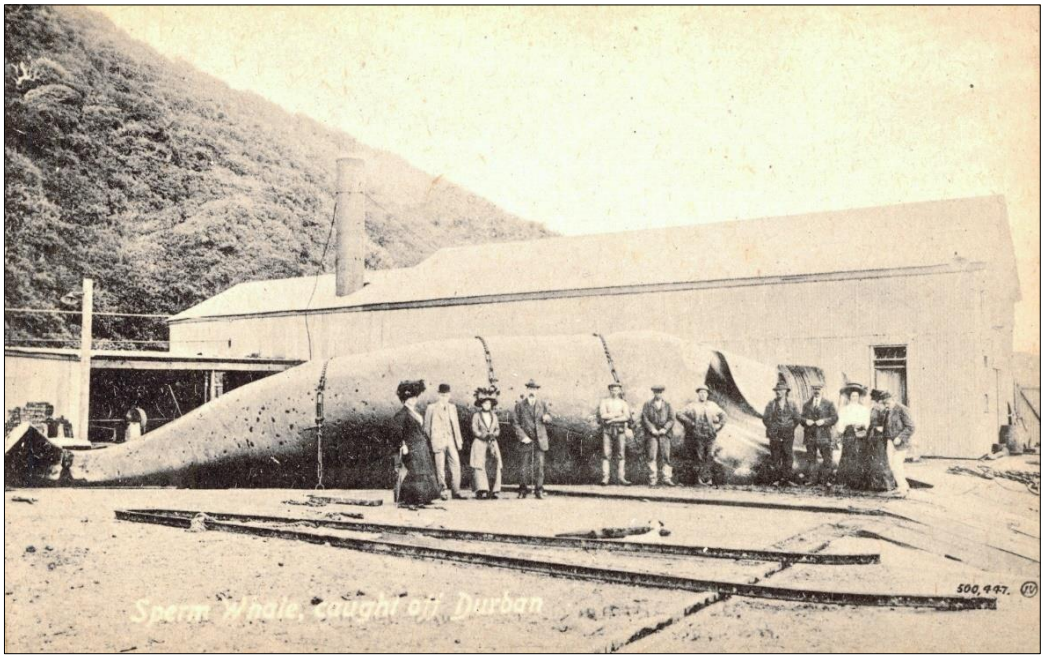

Figure 26: Large unidentified whale near the Whaling Station (Unknown).

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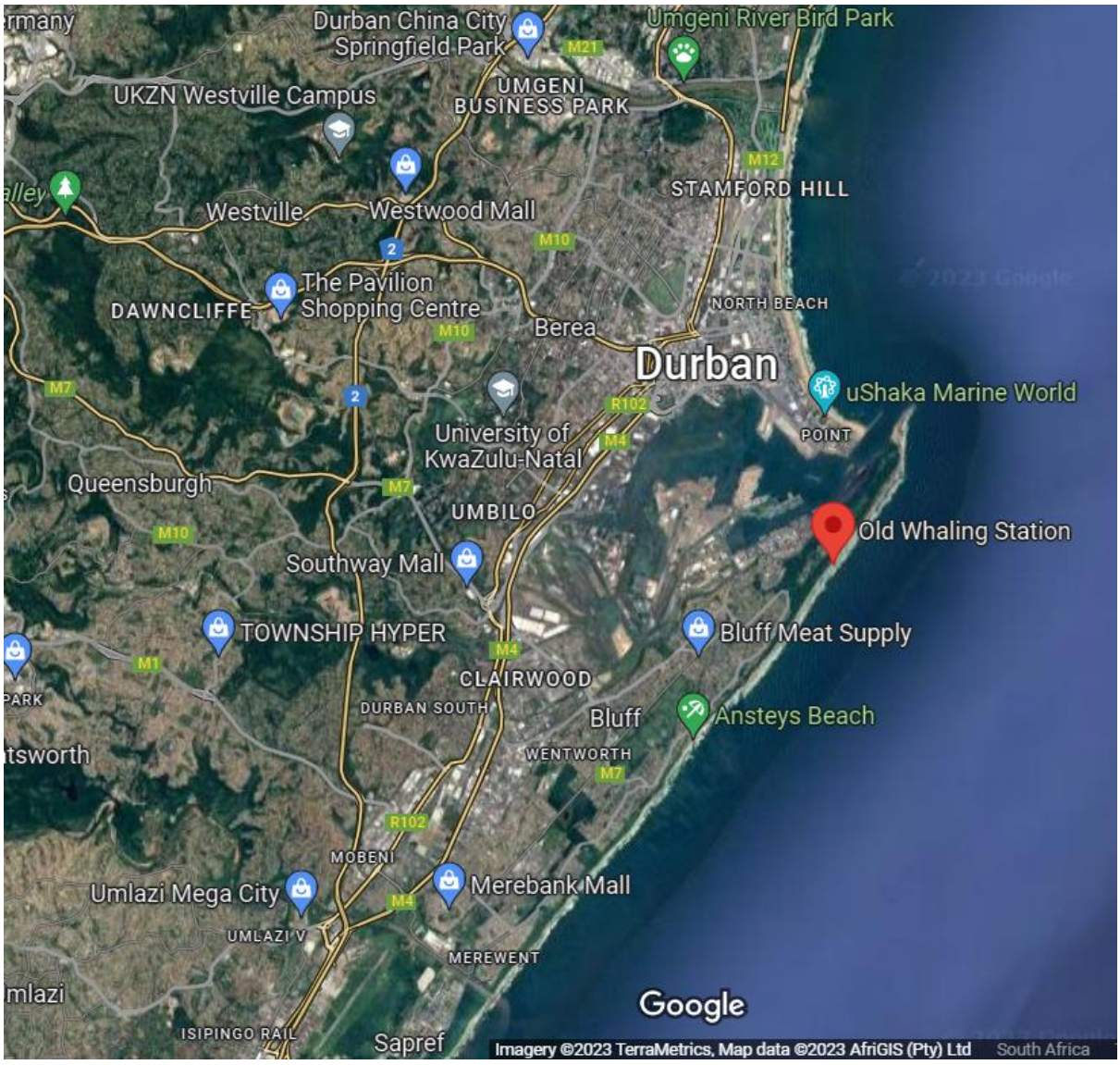

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