Applied or advocacy ethnomusicology has yet to be developed as a formal sub-field in South Africa, yet researchers of music have the advantage of being at the forefront of a social reconstruction impetus that provides opportunities for relevant social engagement, the remodelling of research foci, the expansion of multidisciplinary applications, and the utilisation of participatory methodologies that have yet to be explored in research on performance. This paper is presented in the form of a report of my recent explorations into the operational interface between ethnomusicology, environmental conservation and sustainable development in the Dukuduku Forests of northern KwaZulu Natal. In so far as the study is situated in a community that resides within an environmentally protected area, it extends the notion that culture is as much a part of the treasure of the landscape as are its faunal, floral and marine resources. The premise herein, is that songs, dances and ritual processes present rich repositories of local knowledge about the environment, and are particularly relevant signifiers of local meaning systems in a context where these systems may no longer be learned through apprenticeships or oral tradition, due to geographic displacement and rapid socio-economic transformation. Broadly therefore, the project strives to examine the interdependencies between symbolic practices and natural resource use, and to explore ways in which deep-rooted cultural wisdoms can be recast to generate an organising paradigm for the sustainable custodianship of the environment, and herein empower the communities to participate more equitably in the development of the region.

The people of the Dukuduku Forests of the Greater St. Lucia Wetlands Park Authority are amongst the poorest in northern KwaZulu Natal. They are also amongst the most controversial. Having been evicted from the eastern shores of the St Lucia estuary in the 1950s, when the white Nationalist Government proclaimed the area a National Forest, they returned in the late 1980s to claim legitimate ownership of the land, where they now subsist by way of slash-and-burn subsistence agriculture, fishing, craft production and tourism. Not all

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1 I would like to thank Louise Meintjes for her commentary on an earlier draft of this paper.
2 The St Lucia Wetlands Park is approximately a quarter of a million hectares in size, and is located on the northeastern coast of KwaZulu Natal. 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 an exceptionally wide variety of animal, bird, marine and plant species. The Dukuduku forests are located in the southern region of the Park, some 250 km north of the city of Durban.
residents can claim ancestral connection with Dukuduku however. Some attempted to escape violence from other areas of the province; some sought land, employment or other lifestyle opportunities; a small number are immigrants from Mozambique.

Official title lodged with the KwaZulu Natal Land Claims Commission in 1991 by the Dukuduku community attracted extensive media attention as one of the first successful land settlements by a displaced black community in South Africa. Perhaps as highly publicised, however, has been the battle waged by the Save the St. Lucia Campaign (an umbrella of more than 200 environmental organisations) that sought to protect the wetland dunes from titanium mining, prevent the rapid deforestation of the indigenous coastal forests, and to encourage greater exploitation of nature-tourism in the area.

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. As a result of its massive tourism potential, it has become necessary for the KwaZulu Natal Nature Conservation Services to consider a more comprehensive, sustainable approach towards conservation that is concerned not only with the preservation of its plant and animal resources, but significantly with the people, culture and local knowledge. Consequently, decentralised decision-making, recognition of community rights, and the incorporation of local communities into joint management schemes are currently being investigated in an attempt to decrease conflict over resource management, as a means towards ensuring biodiversity, and as a way to boost revenue potential to local peoples. This integrationist approach represents a dramatic departure from the old South African “fortress” approach to conservation, wherein rural communities who fell within areas demarcated for National Parks or Forests would be forcibly removed, with no consideration given to the value of local knowledge in environmental decision-making, and less still to the ways in which locality and natural resources play a fundamental role in the social, cultural and spiritual identities of local communities. However, while material resources may be in place within the new dispensation, and the commercial benefits calculated, the community stakeholders and cultural assets have yet to be identified, thus ensuring that policy development will build on community strengths and participation.

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3 In the run up to, and following the first democratic elections in 1994, there was an escalation of violence in KwaZulu Natal between supporters of the African National Congress and the Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party.

