Musical Constructions of Place: Linking music to environmental action in the St Lucia wetlands

Angela Impey
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Abstract

This paper reflects on a documentation project in the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park Authority that explored the operational interface between music, cultural knowledge and environmental stewardship. Building upon the premise that music and associated ritual practices present rich discursive sites where local knowledge about the environment are negotiated and affirmed, the project aimed to engage high school students with broader environmental concerns through the documentation of their diverse cultural and environmental heritages. In so doing, it explored ways in which the active recovery of deep-rooted cultural wisdoms about land, natural resources and senses of place may contribute towards a more integrated paradigm for environmental conservation in the area.[1]

Introduction

> It has been argued that 'promoting conservation in the context of local culture would endow protected areas with a significance that emphasis on biological diversity, landscapes or economies does not'. This is especially relevant in a country such as South Africa, where people can ill-afford the luxury of a species-focused conservation ethic but recognize the importance of cultural diversity. We therefore need to reintroduce the concept of culture into our analyses of the environment and not simply portray wild harvested material as being only of economic value to users. (Cocks, Dold & Sizane, 2004:4)

Ethnomusicology is the study of music in its cultural context. It is an inherently inter-disciplinary study embracing, through the examination of sound and music-making, analytical concerns relevant to anthropology, history, geography, religion and gender studies, to mention a few.

An ethnomusicologist might approach the study of music-making in any number of ways: s/he might be interested in the sound and structure of a piece of music; in its melodic contour, rhythmic configurations, textures and musical form. S/he might focus on the study of musical instruments; on the natural resources used in their manufacture and their principles of sound production. S/he may analyse lyrics and the use or delivery of language, or may focus on performance itself, and the role played by music in communicating social, religious or political experiences.

Music is a particularly potent expression of South African social life. It expresses what may have been forgotten as a result of social change, and communicates concerns that may not be expressed verbally as a consequence of repressive social circumstances or cultural conventions. Music transmits experiences and provides a cognitive map of histories, people and places. While offering an immediate, embodied and highly adaptive expressive outlet for the negotiation of individual and social identities, it also preserves and sustains collective memories. In its many forms and manifestations, music functions as a primary symbolic landscape of a people.

As an ethnomusicologist, I have attempted to take a step beyond musical description and analysis and explore ways in which music may operate as a discursive site where information about land, locality and belonging are reflected upon and memorialised in symbolic form. Further, in seeking the interface between musical expression and environment, I have sought ways to promote its conservation as a cultural resource, positing that community-driven environmental management may be more actively embraced when nature is understood as an essential signifier of cultural histories and social identities.

In this paper, I will reflect on a youth research project conducted in the Dukuduku forests of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park Authority, that focused specifically on the operational link between music, cultural meaning and environmental action.

The project was motivated by two broad concerns. The first pertains to the politics of land and locality, which are key to the development discourse in post-apartheid South Africa. Fostering a sense of belonging and place attachment is essential to the social reconstruction process, and is central to countering the widespread physical, social, political and cultural dispossession experienced by a large number of South Africans under apartheid. 'Finding one's place' under the new dispensation, however, involves a complex process of disentangling from the hegemonies of the past, and a conscious re-valuation of self, past cultural practices, local knowledge(s) and senses of place.

The recovery of local knowledge in South Africa is currently addressed under the banner of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). IKS is motivated by an attempt to open new moral and cognitive spaces within which constructive dialogue and engagement for sustainable development may begin. Essential to IKS is consideration of how knowledge(s) may be 'recovered and re-appropriated in real time to advance the survival and growth of local communities' (Odoro-Hoppers, 1998:3). IKS in South Africa focuses predominantly on biodiversity and the role of indigenous communities in the protection and utilisation of natural resources. Within this frame, attention has been paid largely to medicinal plants and indigenous medical practices: these are tangible products that can be measured, understood scientifically, and offer the possibility of profit-making.[2] IKS, as manifest in music, body and ritual processes, on the other hand, seeks the recovery of meaning systems as its principle reference. In this context, its focus is on ways in which people and places are mediated through symbolic vocabularies, the premise being that it is at the level of the intangible, experiential and sensual that people most meaningfully inscribe themselves into their environments, and thus transform physical landscapes into cultural spaces.[3]

The second impetus for the project focuses on the application of the conservation-with-development paradigm, as advanced by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention

(relevant to the St Lucia wetlands) and by community-based natural resource management (CBNRM).[4] Both the UNESCO convention and CBNRM aim to involve local people in sustainable conservation by drawing on indigenous knowledge and technologies as the basis of an integrated management system. However, the people-and-parks alliance remains politically fractious in South Africa. One of the contributing factors for this may be that culture and local knowledge systems generally remain outside the expertise of environmental managers, and interdisciplinary partnerships that link cultural conceptualisations of landscapes with natural resource management remain relatively unexplored (Murphree, 1991; Murombedzi, 1998; Griggs, 1999).

