

Institution: SOAS University of London		
Unit of Assessment: 33 - Music, Drama, Dance, Performing Arts, Film and Screen Studies		
Title of case study: Reviving Endangered Music to Empower Marginalized Communities in Mexico and Namibia		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Professor Lucy Durán	Professor of Music	1993 - present
Dr Angela Impey	Reader in Ethnomusicology	2006 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 - 31 July 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research at SOAS into the musical traditions of marginalized and minority groups in Mexico and Namibia has led to cultural and educational impacts locally, nationally and internationally. The research re-connected Afromexican musicians in Oaxaca with West African music and musicians, while in Namibia a film of an annual heritage festival re-ignited awareness of cultural identity among the Damara people and generated international interest in their musical cultures. As a result, members of both the Afromexican and Damara communities have found a new sense of cultural identity and have increased their sense of political belonging.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Communities of African descent across Latin America, displaced by colonial land grabs and the trans-Atlantic slave trade, have found themselves at a severe socio-political disadvantage through marginalisation. This is underscored by a widespread forgetting, within and outside of these communities, of their histories and traditions. African-heritage communities have been in Oaxaca, southwest Mexico, for over 400 years but have little visibility or representation at national level. They are often mistaken for illegal immigrants; they suffer racial discrimination and until the census of 2020 they had not been counted. In Namibia, the Damara, an indigenous group, have inhabited some of the most resource-rich regions of the country. Their forced displacement under colonial and apartheid rule has rendered them barely visible in the national archive today.</p> <p>Durán (Professor of Music at SOAS since 1993) and Impey (Reader in Ethnomusicology at SOAS since 2006) have a combined total of 41 years' experience researching the musical traditions of Africa and the African diasporas. In Mexico (Afromexicans in Oaxaca) and Namibia (Damara or ≠NūKhoen), they applied innovative practice-based methodologies – workshops, concerts and recordings - to harness their research in the service of local priorities and goals.</p> <p>Durán's project draws on her research on the music of West Africa and the Caribbean. A major part of her methodology and academic output has been the production of music albums featuring lesser known and under-represented oral musical traditions. As part of a British Academy Newton Advanced Fellowship grant (2015-2017, GBP70,662) she brought this experience and methodology to research with Oaxacan communities of African heritage, in collaboration with Dr Sergio Navarrete Pellicer (Center for Research and Higher Studies in Social Anthropology, Mexico) [3.5]. Durán's practice-based research with local musicians and schoolteachers highlighted music and dance as the most tangible identity markers of Afro-Oaxacans. Unlike indigenous communities in Mexico, Afro-Oaxacan music has had almost no exposure on the national and international scene and little professional musical performance.</p>		

Durán prioritized informal music education and performance, including musical workshops with school children, on-location filming of events such as celebrations and concerts involving the children, and interviews with key practitioners [3.5]. This project provides important primary data for further research linking Afro-Oaxacan traditions with those of other Pacific Coast black communities as far south as Peru.

In order to regenerate this endangered tradition and bring greater awareness of its African heritage, Durán invited two outstanding musicians from Mali, West Africa to explore common ground in performance, particularly through the xylophone balafon, ancestor of the Mexican marimba. The Malians played key roles as teachers, performers and co-arrangers in the collaborative acoustic CD album *Forontó Afroaxaca* [3.1]. Durán was the sole music producer of the album and drew on her experience of producing over 20 albums by West African musicians.

Since 2006, Impey's research in applied ethnomusicology has focused on music, memory and place in southern Africa, and has advanced new participatory research methodologies on culture and conservation. Her book [3.3] investigating the use of song in relation to places and journeys by displaced communities in southern Africa, has received numerous awards, including the 2018 Society for Ethnomusicology Marcia Herndon Prize. Impey found that women's songs were a powerful medium to explore women's lives and livelihoods and determine their histories under past Apartheid rule, and their trajectories in contemporary political projects of land ownership, management and conservation.