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](http://www.unesco.org)
For the 15 000+ residents of Dukuduku’s main settlement, Khula Village, the notion of “community” is defined by a spatial boundary and by common economic interests in the resources of the area. Although mostly Zulu-speaking, people represent diverse regional cultural differences, and retain a high level of mobility. In addition, Khula Village is an unusual combination of urban and rural. While having the physical profile of a peri-urban township, it is positioned deep within a National Park; and while it functions with an urban infrastructure, it remains politically represented by hereditary traditional leadership.

For the newly settled residents of Khula Village, the construction of locality (i.e. the claim on territory, the recreation of sense of place and the development of social bonds) is likewise being fashioned by conflicting forces. While the concerns of the residents themselves are with the development of a community infrastructure, job creation, and poverty alleviation, development visions for the region are being significantly shaped by its recent accession to World Heritage status, which defines human action in terms of the preservation imperatives of the natural landscape.

Making further impact on this disjuncture is the overwhelming development thrust arising out of eco- and cultural tourism, which feature as the major foci for income-generation in the Greater St. Lucia Wetlands Park Authority. As has been demonstrated elsewhere, cultural tourism has the tendency to reduce identity to a singular, generic “Other”. Tourism initiatives in KwaZulu Natal capitalise on the global imagination of the Zulu as the quintessential African Warrior Nation, an image that is framed in an idealised, historic moment, and that perpetuates their representation as authentic, potent, and uncontaminated. In as much as cultural tourism feeds on mediated images of the “noble savage”, so eco-tourism trades on the recurrent tropes of the African landscape based on images of an endless, pristine wilderness teeming with wildlife, and into which are inserted “natural ” but soon to vanish cultures (Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994).

The contrast between the internal processes of community building (which arise out of the challenges of modernisation), and the externally defined environmental, economic and development visions for the region (which focus on an idealised past and on cultural uniformity), provided the thematic disjuncture which this project aims to address. Since the Dukuduku people are extremely

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5 The Dukuduku forests historically have been known as a place of refuge. Despite its volatile past, Khula Village has become associated with hope, regeneration and opportunity, and hence the choice of the name “Khula”, which means “we are small but growing”.

6 While the UNESCO convention draws attention to the importance of cultural diversity within areas designated World Heritage status, little work is being undertaken to document indigenous cultures in South African World Heritage sites, particularly in relation to their value in environmental decision-making. See Griggs, 1994. www.cwis.org/fwpdp/artrack.html

7 See Urry 1990; Smith 1989; and MacCannell 1989, amongst others.

8 For further discussion on cultural tourism in KwaZulu Natal, see Hamilton 1998.
poor, their survival appears to depend on their conforming to the visions and requisites defined by external agencies. However, they are well positioned to develop agency through self-representation, which builds upon environmental value and cultural significance.

**Linking ethnomusicology to community development and environmental action**

My involvement with the Dukuduku community was initiated in 2000 by a request from the Dukuduku Development and Tourism Association to undertake a musical survey of the region and to assist in the conceptualisation and production of a musical display towards a more encompassing cultural tourism initiative. Since the village is located in an indigenous forest system that falls within a World Heritage Site, the livelihood potentials for the community are restricted by the preservationist parameters of the Unesco Convention. Commercially profitable ventures such as fishing, the collection of mussels, the harvesting of reeds for the construction of wedding or sleeping mats, the collection of medicinal plants, and the use of indigenous wood for the crafting of tourist art are strictly proscribed. The economic value attached to these products on the open market has resulted in massive over-harvesting in the past, and many of these species are now listed as endangered. Khula Village is, however, situated on the key access route to the tourist town of St. Lucia, and the community 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, the development vision of the community has progressively begun to focus on eco- and cultural tourism as their primary route to poverty alleviation.