The objective of the Dukuduku project was, therefore, to examine the interdependencies between symbolic practices (music and associated ritual activities) and perceptions of place, and to explore ways in which deep-rooted cultural wisdoms may be recast to contribute towards a more holistic paradigm for sustainable conservation.

Musical Constructions of Place

In the following section, I will offer a brief musical case study to demonstrate ways in which musical meanings are 'intimately and inextricably bound into the spatial formations, practices and processes by which music is performed' (Revill, 2000:605). The case study focuses on a song entitled *Uthando Luphelile* (Our Love is Finished), composed and performed by Mrs Ndabesehlele Myeza, an elderly Zulu woman whom I encountered in the hills of Nongoma in the 1980s.[5]

Ndabesehlele is of the last generation of Zulu women in northern KwaZulu-Natal to perform the *umakhweyana* gourd-bow. This bow was customarily played by young women prior to marriage to accompany love songs. Today, songs composed or remembered by elderly women often reveal, through narratives about love or lost love, a subtext about loss of identity, social fragmentation and loss of place.

The *umakhweyana* gourd-bow is a simple instrument comprising an arched stick made from the pliable wood of the *Acacia ataxacantha (umthathawe)*,[6] a single string, which is attached to both ends of the stick, and a gourd, which is positioned near the centre of the stick and used to amplify the harmonics. The bow is constructed to resonate inward, played into the body; literally using the 'embodiment' of sound as a means through which the musician is able to meditate aloud about her experiences.

Far away mountains where the sun sets
Be on my side
Talk on my behalf
He dances even when it is closed
And the elders stand up
Cry for me
Johannesburg has taken him away
Be on my side

I married a shebeen man
And people are celebrating

Isibongo self-praise

I, the snake who gets killed whenever people see me
I, the spear that stings the hearts of men and women
I, the bird who spreads its wings over the homestead of Sebokeng

The song brings together the experiential and the political. It is a lament of an abandoned wife whose husband has left his rural home to seek work in Johannesburg. In so doing, he has taken to alcohol, forsaken his family, and deserted his traditions. What is pertinent about the song in this context is the way in which the singer transforms the landscape into a place of human action, and how she imbues nature with meaning.

Clearly the composer is rural. To her, Johannesburg, the city, represents the object, the 'other'. On one hand, Johannesburg is material: it is where the largest proportion of migrant workers congregated in the past and has thus become a symbol of the migrant labour project. On the other hand, the city is metaphorical and is represented in the song as an agent of social change. To the musician, the city is a feckless, rootless place; a modern symbol of personal fragmentation.

The countryside, by contrast, represents the known; 'tradition'. It is in this context that the singer seeks epistemological mooring in natural symbols: in the mountains and the sun. However, there is an ambiguity in the way the singer references these images. The mountains are far away; the sun is setting. Through these images she appears to imply that everything is slipping out of control, and not even the elders, in their wisdom and authority are able to restore order.

But nature is also perceived as solid and timeless, and in her moment of impotence, she appeals to it for moral support:

Be on my side
Cry for me
Talk on my behalf

In the second section of the song, Ndabesehlele breaks into *isibongo* self-praise. *Izibongo* praises are an ancient genre of isiZulu oral poetry that are generally associated with a chiefly clan or with royalty. They are a powerful, metaphorical and highly refined rhetorical practice. Their delivery is rapid, intense, defiant and authoritative.

