

McKerrell S.

[Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland.](#)

In: McKerrell S; West G, ed. Understanding Scotland Musically: Folk, Tradition and Policy. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2018, pp.17-29.

Copyright:

This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge in Understanding Scotland Musically: Folk, Tradition and Policy on 20/02/2018, available online:

<http://www.routledge.com/9781138205222>

Date deposited:

04/01/2018

Embargo release date:

20 August 2019



This work is licensed under a

[Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)

Abstract: This chapter examines how we might model sustainability in Scottish traditional music. Since the 1980s the growth in the marketisation of traditional music has brought increased revenues and new models of financial exchange and support for artists. Examining a series of three short case studies of (1) the sole trader, (2) the online teacher and (3) the institution, using real world ethnography, this chapter interrogates how these operate in the Scottish context. In relating these developments to the wider, international ethnomusicology of the commercialisation and heritagisation of traditional music as Intangible Cultural Heritage, it concludes that in the Scottish context and elsewhere in developed nations such as the UK that have not signed up to the 2003 UNESCO Convention on ICH, that arts and heritage policy for traditional music should avoid the rights-based discourse that are increasingly under attack in late modern capitalism. And moreover, that models of sustainability should embrace the commercial economic exchange value of traditional music alongside its social, cultural and heritage exchange values, to produce a more useful and realistic means of supporting and developing traditional music that acknowledges the co-existence of commercial and community-based musical practice.

2

Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

Simon McKerrell

There are myriad traditional arts organisations within Europe today delivering publicly funded initiatives and tuition that are not bound together in any network or actively engaged in dialogue about best practice or sustainability. In Scotland, there has been a vigorous renaissance of the traditional arts in Scottish cultural life (see Francis, Dickson and Miller, this volume) which has been driven by the post-revival commodification of Scottish traditional music and more broadly through the heritagisation of public spaces and political growth of Scottish nationalism symbolically aligned with traditional music. In this chapter I outline some of the key ideas from the ethnomusicology of sustainability elsewhere and how they might relate to musicians and collectives working in Scottish traditional music today.

Financial support for the arts (broadly defined) in the UK saw a remarkable growth from 1997 under New Labour, where the performing arts were broadly speaking collapsed into a political narrative that constructed and reformulated them as having economic and instrumental benefits (Lee et al. 2014; Alexander 2007). This narrative was very powerful and not only led to the retheorisation and emergence of the ‘cultural clusters’, ‘creative economy’ and ‘creative industries’ (over the term ‘cultural industries’) and saw an expansion of the ‘creative industries’ to include sectors such as computer software, but also a consequent expansion of the economic case linking them to growth (Desmondhalgh 2012, 175). In policy terms there was a resultant surge in UK public funding for the arts, and this included the traditional arts in Scotland (McKerrell 2014). Since the financial crisis of 2008, public funding for the arts in the UK has significantly decreased, and the sector has both bemoaned this fact, and also sought out alternative funding models and means of sustaining their economic activity and consequently the health of the performing arts sector itself. Part of this shift in Scotland has been the entry of the traditional arts into mainstream public funding alongside the other artistic genres such as literature, visual art, dance, classical music and drama. The UK has not yet signed up to the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH, which means that

2 Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

there is no formal, state-recognised, rights-based approach for recognising the cultural value of the traditional arts in the UK, and much of the support and policy for traditional music in Scotland is delivered within the commercial context of a highly professional performing arts and media sectors which form the context for these developments. This recent growth and subsequent exploration of different models of sustainability for the traditional arts has led to continuing professionalisation, festivalisation and heritage performances at home and abroad. In policy terms it is uncertain whether the Brexit might support or encourage greater engagement with UNESCO in the UK in a post-EU context, or whether it might shift Scotland and Britain further beyond the international heritage community. What is certain however is that in the context of the growth of Scottish traditional music, that analysis of the socio-political, pedagogical and cultural structures that support traditional music and dance is urgently required, both to interrogate the relations between the discursive and musical construction of authenticity and the mobilisation of it to support cultural tourism and sustainable musical communities in Scotland.

In various contexts at the local and national levels and at the pan-European level through the policies of UNESCO, traditional music has emerged as a key cultural performance of both indigeneity *and* Otherness in contemporary Europe. Festivals, musical performance, tuition as well as the manufacturing of musical instruments, clothing, artefacts, heritage tourism and literature, all now have emerged as economically and culturally significant across the European traditional arts. Traditional music, as well as having a significant commercial, professionalised presence in the performing arts sector, has also now been mobilised as ICH for heritage tourism, intercultural understanding within Europe, greater visibility of historical identities and important ethnic minority communities and improved public policy for the living cultural heritage of Europe's past. ICH policy has not only formalised some of the specific practices and policy support structures such as Fado (Portuguese song genre) and Latvian celebrations of Baltic song and dance as safeguarded and formally listed ICH, it has also lent both political and cultural authority to the practitioners of these art forms, assisted in securing state and regional funding and amplified local antagonisms between organisations, ethnicities and practitioners on the ground. The practice of nominating, securing and disseminating very discrete musical practices on the UNESCO representative list of ICH appears to be useful in the policy arena but less effective in terms of securing or sustaining these musical practices as living heritage. And in countries that have not signed the UNESCO convention such as the UK, Canada and the United States of America, there is a significant gap in our understanding of how the ICH agenda has been driven by proxy through the mediation and control of government quangos and the media. In these countries, commissioning editors, arts council officers, museum boards and broadcasters have in many