While I welcomed the opportunity to participate in a community-driven initiative, I was apprehensive about the long-term value of tourism in Dukuduku. Eco- and cultural tourism is vigorously embraced in South Africa as an ideal economic base for underdeveloped communities, but I feared that these ventures could run the risk of corroding the already tenuous social fabric of this community. From an economic standpoint, I was concerned that tourism would inevitably benefit some (the gate-keepers, those with resources, men) and exclude others (the poor, women, the aged). The construction of a cultural spectacle based on a fabricated, historicised cultural image would not assist in the establishment of a community identity, which in reality is based on diversity and difference. Nor would such an exercise assist people in negotiating the complex dialectic between “traditional” and “modern”, which feature as concurrent facets of their contemporary lives and identities. Perhaps of greatest concern, however, was that in spite of its privileged geographic location, Khula Village is situated at the epicentre of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa. Additionally, due to

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9 The Dukuduku Development and Tourism Association, more recently named the Simunye Association, is a community-based organisation comprising community leaders, elders and environmental NGOs.
the rising levels of poverty and unemployment in the region, crime has escalated, and is often directed at the affluent outsider. These massive social problems alone attest to the fragility of tourism as a growth industry for poor communities.

However, given that there are so few economic alternatives for the communities in the region, and that Nature Conservation bodies, NGOs and the corporate sector were resolute in their decision to develop partnerships with communities around tourism and tourism-related activities, I was not in the position to voice my somewhat academic reservations. Rather, while conducting the musical survey, I began to reflect upon ways in which the process of cultural documentation could function to benefit more than simply the tourist gaze. Since the community had shared a ten-year history only, it was clear that people were as yet unfamiliar with one another’s histories and cultural practices. Through the application of participatory research methodologies, the process of documentation could begin to stimulate dialogue and exchange between Khula residents, and could provide a platform for people to address issues of identity, meaning and community building. The development of a narrative for eco- and cultural tourist consumption would therefore be linked with an initiative that sought to actively recover the communities’ histories, identities and traditional knowledge systems, and operate as a process upon which other kinds of community interventions could be explored.

In January 2001, I established a community cultural and environmental documentation initiative at the Silethukukhanya High School in Khula Village. The aim of the documentation project is to train young researchers to build a community archive of indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage. Through the documentation of songs, dances and ritual processes, the project aims to stimulate public discussion concerning “traditional meaning” (as claimed and understood by Dukuduku residents), identity and self-representation. Further, it aims to encourage dialogue regarding the interface between music/ritual processes on one hand, and land, natural resource use and notions of locality on the other. And finally, it aims to explore methods by which the re-memorisation of this knowledge can be reconciled with contemporary conditions and economic opportunities.

The school was identified as an appropriate institution to house the project as it operates as a cultural nucleus of the village. Through young, volunteer student researchers, the project could network into the wider community by way of families, friends and neighbours. Information collected would have direct educational value and would contribute materials towards the development of the school’s Cultural Studies Focus,10 which necessarily draws

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10 Cultural Studies falls within the Arts and Culture Learning Area, which is one of eight categories of learning within Outcomes Based Education (OBE). OBE was recently introduced into the South African high school system by the National Ministry of Education as a more flexible, open learning system, basic to which is the privileging of the needs, experiences and capacities of the learners in the attainment of knowledge and formal certification. Within it, Arts and Culture are defined as an integral part of life, embracing the spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional aspects of human society.
on local knowledge and practices. And further, the project would provide skills training to researchers and would herein open a range of post-school vocational possibilities, otherwise unattainable to the average Khula school-leaver. Lastly, the culture-environment focus of the project would complement other initiatives at the school, namely the restoration of a segment of indigenous forest within the school premises into a Sacred Forest walk, and an indigenous plant nursery.