By resorting to this poetic genre, the singer appears to reclaim power from traditional form and from mutually understood symbols. Again, she uses natural iconography to index personal identity, but rather than appealing to natural imagery, she *becomes* the snake; she *is* the bird. By inhabiting these references, her attitude becomes retaliatory. In Zulu culture, the snake is both feared and revered, and by referring to it, she appears to be saying: you may try to destroy me,

but I can be dangerous to you too. By identifying with a bird – conceivably imagined as an eagle or a bird of comparable totemic significance – she reminds the protagonist that she has the capacity to hover above him and observe his every move. As a bearer of witchcraft or ancestral power, she may threaten his home and bring him misfortune.

This song is a particularly vivid example of the use of topography as both physical backdrop and personal identification. In so doing, it reveals how nature may be understood differently if considered against the background of human experience. Through it, we see how nature becomes instrumental in shaping discourses about social relations, how it serves to shape consciousness about emplacement and displacement, and how it provides a reflection against which imagery of the self, at individual and social levels, may be mapped and experienced (Lovell, 1998:9).

Linking Music To Environmental Action in Dukuduku

The St Lucia Wetland Park Authority is approximately a quarter of a million hectares in size and is located on the northeastern coast of the KwaZulu–Natal Province. Its boundaries extend from Mapelane and the St Lucia estuary in the south, to Kosi Bay on the Mozambican border in the north. The Park comprises a variety of habitats, including grassland savannah, coastal dune forests, wetlands, beaches and mangroves, and is sanctuary to a wide variety of animal, bird, marine and plant species. Lake St Lucia is the largest estuary in Africa; it is the oldest proclaimed National Park in southern Africa, and it is the first area in South Africa to be registered a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The Dukuduku forests are located in the southern region of the Greater St Lucia Wetland Park, some 250km north of the city of Durban. Khula Village, which is situated on the northern periphery of the Dukuduku forests, comprises a fragmented people from many 'elsewheres' who have recently been resettled on land reclaimed from commercial plantation. Some Khula residents were expelled from their ancestral homes on the eastern shores of Lake St Lucia in the 1950s and returned in the late 1980s to claim ancestral ownership of the land. Some have sought refuge there from violence or poverty in other areas of the province, the country, or even the region. Common to almost all of its residents is the experience of displacement.

Dukuduku has been, and continues to be, a highly contested space. Here, the notion of community is based on shared spatial and economic interests, but cannot be predicated upon any sense of collective identity or cultural commensality. As the village has been in existence for some 15 years only, my preliminary research revealed that people appeared to have little knowledge of one another's cultural histories.[7] Their absence of cultural anchorage appeared to link directly with their apparent lack of buy-in with regard to stewardship of the forests. While many residents will argue that their original motivation for settling in Dukuduku was because they could 'live naturally' and could seek protection under the thick canopy of the forests, the indigenous trees are being felled at an alarming rate and rapidly being replaced with *Eucalyptus* woodlots and sugar cane.

Khula Village is situated on the key access route to the tourist town of St Lucia, and the community and is well positioned to capitalise on the increasing numbers of local and

international visitors to the estuary. With additional exposure gained by its accession to World Heritage status, so eco- and cultural tourism feature as the principal foci for income-generation in the area. As has been demonstrated elsewhere (Cohen, 1984; Crick, 1989; MacCannell, 1989; Smith, 1989; Urry, 1990; amongst others), cultural tourism has the tendency to reduce identity to a singular, generic 'other'. In KwaZulu-Natal, cultural tourism tends to capitalise on the global imagination of the Zulu as the quintessential African warrior; an image that is framed in an idealised, historic moment, and that perpetuates their representation as authentic, potent and uncontaminated.[8] In as much as cultural tourism feeds on mediated images of the 'noble savage', so ecotourism trades on the recurrent tropes of the African landscape based on images of a pristine wilderness teaming with wildlife, into which are inserted 'natural' but endangered cultures (Bruner & Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1994). However, while offering an obvious route to poverty alleviation, tourism would not necessarily assist in nurturing a sense of community and cultural diversity; nor would it necessarily address the ongoing conflict in Dukuduku between people, land and forest conservation.

With these concerns in mind, I began to think of ways in which participatory documentation of the diverse cultural and environmental heritages in Dukuduku might contribute towards the mobilisation of a sense of community – *a recreation of place* – and in so doing, nurture a greater level of investment in the forests as a valuable cultural resource.