2 Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

ways acted as the tacit ICH policy makers. This may have had the advantage of allowing traditional arts in Scotland to flourish in some fairly strong experimental and creative ways, leading to commercially successful hybridisation in performances from bands such as Shooglenifty, Lau, Capercaillie and The Peatbog Fairies. However, in my view, Scotland has struggled to find state funded support for non-commercial ICH access, archiving and support, but in recent years, some has been provided via the organisation *Traditional Arts and Cultures Scotland* (TRACS) and partially via Museums, Galleries, Scotland. The result of this has been that archival recordings, collection and non-commercial practice has struggled to find support in the public square, where professional bands, festivals and international touring has modestly flourished as part of the wider professional arts scene in Scotland.

Sustainability and authenticity

The sustainability or otherwise of a performing tradition that relies upon oral tradition, or is at least derived from oral traditions, necessitates that there is an intergenerational community of practice that feels strongly about that performing tradition, and wishes to perform and pass it on. The problem with the ethnomusicological literature in this area is however that it posits commerce in a binary opposition with sustainability. Indeed, much of ethnomusicological literature on sustainability is rooted in a tacit belief that indigenous, community-based practice of musical traditions are the ideal for sustainable, real-world traditions. This is placed in opposition to commercial spaces and commodification as though the two are mutually exclusive and usually justified because of the imagined gap in authenticity that emerges in commercial and/or heritage spaces. I believe that in certain late modern Western states such as Scotland, where there are healthy performing communities and rich traditional arts practices, this dyadic relationship is outdated and too simplistic. The ecological model does not yet account for the economic models that are so necessary to supporting the grassroots communities, and often disparage attempts to capitalise financially upon traditional arts. Sustainability does require collectivisation and active participation, but we need to consider it as it is often experienced in the real world where musicians and artists can be performing on one day in front of a large crowd of paying tourists or a concert audience and the next day engaged in entirely social music making at their local pub amongst genuine friends. Performers have multiple identities which they switch between, code switching too in terms of language, sartorial style and musical performance, but they can remain authentic in different ways, to different audiences.

Jeff Todd Titon's position on sustainability in music makes the argument for a cultural policy that is modelled upon ecological models with four key principles including, diversity, limits to growth, connectedness and stewardship (Titon, 2004). Problematically however, Titon's objection to

2 Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

economic models of sustainability, and in particular the use of ICH and cultural heritage paradigms, rests upon an objection to what he calls ‘staged authenticity’ which emerges out of managed performances in heritage tourism. This tacitly assumes that there is in fact a true authenticity, or a natural authenticity in traditional and folk musics that somehow exists in social music making where there is an absence of financial exchange. He refers to these spaces where financial exchange is mediated between the performing community and a paying audience as ‘heritage spaces’ and includes ‘festivals, heritage trails, interpretive centers, and living history museums’ (2009, 120). In his words, ‘these spaces embody a paradox: what is presented there as authentic cannot possibly be so, because it is staged’ (2009, 121).

What his, and other ecological viewpoints on musical sustainability raise for me, is the tacit assumptions and underlying values that ethnomusicologists and heritage professionals hold about the kinds of music cultures that are worth sustaining. There is a disdain of professional, commodified and commercial contexts for music in much of the writing on music sustainability which pits these forms of music making against social, participatory and grassroots performance. There are a number of problems with this conception of musical sustainability which include (1) a tacit binarism that assumes that growth of commercial contexts for traditional music degrade and deplete participatory social traditional music making; (2) a failure to recognise the mixed and portfolio profiles of professional traditional musicians who themselves move between intimate and public contexts in their music making throughout their careers; and (3) longer term problems for the disciplines of ethnomusicology, if it fails to embrace traditional arts practices that are embedded into late capitalist forms of society as well as more communitarian groups.