For the advocacy ethnomusicologist, positioning oneself at the interface between music, environmentalism and community development poses a number of theoretical and methodological challenges. It presents the opportunity for new multidisciplinary intersections that is at once exciting, but also demands that one gains knowledge of new discourses and disciplinary trajectories, all of which have their own ideological agendas and professional priorities. The challenge of placing one’s footprint across academic/professional sectors may be equalled by the challenge of repositioning oneself within one’s own disciplinary territory. Historically, there has always been something of an uncomfortable relationship between theoretical and applied fields in the human sciences, the subtext being that academia is superior to the theoretically unsophisticated and ethically problematic wanderings of applied work. To some extent this schism remains, despite recent reconsideration that applied anthropology (and by extension, ethnomusicology) be viewed as an integrated theoretical and practical field. Within this frame, the action-orientated undertakings of applied anthropology do not detract from the unity of general anthropology, but rather enrich it through a mutually beneficial relationship (Johannsen 1992:73).

In developing an applied methodology in Dukuduku, I have attempted to draw on theoretical insights offered in the intersections between ethnomusicology, performance studies, oral history, environmental anthropology, social geography and development studies. In linking these particular disciplines, I was encouraged by Brosius’s assertion that “while there may have been a proliferation of research around contemporary environmentalism with particular regard to how environments are constructed, represented, claimed and contested, there is an urgency in the broader field of environmental anthropology to better understand ways in which particular topologies—constructions of actual and metaphorical space—are discursively produced and reproduced” (Brosius 1999:281). The underlying concern herein is in how people transform landscapes into places of human action, and how nature is imbued with meaning by, and for social praxis and identity. As Lovell suggests: “Nature—be it in the form of landscape, architecture or any other form of habitat—may be understood differently if considered against the background of human experience. Of course nature is also instrumental in shaping social relational discourses, and it is obvious that it is also part of social praxis. But nature is mutually reflexive in its own rapport to human beings. It serves to shape a human consciousness about

Culture embodies not only expression through the arts, but also modes of life, behaviour patterns, heritage, knowledge and belief systems.

11 Brosius’s (1999) definition of environmentalism is that referring to the broad field of discursive constructions of nature and human agency.
emplacement, about the workings of the human body, and provides a reflection against which human imagery of the self, at individual and social levels, can be mapped and experienced” (Lovell 1998: 9).

The symbolic embodiment of nature and its role as mediator of identity is not new to ethnomusicology or performance studies. Jackson (1989) argues that nature extends beyond cultural categories and ontological classifications. He claims that humans enter into a more complex dialectical relationship with landscape where nature itself becomes inscribed onto bodies, and provides both the foundation and the outcome of contextual interactions. In this regard, Jackson suggests that knowledge through artistic expression (such as dance) may be a particularly revealing way to understand natural agency. The performative aspects of ritual activities are considered essential in anchoring belonging, and in endorsing it through social practice.

Seeger (1987), in his analysis of the musical life of the Suya of Upper Xingu in Brazil, provided insight into the interconnectedness between nature, music, dance, speech and other forms of communication in the construction of sense of place or locale. His work extends the notion that it is through music and dance that fundamental aspects of Suya social organisation are recognised, social time is ritually articulated, and an entire cosmological system is grasped (Stokes 1994: 2). Similarly, Roseman focused on how the Temiar of the Malaysian rainforest inscribe in their songs, crucial forms of knowledge of the landscape in a manner that serves to “map and mediate their relationships with the land and each other” (Roseman 1998: 111). Feld (1982) analysed how the expressive modalities of weeping, poetics and song account for how the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea construct their world. He argues that nature (as manifest in forest, waterfalls, rivers, birds, insects, day and night, and annual seasonal changes) provides a visual-auditory-sensate metaphor of self, place and time, and herein become a “reflection” or mirror for Kaluli social relationships (Feld 1984: 395). Finally, contemporary identity amongst Aboriginal Australians is profoundly invested in land, which is assigned exceptional spiritual and cultural importance. Contemporary economic and political empowerment is associated with access to sacred sites and significant landmarks, which are laid claim to through songlines and dream narratives (Magowan 1994).