Azibuye Emasisweni: The documentary process

Mapping self in place

Basing my premise on the notion that music is a powerfully emplacing medium, and that sound and the affect of music-making operate as potent activating modalities for memories about self in place and time, I established a documentation project at the Silethukukhanya High School in Khula Village, that attempted to utilise music as a primary means through which to engage young people in discussion about the relevance of natural resources to the cultures and identities of the community.

Referred to as *Azibuye Emasisweni: Remembering our Stories/Heritages*, the project was conceptualised as a 'club' and functionally located within the school's innovative 'living library' project. Its expressed aim was to systematically build a community archive of local knowledge about the people, their cultures and their senses of place. In the absence of books about Dukuduku, it sought also to make these stories available to teachers, learners, environmental NGOs, and community-based cultural or ecotourism operators in the vicinity.

A team of 20 student volunteers (between the ages of 16–19 years) and the school librarian were invited to participate in the archiving initiative. The research team focused initially on mapping the village and its environs. The construction of a range of different maps helped to raise awareness amongst the students of the layout of their own community, and to analyse spatial arrangements in terms of amenities and infrastructure, as well as in relation to significant cultural and environmental features. The latter included sites of personal, social and ceremonial significance, places of ecological importance, and fences, roads and boundaries that identify spaces of inclusion and exclusion.

Part of this exercise included 'sound mapping': the identification of sounds that make up the broader Dukuduku soundscape. These included birds, insects, frogs and hippopotamuses, and well as the various genres of songs and instrumental performances that are heard on various days of the week and times of the year: the *mqangala* mouth bow and jew's harp, the *umakhweyana* gourd bow, *ingoma* dance songs; wedding, healing and funerary songs (accompanied by *isighubu* (military-style drum) and *ingulule* (friction drum)); songs of the Shembe, Zionist and Apostolic churches; radio or recorded music that is broadcast from speakers in shebeens and shops, etc.

Biographical mapping

The next task was to conduct a training programme for the students in documentation, concentrating on project conceptualisation, interview techniques, recording strategies and research ethics, amongst a range of other issues. With these rudimentary techniques at hand, the students proceeded to trace the biographical pathways of Dukuduku residents, focusing specifically on the elderly and important culture bearers such as *izangoma* (healers). Our aim in collecting life histories was motivated by an attempt to better understand the personal journeys people had made to Dukuduku, and how they had made attachments to it as a social, economic, political, ecological, and spiritual space. The objective of the exercise was premised upon the notion of 'home' as a dynamic and relational concept; one that is intimately linked with socio–spiritual practices and cultural systems which serve to ritually mark and affirm them.

Biographical knowledge is also geographical knowledge, and many of the biographies included ritual narratives that referred to places and natural resources as 'culturally situating' markers. An often quoted example of such a ritual process is *ukubuyisa indlosi* or *umlahlankosi*. In it, a branch of the *Ziziphus mucranata (*Zulu – *umphafa),* a tree that is imbued with exceptional spiritual significance in Zulu culture*,* is used to symbolically relocate the spirit of one's ancestors to a new place of residence. The following quote is taken from an interview conducted by one of the student researchers:

> Though their physical graves are left behind, we have to collect the souls of our ancestors to our new home. When a new home is completed, you collect them by taking a branch of a tree called umlahlankosi.[9] If it is a female ancestor, you have to collect her with a branch called umganu.[10] You go to their graves and you tell them: 'Now my ancestors, I have come to collect you from this abandoned home to a new place.' When you collect them using a car, this is what happens: You will go with a few older members of your family and at the graves you will tell each of your ancestors that you are there to collect them to a new home. From there you tell them that they must get into the car and go. Inside the car you don't talk to anyone. If the car stops in town and it happens that your relative comes and talks to you, you just keep your mouth shut. He will see you carrying umcansi (a small reed mat) and the branches of this tree, and he will understand. (Baba Thethwayo interviewed by Mduduzi Mcambi, Khula Village, April 2001)

Umlahlankosi is a poignant example of how ritual processes, when conceptualised as a discursive space, provide dynamic opportunities for the creation and transportation of meaning through

time and in changing social circumstances. It also highlights the way in which natural resources continue to carry profound symbolic meaning in Nguni cultures. As with the *umakhweyana* bow song discussed earlier in the paper, the branch in *umlahlankosi* is used to shape discourses about the self and familial relations; it assists in articulating social and spiritual disharmony/discomfort, and it provides a medium through which individual and social balance may be restored.