Between 2014-2018, she collaborated with Sian Sullivan, Mike Hannis and Chris Low (Bath Spa University) and Rick Rohde (University of Edinburgh) in an AHRC-funded project in Namibia, "Future Pasts: Sustainabilities and Cultural Landscapes in West Namibia" (GBP797,107). Impey's research focused on the politics and memory of belonging amongst the Damara (≠NūKhoen) of west Namibia, as manifest in songs, oral histories and ritual practices [3.4]. These are important cultural registers of socio-environmental knowledge that are masked by new discourses of sustainability, but also present opportunities to perform an identity in line with various green or environmental agendas. Impey used film to document the 2016 annual Damara King's Festival [3.2]. By setting up intimate screenings with extended family groups, with the Damara King's Council and on national television, she engaged in an action research approach in dialogue with Damara audiences about their cultural histories and political memory. The outcome of such research demonstrated the complexity of the link between cultural expression, creative production and political belonging.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 3.1. Durán, 2019. *Forontó Afroaxaca* (2019, on Xquenda label, and Spotify). Available on request. **Output from British Academy Newton Fellowship project**
- 3.2. Impey, 2017. *Damara Kings Festival Film* [online] <https://www.futurepasts.net/events> OR <https://vimeo.com/224051477> Co-produced by Impey with MaMoKoBo film company, Namibia **Output from AHRC project. Shortlisted for the 2017 AHRC Film in Research award**
- 3.3. Impey, 2018. *Song Walking: Women. Music and Environmental Justice in an African Borderland* (monograph: University of Chicago Press). ISBN: 9780226538150. Submitted to REF2021. **Awarded the 2018 Society for Ethnomusicology Marcia Herndon Prize.**
- 3.4. Sullivan, S., Hannis, M., Impey, A., Low, C. and Rohde, R.F. 2016. 'Future Pasts? Sustainabilities in west Namibia - a conceptual framework for research' Future Pasts Working Papers No. 1 <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.24728.80645> **Output from AHRC project**
- 3.5. Durán & Navarrete, 2017. "Somos Negros de la Costa". Mexico: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V66nCC8w2R8&t=383s> **Output from British Academy Newton Fellowship project.** As of 20 Oct 2020 c 440,000 views and 1,059 comments

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The projects produced cultural, educational and political benefits to (a) local Damara and Afromexican communities (b) national populations in Namibia and Mexico and (c) international

communities including musicians. The main beneficiary groups included: schoolchildren, their parents and teachers, and local musicians; local community members and leaders; national radio and TV audiences in Mexico and Namibia; and international musicians and audiences in Mali, the UK and other countries. Members of both the Afromexican and Damara communities have found a new sense of cultural identity and empowerment, while national and international audiences have become aware of them and their musical traditions, often for the first time. The impact of this research is significant, given that the marginalisation of minority communities is a matter of international concern.

Regenerating awareness and pride in local marginalised identity and culture, and developing musical talent among young people

In Mexico, local interest was stimulated by providing instruments to schools, and through three intensive music workshops (each three weeks) for approx. 30 children each in 2015-2016, led by local Afromexican musicians. The project's Mexican collaborator Sergio Navarrete Pellicer said: "This musical dialogue was very fruitful. Looking for similar accompaniments, musical patterns, with which we were able to create a repertoire...It is also a recovery project because we used and made musical instruments that had disappeared in the area...and the children learned to play them. We also used local musical instruments and dances which are important emblematic symbols of the Coast black culture identity...it was a very rich sound experience for the children" [5.1, time code: 00:05:54-00:07:15]. The musicians were able to transfer their skills, and the children gained both the skills and experience of performing by organising concluding concerts, attended by approximately 500 school peers and parents. One of the children said: "We learned rhythms of songs from the Coast region which are the songs that identify us as people from the coast" [5.1, time code 00:14:30-00:14:41]. A parent said: "I am very happy about these workshops because they exploit and empower the attributes that our children already have. We always say that black people have music and rhythm inside, and sometimes it is necessary to have a little help and assurance from someone who has more experience in the world of music, and that is what the workshops were about" [5.1, time code: 00:10:24-00:10:55]. Some of the children who attended the workshops went on to an advanced training workshop, and some local musicians have launched professional performing careers. For example, as a result of this project, violinist Adalid Ventura performed at the XX Encuentro de Pueblos Negros, Mexico City, Nov 15, 2019 [5.3]. This was a major national event advocating Afromexican rights, with a live audience of c. 800 plus national television coverage. Another Afro-Oaxacan musician, Chogo Prudente, who appears on the CD Forontó Afroaxaca, was invited to record a solo album (by Mexican label Discos Corason) and to perform at the Festival Internacional Cervantino, Mexico's most prestigious international music festival. Chogo stated "This album is an educational project, a collaboration between Afro-Oaxacan musicians including children from the Pacific coast of Mexico and musicians from Mali. It has given me the opportunity to contribute two of my own songs... one of which (La Tia Joaquina) I was honoured to have as singer and interpreter the great artist..Susana Harp..I believe that if you get hold of this album you will certainly want to listen to it many times!" [5.4]. Susana Harp, president of the Mexican Cultural Commission and member of the Mexican Senate, describes the album as "an achievement of many voices – academics and artists working to raise awareness and recognition of Afromexican people" [5.2].