Land, locality and belonging play themselves out in the South African annals as a painful and unresolved lament. Unlike the research undertaken by Seeger, Roseman, and Feld, who focus on the musical constructions of place by societies which remain profoundly rooted in their cultural landscapes, the people of Dukuduku have been expelled from ancestral place, successively relocated to regions that were geographically, culturally and politically unfamiliar, and pressured into urban labour migration by rural poverty. Here, locality cannot be solely predicated upon collective identity and a sense of cohesion or cultural commensality, as Lovell might suggest (Lovell 1998: 4). Rather, locality in Dukuduku would have to be mobilised as a more complex and dynamic concept of recreation of place, a process that would link political displacement, cultural and spiritual memory, economic well-being and global gaze.
During the first interviews conducted by the student researchers with their elders, it became evident that the legacy of successive displacement and rapid modernisation has rendered most residents unable, or unwilling, to readily articulate their value of sense of place:

(Researcher) How did you feel when you left your ancestors and the land you were used to?
(Baba Dube) We felt deep pain. It is heart breaking to have to leave your place and head for an unknown destination.
(Researcher) Do you get the chance to go and speak to your ancestors?
(Baba Dube) You find that where your ancestors were, there are now only plantations and sugar cane. What could we do? We were defeated. As we are residing here, we were defeated. We are here because we respect the law and don’t want to be beaten like those who remain in the forests.12 (Interviewed by student researcher, Professor Nthombela, Khula Village, April 2001)

However, in describing their cultural practices, many interviewees revealed that the essence of their identity remained invested in the ongoing dependence—functional, cultural and spiritual—on land and natural resources. For the Zulu people in general, music, dance and ritual processes are dynamic loci where landscape most vividly articulates with notions of identity and sense of place. Like the Australian Aboriginals, they relate to land through “songlines” (manifest as izibongo personal-praises or amahubo ceremonial songs that link ancestors with families, clans, the nation) in which rivers, mountains, forests, and birds are typically recalled to situate one in the geographic, genealogical and political present. Despite the pervasive influences of westernisation in Dukuduku, rituals continue to depend upon reeds, animal sacrifices, bones, skins, medicinal plants, water and sacred sites as signifying materials through which humanness, identity and value are enacted.

This tree—imphahlal3—in our culture is used when men are going to an important ceremony. They crush the leaves early in the morning before talking to anyone. Then they bathe in the liquid extract in the middle of the cattle kraal.14 Culturally, this is the medicine of chiefs and izangoma (healers). If you have this tree in your yard, you cannot cut it down because it has been blessed by the ancestors. When a person is possessed with ancestral spirits, and the spirit is weak, the leaves and roots of this tree are crushed in a bowl. You have to use a stick from the same tree to stir the liquid. When you drink it, you will vomit, and this way, your spirits will regain their power. (Gogo Mathonsi interviewed by student researcher, Zama Simelane, Khula Village, October 2001)

12 Some of the Dukuduku people have not settled in Khula Village, but remain in the indigenous forests where they are treated as illegal squatters.
13 Brachylaena discolor
14 The cattle kraal is a sacred space in the Zulu homestead; it is where family ancestors are addressed, oxen are ceremonially slaughtered, and family amahubo ceremonial songs are performed. The kraal is strictly designated as a male space.
Fostering a process of dialogue through the research of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) appeared to me to be both methodologically challenging and politically apposite.\(^\text{15}\) In South Africa, the recovery, protection and mainstreaming of indigenous knowledge has been placed at the forefront of post-1994 development policies, as implemented by the Ministry of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, and by research bodies such as the Human Sciences Research Council and the National Research Foundation.\(^\text{16}\) The recovery of IKS is motivated by an attempt to open new moral and cognitive spaces within which constructive dialogue and engagement for sustainable development can begin, and essential to which, is consideration of how knowledge can 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.\(^\text{17}\) IKS, as manifest in music, dance and ritual processes, seeks the recovery of meaning systems as its principle reference.