Inherent in *umlahlankosi* is the notion of displacement and emplacement/re-rooting. The process of re-establishing familial stability by physically traversing a prescribed pathway is not dissimilar to Australian Aboriginal 'songlines' in which rivers, mountains, rocks, forests and birds are ritually performed in order to reposition one in the geographic, genealogical and political present. As with many Aboriginal people, despite the pervasive influences of westernisation and Christianity, these rituals continue to depend upon natural resources, water and sacred sites as signifying materials through which humanness, identity and value are affirmed in Dukuduku.

Umlahlankosi is an especially significant ritual for Dukuduku residents, many of whom have recently relocated away from the graves of their ancestors. Situating self in a new locality for most has necessitated both the ritual restoration of past familial relations and the establishment of new social and economic associations. Similarly, resettlement has demanded the re-alignment of cultural landscapes; the renegotiation (conscious or unconscious) of cultural histories, identities and localities as a response to new social, cultural and geographic contexts. Making meaning of, and nurturing a sense of belonging in the present, is thus dependent upon the re-contextualisation of past contexts. Lovell's (1989:5) insights may have particular relevance to Dukuduku:

> Displacement and the experiential narratives which derive from such a condition are not intermediary statements. The lived experience of migration, exile or other forms of dislocation may uproot settled locality, but it is not in itself a condition in between, since meaning is derived *in situ* from dislocation itself. In addition, memories of settlement, of particular belonging to a highly localised place, may act to counterbalance the dislocation and displacement felt at particular junctures in history. Locality in this sense becomes multivocal, and belonging itself can be viewed as a multifaceted, multilayered process which mobilises loyalty to different communities simultaneously.

Sound and place in Dukuduku
In the following section, I will examine a number of songs that were collected by student researchers in Dukuduku. All of these songs originated elsewhere. However, while their meanings may be rooted in other places and times, their performance in Dukuduku gives them new relevance in the present. For the most part, old songs are performed with little conscious examination of their meanings and references. The experience of actively collecting them from community elders (often grandparents and neighbours) provided the young students with an opportunity to appraise their inherited practices anew, and to discuss the relevance of the cultural and environmental knowledge contained within them to their own experiences and contexts.

The first two songs refer to a quintessential social institution in all Dukuduku cultures: marriage. While the ritual processes may have changed significantly, certain songs continue to be sung within the context of courting and marriage today, retaining the memories of social/gender mores and practices of earlier times.

The following song is performed by women on the mouth bow or the Jew's harp. The Austrian jew's harp was introduced into South Africa by European travellers and explorers, possibly as early as the late-1700s. It became widely performed by young Nguni women, who added it to their repertoire of traditional mouth bows: the *umqangala*, made from river reed, and the *isizenze*, constructed with a deeper wooden stave and played by rasping corrugations carved into the outer stave with a small stick. Today, these instruments are generally remembered by elderly women only, and are performed in Dukuduku by basket weavers and market traders from the Maputaland area.

Mouth bows were customarily played by young women to accompany walking; their short repetitive phrases used to provide rhythmic impetus to the act of walking and to alleviate the boredom of traversing long distances across the mountains. The melody, which is created by placing the instrument against the mouth, and using the mouth cavity and epiglottis to manipulate and amplify pitches and their harmonics, follows the contour of a spoken phrase:

Deda endleleni, Nkolombela
Move off the pathway, Nkolombela

This song is said to have been composed by a young woman while walking to the river to fetch water. On her way, she encountered Nkolombela, a young suitor who confronted her on the pathway and declared his love for her. Rather than rejecting his affections outright, she expressed her lack of interest by asking him to move off the pathway so that she may continue on her way.

The song is significant in the way it uses spatial representation – i.e. the pathway – as a metaphor for social relations. Pathways are a significant symbol of social interconnectedness. However, while their places of origin and destination may be determined, they are in themselves intermediary spaces; spaces of social liminality and negotiation. In the past, pathways were spaces where young women and men could associate with one another away from the restrictions imposed on them by parents and older siblings in the household. The pathway to the river, in particular, is often referred to as the site where young men would wait for women in order to talk to, and proposition them.