In Namibia, Dr. Impey commissioned and co-produced a film of the 2016 Damara King's Festival, which included traditional Damara music and dance. She then staged intimate screenings of the film and subsequent discussions with Damara groups to encourage conversations about the past and local knowledge about the land, natural resources and ritual practices. This was followed up by distributing DVDs to schools and community centres. These were shown to people in homes and community centres in order to prompt discussions about cultural heritage. Groups ranged from family groups to the Damara King's Council, totalling approx. 550 people. David / Nuseb, traditional council leader of the !Oe#gâb Daman community, felt such a film was "really needed". Others in the council agreed, raising the "question why such a film had not been made before" as the film "reminds us of our past and has really opened up our minds about our people and our heritage" [5.6]. One local teacher on the council identified the film's importance for younger Damara groups, "because most of our role models that you can see (in the film) and are there; and most of our traditional things are done there" [5.5].

Boosting the visibility and political voice of marginalised groups nationally

In Mexico, the album *Forontó Afroaxaca*, representing local Afro-Oaxacan repertoire on disc for the first time, was broadcast by 10 local indigenous music radio stations in Mexico during 2019, e.g. Radio Zacateca, and has contributed to raising the profile of the music and musicians around Central America. Local concerts were attended by members of leading national Afromexican movements. This resulted in performances by the musicians at national events such as the XX Encuentro de Pueblos Negros in Mexico City, held on 15 Nov 2019.

The project raised the political visibility of Afromexicans, enabling an accurate count of their population in the Mexican census and which will lead to better policy making. Following an amendment to the Mexican constitution in July 2019, the 2020 national census included Afromexicans for the first time. There were concerns that Afromexicans would fail to participate through lack of awareness of this change. Two tracks from the album *Forontó Afroaxaca* were selected by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (University of Mexico) as a representative soundtrack for the Mexican national television campaign “INEGI” to raise awareness of this change and to encourage Afromexicans around the country to complete their census forms [5.7a]. The INEGI videoclip was widely disseminated throughout in Oaxaca, including on Facebook [5.7b] and played on radio for two weeks in March 2020 during the census. As a result, 194,747 registered as Afromexican or Afrodescendent, becoming a highly visible minority comprising 4.7% of the population of the region [5.7c, slide/p 51]. An application by Durán for the British Council Newton Fund Impact Scheme in 2019 to continue work to professionalise music from the Costa Chica was strongly supported by Senator Susana Harp.

The film of the 2016 Damara King’s Festival was shown on primetime national television on two occasions on Saturday nights. The project also hosted a national premiere of the film in Windhoek, which was attended by council members from other ethnic groups, Namibian media and members of the cultural industries; promoters and musicians. The traditional council leader, David, notes that such exposure of Damara heritage gives courage to the Damara in the face of difficult national debates on the “issue of who is considered to be indigenous in Namibia” [5.6]. Moreover, in 2020, when the festival itself was cancelled as a result of COVID-19, the film “was used to replace the festival” [5.6] and continued to raise awareness of Damara culture in the community and nationally.

Raising international awareness of marginalised peoples’ music including among professional musicians

To generate awareness of their African heritage, Afro-Oaxacan musicians were joined by two musicians from Mali, West Africa. The Malian musicians who took part in the project were exposed to a facet of the African diaspora that they had no idea existed. Lassana Diabaté from Trio Da Kali from stated: “if you arrive in the country and see people who look like you that’s nice. I was very touched they are Africans. When they do their dance with masks... That really is something that comes from us. They are Africans.” [5.9b p11] As musicians with top international profiles, they have performed these repertoires at home and at WOMADELAIDE (Australia) and WOMAD (New Zealand) in March 2020. A BBC World Service broadcast by Durán, “The Afro-Mexicans”, featuring recordings and interviews from the workshops, reached c. 4 million listeners [5.8]. The documentary film [5.1] had 360,000 views and 890 comments on YouTube (as of 31 July, 2020). The complete album *Forontó Afroaxaca* was featured along with an interview by Durán on Spanish Radio Nacional 3’s *Músicas Posibles* (Nov 11, 2019), generating positive feedback from listeners [5.10gi and gii]. On March 13, 2020 a track was played on BBC Radio 3’s *Music Planet* (March 13, 2020), and also received positive feedback, as noted in email from a listener who singled out the track *Angata* as a “happy experience” [5.10h].