**Participatory research and action**

Since the Dukuduku cultural and environmental documentation project is motivated by a commitment to sustainable development, the methodological processes draw fundamentally on the participation of the Dukuduku people, for whom project incentives, processes and outcomes must be meaningful. I have drawn on the Participatory Research and Action model (PRA) as formally promulgated by British sociologist, Robert Chambers (1997), and most commonly applied in health, agriculture and environmental development sectors. Realising the shortcomings of development policies and methods of implementation of the 1950s and 1960s, which sought solutions to universal health access, employment, education and environmental protection through western models of modernisation, Chambers began to explore new development methodologies drawing on bottom-up problem identification and solutions for action.\(^\text{18}\) In his words, PRA seeks

\(^\text{15}\) Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) refers to a combination of knowledge systems encompassing technology, social, economic, philosophical, legal and governance. The term refers to the body of knowledge that exists outside of formal education systems but that have enabled communities to survive.

\(^\text{16}\) Although fairly contentious in South Africa, the designation “indigenous” is broadly applied to people of African decent.

\(^\text{17}\) This position was ratified by the 1992 UN Convention on Environment and Development.

\(^\text{18}\) This paradigm shift owes much to the work and inspiration of Brazilian educationalist and political activist, Paulo Friere (1972), who maintained that the poor and exploited should not be judged according to externally imposed systems and standards, but can and should be enabled to analyse their own reality. The Freirian model, referred to as Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), has been associated with adult education.

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actively to involve people in generating knowledge about their own condition and how it can be changed, to stimulate social and economic change based on the awakening of the common people, and to empower the oppressed. The techniques used in PRA include collective research through meetings and socio-dramas, critical recovery of history, valuing and applying folk culture, and the production and diffusion of new knowledge through written, oral and visual forms. (Chambers 1997:108).

Chambers’ “new professionalism” challenged the hypothesis-driven, extractive approach to data gathering by introducing a model that is flexible, and that places the needs, priorities and capacities of the people first. PRA seeks sustainability by encouraging the people to lead; to determine the agenda, to gather and analyse information and, based on capacities and infrastructure, to construct their own community action plan. The role of the professional herein is to listen and learn, and to function as a research partner, a facilitator or a catalyst to change. Essential to PRA is monitoring and evaluation, which is applied in order to enhance people’s awareness of the wealth and value of local knowledge and practices, and to empower their actions.

In addition to PRA, the project has been informed by “appreciative inquiry” or an “assets-based approach”. This methodology avoids focusing on problem identification, but emphasises cultural strengths, potential and value. Through recognition of what people have, rather than what they lack, the approach seeks to overcome perceptions of deprivation and powerlessness, and encourages self-representation. In the Dukuduku project “appreciative enquiry” is considered particularly significant in building confidence and hope, and herein challenging the hegemonic trajectory of apartheid, which used culture to systematically undermine and demoralise black South Africans.

Once the school headmaster had agreed upon the project concept and a coordinator was elected from amongst the teachers, it was the responsibility of the coordinator to select a group of senior school students to create a core group of ten researchers. Students joined voluntarily and on the basis of their interests in culture and conservation. The group comprised five female, and five male students between the ages of 16 and 18 years. In addition, we solicited the assistance of three unemployed school leavers as our interview transcribers and translators. A third element of the group comprised six elders who, having taken special interest in the documentation process as interviewees during the early phases of the project, were invited to formally join the process as project advisers and evaluators. Finally, in order to ensure sustainability of the project, we established a mentorship program at the end of the year, wherein members of the original group selected, trained and guided an additional ten young researchers.

In launching our initial discussions about the project, and in order to ensure cooperation from school faculty and community members, we solicited participation by the community leader, a number of the community elders, the school headmaster and interested teachers. With the guidance of this group, we
identified a strategy for documentation, aiming first to train young researchers to interview the elders of the community, whose memories of cultural practices and natural resource utilisation provided a precious, and endangered, source of information. Significantly, we were directed to focus on the izangoma (healers) who operate as the essential custodians of information about the environment, linking people to landscape through their knowledge of medicinal plants, their spiritual connectedness and ritual action. It was also suggested by the group of elders that we focus on information regarding rituals of attachment—birthing ceremonies, marriages, funerals and ancestral rites—that continue to provide cultural anchorage to the Dukuduku people in spite of their long history of displacement and social change. Significantly, these rituals depend on the continued use of natural resources to symbolically link people to one another, to their ancestors and to the material world. They are also the sites where songs and dances comment most powerfully upon social and historical identity and sense of geographic place.