While many Khula residents have embraced Christianity, certain traditional practices such as *lobola* (the giving of cattle by the groom to the bride's family) remain central to the marriage transaction. The following song is sung by women (many of whom have relocated to Dukuduku from the Maputaland borderlands) to the accompaniment of the *umakhweyana* bow:

Aayi imbombosha
Wemaganazonke
Wemalanda nkomo
Lisheshe lashona imbombosha

Hey, little cattle egret
You who has married everyone
You who fetches cows
The sun sets early, little egret

This song uses the inter-relationship between the cattle and the cattle egret as a metaphor for the practice of *lobola*. In it, the cattle egret symbolises a young woman. The song suggests that where there are young women, there will always be cattle given in marriage. A woman who is able to marry early in life will complete the *lobola* transaction with alacrity – the ritual transaction manifest in the image of the setting sun – and will thus bring prosperity to her family.

The following song, which is sung by women in a mixture of siSwati and isiZulu, is a commentary on the disintegration of the family due to labour migrancy:

Kulomuzi kaBaba noMama
Kukhanyis'ubani lomlilo ovutha entabeni?
Kukhanyis'ubani?
In the house of my father and mother
Who is burning a fire on the other side of the mountain?
Who is burning?

This song, which is reminiscent of the *umakhweyana* song discussed earlier in the paper, but is sung by elderly women who relocated to Dukuduku from the north-west of KwaZulu-Natal, expresses anxiety about social change brought about by the prolonged absence of family members from the household. It was originally performed (conceivably in the 1940-50s) by young women who would have remained at their rural homes while their men travelled to the cities to work. The city was a distant and unknown place for most women, and the mountain is consequently constructed as both a symbolic and a literal barrier beyond which the singer cannot see and does not understand. The fire burning on the other side of the mountain is personified as an agent of social change; that which may be dangerous, may not be controlled, and may potentially destroy the home.

The final song explores the use of natural imagery to express political protest. It was sung by men in the Ndumo area who were demonstrating against land dispossession in the 1950s:

Baleka mfana, lashona ilanga
Gijima mfana, awekho amanzi
Awekho amanzi asemfuleni
Run boy, the sun is setting
Run boy, there is no water
There is no water; it is in the river

The narrative of the song centres on the daily collection of water from the river for household consumption, a task normally associated with women and symbolising a necessary life-sustaining activity. The image of the setting sun is used as a pronouncement that time (and the tolerance of the protesters) is running out. The lack of water refers to the land and natural resources that have been denied them by the divisive legislations of the apartheid system. The singers rally support by suggesting that while there may not have these resources, they may be claimed back if the appropriate and timely action is taken.

In the above, we see how songs serve as repositories of information about the cultural histories and practices of the Dukuduku people. While they may be known to different people in the community, and thus reflect different cultural and geographic heritages, these histories and practices constitute the essence of identity in the Dukuduku community. It is in recognition of the multifacetedness of their heritages (as highlighted by Lovell), that loyalty to new locality may be mobilised.

Common to these songs is the poetic association between natural imagery and culture, each highlighting the ways in which trees, birds or conditions of the landscape are intimately interwoven with conceptualisations of self, human relations and cultural meanings. Viewed in this light, we see how nature may transcend locality, may be repositioned in the present, and may be understood more generally as a vital and ongoing cultural asset.

Project Reflection and Action

In the final section of the essay, I will briefly focus on some of the ways that we attempted to link cultural knowledge to environmental agency.

Our first exercise in reflection and evaluation occurred through a series of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) workshops comprising youth researchers, community elders (who had been particularly supportive of the project initiative), school teachers and local Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife community conservation officers. During these workshops, it became evident that the students had begun to move from a position of discomfort with their traditions and practices, to appreciate how much they already knew, and to better understand the value of cultural and environmental knowing as both personally and socially meaningful. It also became clearer to them that the reckless felling of trees for the establishment of a *Eucalyptus* woodlot, or to plant sugar cane, would not only lead to the loss of indigenous flora and fauna, but also to the loss of resources that support and nurture their very cultural identities. Although the value of the trees as an immediate economic resource cannot be disputed, they began to understand that this was a short-term solution only. Without the trees and plants, they would not be able to perform vital ancestral ceremonies or procure medicines (practices which are still widely followed by most residents), and they would no longer be able to associate with the sounds, smells and sensual landmarks that are intrinsic to their subjective knowledge of place. For some of the teachers and wildlife officers, these workshops provided an important forum for the development of a more inclusive conceptualisation of environmental education.