Impey hosted an exhibition “Stolen Moments: Namibian Popular Music Untold (1950s-80)” in partnership with Namibian researcher/curator, Aino Moongo in the Brunei Gallery in London from July – Sept 2019. The exhibition drew on *Future Pasts*’ focus on the politics of belonging via the recovery of untold stories, aimed at raising awareness of Namibia’s marginalized people through

their music. The exhibition was visited by 9,800 people [5.9] and Impey also co-organised 'Playback London' a full-day creative workshop on Namibian archival music. 25 musicians attended, including from Namibia and from London's music scene. A critically lauded South London songwriter and producer stated "I'm so happy I spent my afternoon with you all. Creating and sharing." [5.9 p2]. The exhibition generated media coverage in Songlines, OkayAfrica, Christian Science Monitor, RS21, and Worldnewsnet [5.10a, b, c, d, e] and on programmes on BBC Radio 3 and BBC Radio 4 [5.10fi and fii] and BBC 6 Music reaching approx. 660,000 listeners [5.9 p2]. After visiting the exhibition, the Namibian High Commissioner to London, Honorable Linda Scott stated "The significance of this project lies in that it highlights the seemingly ordinary lives of people who lived under Apartheid.. It shows how the human spirit will gravitate toward finding the creative even where the system seeks to prevent this" [5.11].

Impey's film was shortlisted for a AHRC Research in Film award in 2017 [5.12 p4]. Impey's film's focus on cultural heritage inspired the British Library's Sound Archive in 2019-20 to commission her to record the full corpus of songs by the celebrated Damara composer and performer, Michael Doeseb, the only Damara composer in Namibia. Recordings have been fully annotated and uploaded to the BL Sound Archive catalogue and available to global listeners via the website. The British Library's Head of Sound and Vision notes "[The] archive represents the only fully annotated set of recordings from this area in the British Library's collections. It is further significant in... facilitating the documentation and preservation of Michael Doeseb's personal cultural archive" [5.13].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 5.1. Feedback of Pellicer, students and teachers in intensive workshops in documentary *Somos Negros de la Costa*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V66nCC8w2R8>
- 5.2. Whatsapp message from Senator Susana Harp (Spanish)
- 5.3. Encuentro certificado - participation of musicians and researchers in the XX Meeting of Black Peoples (Spanish)
- 5.4. Translated transcription of video statement from Chogo Prudente
- 5.5. Transcript of group interview at !Oe#gâb [Damara] traditional council, Aug 2018
- 5.6. Transcript of Whatsapp message from Namibian Traditional Council leader, Oct 2020
- 5.7. Impact on Mexican census 2020: **a)** Letter from Asociación Cultural Xquenda, A.C (Spanish) and **b)** Letter from Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (Spanish with English translation); **c)** Presentacion De Resultados – Oaxaca – 2020 Censo, INEGI (Spanish)
- 5.8. **a)** BBC World Service programme The Afro-Mexicans, broadcast April 10, 2016: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p03pv0yl>; **b)** transcript
- 5.9. Letter from Head of Galleries & Exhibitions, Brunei Gallery
- 5.10. Joint media file: **a)** Reclaiming Cultural Memories – Songlines 143, June 2019; **b)** Stolen Moments Uncovers the Namibian Music That Apartheid Tried to Erase – OkayAfrica, 19 Sept 2019; **c)** Stolen Moments is saving Namibia's suppressed pop music - Christian Science Monitor, 24 Jan 2020; **d)** Review: Stolen Moments - RS21, 15 Aug 2019; **e)** Stolen Moments Namibian music history untold (1950-80s) – WordInnewsnet, 9 Sept 2019; **fi)** Damara Festival in Namibia_Dancers and King at Damara Festival_World on 3_BBC Radio 3_9 Dec 2016; and **fii)** From Our Own Correspondent – BBC Radio 4, 21 Jan 2017; **g)** Screenshot positive feedback from listeners of Spanish Radio Nacional 3s Musicas Posibles, Nov 11, 2019 (Spanish) **gii)** positive email feedback of Duran's interview and album play on Musicas Posibles (Spanish); **h)** Email – producer, BBC Radio 3's Music Planet
- 5.11. Email from Namibian High Commissioner to London
- 5.12. 2017 winners (and shortlist) – AHRC Research in Film Awards: <https://ahrc.ukri.org/innovation/research-in-film-awards/previous-winners/2017-winners/>
- 5.13. Email from Head of Sound and Vision at the British Library and link to record in British Library Sound archive: <http://cadensa.bl.uk/uhtbin/cgisirsi/x/0/0/5?searchdata1=C226%0d>