In keeping with the techniques of PRA, and as a way to begin to ascertain perceptions of social and environmental place, our first exercise focused on the conceptual mapping of Khula Village and the surrounding forest settlements. Each member of the research team drew a map of his/her homestead and surrounding area, identifying relevant markers (shops, churches and significant natural features such as forest areas, lakes, burial grounds) and the homes of cultural spokespeople whom he/she wished to interview. We then amalgamated all of the drawings to create a composite map, marking the homes of each student researcher and preparing to progressively mark the homesteads of all community members who participated in the documentation process. In the process of creating the composite map, the students had to explain why he/she chose to include certain features; an exercise that stimulated animated discussions that revealed conceptualisations of the area as an historical, social, political, cultural and environmental domain. This exercise represented our first step towards rethinking locality and belonging.

In discussing the aims and objectives of the documentary project, we designed a loose list of questions that would operate as a directional framework in the interview process. In so doing, we applied two exercises: pie charts were used to clarify and prioritize the research agenda,19 and a matrix provided diagrammatical representation of the interrelatedness of significant musical/ritual practices and natural resources.20 The matrix is a good example of how the application of a simple visual exercise may stimulate an often-surprising level of discussion. In this instance, the exercise facilitated comprehension of the significance of the culture/nature interface, and student researchers were thereby made aware that the survival of those cultural practices that are recognised by the people to constitute the essence of their identity is dependent upon the continued

19 Using the image of a pie that can be sliced into different sizes, the pie chart operates as a simple diagram that is used by groups to negotiate the relative importance of issues.
20 The matrix is a simple table used to assess one set of items/issues against another.
stewardship of certain natural resources. In the words of one student, “Without these rituals, we cannot call ourselves Zulu”.

Most researchers chose to conduct their first interviews with grandparents or elderly relatives with whom they felt comfortable. Once each had completed two or three general interviews, they decided to focus on cultural processes that were of particular interest to them, all of which are marked by a specific repertory of songs and dances: female rites of passage (e.g. ngcekeza first-menstruation ceremony; umemulo coming-of-age ceremony) and the ritual use of natural resources in cleansing, medicating and providing ancestral protection to young women; marriage ceremonies (which are complex, highly ritualised ceremonies and involve a protracted series of symbolic exchanges between families that draw significantly on images of land, ancestors and natural resources); the life-passages of boys, focusing on the passing on of indigenous ecological knowledge related to farming, hunting, the procurement of wild fruit and fishing; musical instruments and music making (for example gourd and mouth-bows, whistles, ocarinas and drums, all of which are made from natural resources specific to the region, but are severely endangered); and death, funeral ceremonies and ancestral worship:

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 umHlahlankosi. If it is a female ancestor, you have to collect her with a branch called umGanu. 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 student researcher, Mduduzi Mcambi, Khula Village, April 2001)

All interviews conducted by the student researchers are recorded on audiotape and are transcribed and translated from isiZulu into English. Students have been taught to record songs and instrumental performances on a high-quality DAT recorder with external microphones. Central to the documentation and evaluation process is the use of video to record both the interviews and cultural events that take place in the community. Video materials are essential in soliciting feedback through community screenings, and for increasing the network of participants. Video operates as an extremely powerful medium in giving voice to the elderly in particular.