Secondly, we used various creative media to display our findings to the public and to hereby stimulate broader discussion about the culture-environment interface. The entire project had

been documented photographically, and an exhibition featuring people, cultural practices and the natural locality was mounted at the school. The exhibition was open to the public, and the students used the opportunity to discuss what had been revealed to them through the documentation process. These informal interactions encouraged the Dukuduku people to talk more candidly about the forests in relation to their own senses of cultural place. Importantly, they did not need to be reactive, as has been the tendency of public forums which deal with land, natural resources and management rights in the area. Rather, these discussions focused on the value of land, trees and natural resources in relation to identities, histories and what it means to belong to place.

Finally, an archive was established in the school library for public use. This consisted of a custom-made cupboard that housed a television/video player, copies of the many hundreds of hours of video- and audio-recorded interviews, hardcopy transcriptions and translations of all interviews and related discussions, as well as books related to local environmental and cultural issues.

Methodological Challenges

In advocating participatory research, so too am I mindful of the restrictions of this approach. Processes can be frustratingly slow, time-consuming, and often difficult to sustain. Chambers' analogy of 'handing over the stick' (1997) herein deeply challenges the inclination of the project coordinator to shape research priorities and, for the sake of expediency, steer the processes.

As with any community development project, the most pressing challenge is to achieve local buy-in in order to ensure that the process will develop a momentum of its own. This was not always my experience, one of the reasons being that high school learners are busy and participate in a range of extra-curricula activities. In addition, teachers' schedules are often over-extended, and while they may support the educational value of activities initiated by outsiders, such projects may represent yet another responsibility on their part. To an extent, these obstacles may be overcome by careful scheduling, by consistent and open communication, and by constantly revisiting project goals and outcomes.

Such an initiative also requires resources in order to establish a functioning public facility. After the initial purchase of tape recorders, cassette and video tapes, video camera equipment, batteries, a lock-up cupboard and computers for data storage, additional funds are required to ensure that the documentation process is sustained, that materials are duplicated and transcribed, and that they are transferred onto an accessible format for use by teachers or interested others. Once start-up resources for the archive have been depleted, it is unlikely that a school would be able to assume financial responsibility for its upkeep.

Having managed the project for three years, we decided to resolve the issue of sustainability and funding by merging the project with another school project that was directed by a local community conservation NGO.[11] The focus of this project was to clear the school premises of alien invader plants and to construct a 'Sacred Forest' walk. While orientated more directly towards environmental education, our respective project objectives were essentially complementary. As this NGO had a long-term vision for its project at the school and was

in the financial position to employ a full-time project manager, the projects were eventually combined under their direction.

Conclusion

Focusing on music and associated rituals as repositories of both cultural and environmental meaning, the *Azibuye Emasisweni* documentation project in Dukuduku employed participatory methodologies in order to set in motion a conscious repositioning of self and locale. Promoting dialogue through the recovery and public dissemination of cultural and environmental heritages may be an empowering process, may encourage community building, and may challenge the reductionist global gaze that is typically advanced by eco- and cultural tourism. Through active reflection of self, community and senses of place, the project sought to raise awareness about the value of the environment as a cultural asset, and in so doing, to support broader initiatives in the region to achieve a more integrated, community-driven paradigm for the custodianship of the environment.

Notes on the Contributor

Angela Impey received her doctorate in anthropology/ethnomusicology from Indiana University, USA. For many years she worked as a senior lecturer in ethnomusicology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and is presently working as a freelance social development specialist in Ethiopia and Sudan. Email: ai244@cam.ac.uk.

Endnotes

1   The project was conducted under the auspices of the School of Music, University of KwaZulu-Natal, and made possible with funding from MMINO (South African-Norwegian Fund for Music Education and Research) and the South African National Research Foundation (Indigenous Knowledge Systems Focus Area).

2   See Cocks, Dold and Sizane (2004), and Sunderland and Ndoye (2004), amongst others.

3   For further discussion regarding the educational applications of IKS (referred to also as 'indigenous knowing systems' or a 'knowing-in-context perspective'), see O'Donoghue and Neluvhalani (2002).