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21 Ziziphus mucronata (buffalo thorn)
22 Sclerocarya birrea (marula)
The project does not only envisage community empowerment as a by-product of cultural dialogue and exchange, but also facilitates skills development and capacity building through the operational methods of cultural documentation. Through a joint venture established between the University of Natal, the Living Lakes Partnership Program, and the Wildlands Trust, a local conservation NGO, we have built a dedicated computer laboratory at the school which houses twenty-six reconditioned computers, and a small audio-visual unit. To ensure maximum use of documented information, all interviews are stored electronically, and all video material is copied and made available for public viewing in the audiovisual unit. One of the outcomes of the project being developed by the participants is a project website, the aim of which is to stimulate dialogue between the people of Dukuduku and indigenous forest peoples globally.

People and agency call for the translation of data into the basis for action. Through a series of PRA workshops with student researchers, elders, members of KZN Nature Conservation Services and members of the public, we have begun to explore ways in which the re-memorisation of indigenous knowledge can empower the community through improved educational resources, by networking with municipal resources and infrastructure, by feeding into existing income-generating ventures such as eco- and cultural tourism and establishing new ideas for income-generation, and by increasing local input into decision-making. As I had anticipated, since undertaking the initial musical survey, two cultural tourism ventures have been established in Khula Village, both of which are run as independent businesses by individuals who have privileged status in the community. Nevertheless, the documentation project has been able to add value to both enterprises. One company has built a traditional Zulu homestead and has constructed a narrative about Zulu life in Dukuduku based on stories, songs and themes developed by the student researchers. The representation of Zulu culture is not one of historicised uniformity, but rather follows the theme of memory, mobility and cultural dynamism. So too does it feature the notion that Zulu cultural identity is strongly located in land, nature and sense of place. The second enterprise follows the form of a “village safari” that takes place in an open vehicle. The tour addresses the historical experiences and contemporary conditions of the Dukuduku residents. One of the stops en route is the school computer laboratory, now a source of pride to the community, and an emblem of progress and opportunity. Here, tourists are presented with an explanation of the student documentation initiative, and recognition is given to the value of cultural emplacement through the collection of songs and oral

23 Living Lakes Partnership is a worldwide project that promotes sustainable development of lake areas in the world. See: www.livinglakes.org
24 The building of a computer laboratory and the acquisition of so many computers enabled the school to lobby the Ministry of Education for a dedicated Computer Studies position. Computer classes are available to all school students and computer literacy workshops are conducted over the vacation periods for members of the community.
25 The website will be launched in early 2003 as www.khulavillage.org.za
narratives. Included in this presentation is recognition of the value of electronic media in building skills and in providing a global mouthpiece through which aims and experiences of the documentation initiative may be shared. With no intervention on the part of the project participants, the tour leader has chosen to include the project as a tourist attraction.

In advocating participatory research, so too am I mindful of the restrictions of this approach. While we may have the advantage of being in close proximity to communities in South Africa where such interventions are possible, processes can be frustratingly slow, time-consuming and often difficult to sustain. Chambers’ analogy of “handing over the stick” herein deeply challenges the inclination of the researcher to shape research priorities and, for the sake of expediency, steer the processes.

However, processes chosen by others provide opportunities for cultural analysis on several levels. In attempting to do so, I have become appreciably aware of the complementarity of praxis-orientated and theoretical ethnography. Participatory methodologies generate vast amounts of information through discussion, negotiation and re-memorisation. Memories of the past become an index of contemporary sense of place, and processes of emplacement become shaped by the way narratives of the past are recreated in the present. The “scripting” of this information, in the Fabian (1990) sense, may provide insight into the making, refashioning and performance of identity and meaning. Music, dance and ritual processes are herein particularly potent indicators of the way people build relationships and recreate a sense of place.

Through the application of a documentation-reflection-action process, the Dukuduku project aims to set in motion a conscious repositioning of self and locale. Promoting dialogue through the recovery of cultural and environmental heritage may be an empowering process and may stimulate new forms of cultural production that challenge hegemonic relations and contest the reductionist global gaze, as is typically promoted through eco- and cultural tourism. Further, it is hoped that through active reflection of sense of place, the project may encourage stewardship of the environment, and assist in raising the volume of local voice to promote the well-being of an otherwise marginalised, fragmented people.

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