4   According to the 'Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage' adopted by UNESCO in 1974, a World Heritage Site relates to an area in which the natural and cultural assets are considered of outstanding universal conservation and aesthetic value. Once granted this status, UNESCO helps to protect and manage the Site, and encourages participation of local communities in the preservation of its cultural landscapes. See: www.unesco.org.

   Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) is broadly defined as a development approach that promotes the sustainable use and conservation of natural resources, and supports rural development through community participation and the creation of economic incentives. Its aim is to alleviate rural poverty and promote conservation by building rural economies and empowering communities to manage resources for their long-term social, economic and ecological benefits. See:

Shackleton and Campbell (2000).

5   Most *umakhweyana* bow players that I have encountered in Dukuduku originate from Nongoma. This example is therefore considered pertinent to the discussion.

6   *-thathawe* also refers to a person who walks with a stoop.

7   This assessment was made during the first months of research, during which numerous conversations held with Dukuduku residents revealed a surprising lack of knowledge of the musical practices of the area. When asked about what musical genres or instruments were played, I was consistently told that the only music performed these days was religious music associated with the many churches in Khula village. My later findings revealed that there is in fact a great diversity of music in the area which is performed for a variety of occasions and in a various locations. When this was subsequently pointed out to residents such as the school headmaster, their response was one of incredulity and dismay.

8   For further discussion on the constructions of 'Zuluness' through cultural tourism, see Hamilton (1998).

9   *Ziziphus mucronata* (buffalo thorn; Zulu *mphafa*)

10   *Sclerocarya birrea* (marula)

11   The Wildlands Trust in association with the Living Lakes Foundation.

References

Bruner, E. & Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. (1994). Masaai on the lawn: Tourist realism in East Africa. *Cultural Anthropology*, 9(2), 435–470.

Chambers, R. (1997). *Whose reality counts? Putting the first last.* London: ITDG Publications.

Cocks, M., Dold, Tony & Sizane, N. (2004). A new broom. *Veld and Flora*, December, 158–161.

Cohen, E. (1984). The sociology of tourism: Approaches, issues, and findings. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 10, 373–392.

Crick, M. (1989). Representation of international tourism in the social sciences: Sun, sex, sights, savings and servility. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 18, 307–344.

Griggs, R. (1999). *The cultural dimensions of environmental decision-making.* Centre for World Indigenous Studies: www.cwis.org/fwdp/artrack.html

Hamilton, C. (1998). *Terrific majesty. The powers of Shaka Zulu and the limits of historical invention.* Cape Town and Johannesburg: David Philip.

Lovell, N. (Ed.). (1998). *Locality and belonging.* London and New York: Routledge.

MacCannell, D. (1989). Staged authenticity: Arrangements of social space in tourist settings. *American Journal of Sociology*, 79(3), 589–603.

Murombedzi, J. (1998). The evolving context of community-based natural resource management in sub-Saharan Africa in historical perspective. Plenary presentation of the International Workshop on Community-Based Natural Resource Management, The World Bank Group, Washington D.C., USA (10–14 May).

Murphree, M. (1991). Communities as resource management institutions. *Gatekeeper Series* No. SA36.

O'Donoghue, R. & Neluvhalani, E. (2002). Indigenous knowledge and the school curriculum:

A review of developing methods and methodological perspectives. In Janse van Rensburg, E., Hattingh, J., Lotz-Sisitka, H. & O'Donoghue, R. (Eds), *Environmental education, ethics and action in southern Africa*. EEASA Monograph. Pretoria: HSRC Press. pp.121–134.

Odora-Hoppers, C. (1998). Indigenous knowledge and the integration of knowledge systems: Toward a conceptual and methodological framework. A discussion document prepared for the Human Sciences Research Council.

Revill, G. (2000). Music and the politics of sounds: nationalism, citizenship, and auditory space. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 18, 597–613.

Shackleton, S. & Campbell, B. (Eds). (2000). Empowering communities to manage natural resources: case studies from southern Africa. USAID SADC NRM Project No. 690-251.12.

Smith, Valerie (Ed.). (1989). *Hosts and guests. The anthropology of tourism* (2nd edn). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.

Sunderland, T. & Ndoye, O. (Eds). (2004). *Forest products, livelihoods and conservation: Case studies of non-timber forest products systems. Volume 2 – Africa*. Bogor, Indonesia: CIFOR.

Urry, J. (1990). *The tourist gaze*. London: Sage.