There are of course a number of different models operating as sustainable businesses and charities within the domain of ICH. Many of these individuals and organisations operate on a part-time basis, but since the success of the mid-twentieth-century folk revival, there has been a noticeable growth in the numbers and activity of professional traditional musicians operating in Scotland and throughout the world. In Scotland today, there are numerous local communities of practice for traditional music, some of which are sustainable in that they have been around for a very long time such as *The Clarsach Society* (established 1931) and The Shotts and Dykehead Pipe Band, which was formed in 1910, and who won the 2015 World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow. If cultural sustainability is to maintain a useful conceptual presence in music studies, heritage, ethnology and related disciplines, not to mention serve a greater use beyond the academy, then it must encompass the tricky debates around representation, authenticity and globalisation, as well as the key consideration of financial and policy sustainability within the broader socio-

2 Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

economic and political landscapes. In considering these aspects, I begin from a position different to some ethnomusicologists which is that economic exchange and the heritagisation of intangible cultural heritage for profit is often a useful and positive development in the public sphere, and which if imaginatively configured, can not only support orally developed indigenous cultures, but also help them to grow and serve the communities in which they thrive. Profit is therefore not mutually exclusive with authentic social practice. Indeed, the commodification and commercialisation of ICH in Scotland has been always present throughout modernity, and the current acceleration of commodification and professionalisation of traditional arts are part of a longer socio-cultural narrative that stretches back to the entrepreneurial musicians, poets and artists of the eighteenth century such as Niel Gow and Robert Burns, who felt no serious conflict between their aesthetic and financial pursuits. However, today, because of the relatively recent emergence of traditional arts and the ICH agenda into UK public policy (see Francis, 1999, 2010; McKenell, 2014) and the continuing convergence of capitalism with culture (Banel-Weiser, 2012; Taylor, 2012), it is worth considering alternative, non-profit and more sophisticated models of sustainability within ICH that might support one of its key aspects, which is the support for the living performance of oral traditions in the communities in which they are practised. To that end, there are a number of key models of financial and professional practice in ICH, and some that offer the potential to policy makers for supporting this increasingly financially significant area of cultural activity. Current established commercial models in Scottish traditional music include:

- Sole trader musician or artist (most often involving production, performance, teaching and distribution of music, dance, drama, crafts and oral heritage, across a variety of public contexts domestically and internationally, either on a semi-professional or fully professional basis).
- The small-scale organisation, festival or band, educating, promoting, producing and distributing their own traditional music, dance, drama or crafts.
- The large-scale national and international businesses, festivals, lobby groups and organisations that exist to promote and further traditional arts in Scotland and abroad.
- Mass mediated commercial production and distribution of ICH via radio, television and online.

These models of sustainable practice have emerged only in recent decades, in the Scottish context only properly since the early 1980s from the first consideration of traditional music for arts policy in Scotland (Scottish Arts Council, 1984). In order for the scholarship of sustainability to have any real impact, it is essential for us to understand how these actually operate today

2 Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

for real world artists in a context in the twenty-first century quite radically different socially, culturally *and* politically from the closing decades of the twentieth century. My own fieldwork with various artists and musicians offers some generalisable narrative examples of how the financial models currently operate in traditional Scottish music. Interviews for this fieldwork were conducted in 2015 and have been partially anonymised in order to facilitate a frank and open exchange as well as protect musicians' personal and financial identities. The following vignettes offer some case studies from real world examples of the continuum of financial and musical exchange in Scottish traditional music today:

The sole trader

This musician's job involves performing traditional music with a number of bands, both self-started and for other projects, compositional commissions and teaching, and she has an established national, and an international reputation amongst the Scottish traditional music community of practice. She resides in Scotland yet performs all over the UK, occasionally in Europe and in North America and regards her role as a highly fulfilling one, embedded within a strong social group of other musicians and friends and family that support her work. In terms of income, this musician has been performing professionally for more than fifteen years, and has gradually built up performing and teaching opportunities which provide the vast bulk of her income throughout the year. Financially, her accounts for the last financial year show around £40,000 of total income, around half of which goes out immediately to other subcontracted musicians with whom she plays. Her personal income from all activity is usually in the range £12,000 to £18,000 per annum. Of this gross income, she claims around £9,000 of personal expenses, including equipment, travel, and the fractional expenses around place of business (home), broadband, clothing, per diems etc. currently permissible under the tax and revenue arrangements in the UK.

What is perhaps most interesting when considering this traditional musician's professional and financial approach is what she is now *not* doing:

The thing is I'm saying 'no' to certain things that I don't think are worth it. It might be a community project, or a band featuring musicians that I totally love to play with and would have a great fulfilling rehearsal with, but I just know it's not marketable, it's not going to go anywhere, it's just a garage band. I can't do things like that now. Also, I used to do a lot of folk music sessions certainly one a week, and then one a fortnight, I just can't do those now because it cuts away a whole day. And because I'm not doing those now I've focused on things that are more important like promoting my own band [name removed] which has made a lot of money.

2 Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

(fieldwork interview, 24.08.2015)

This quote is representative of a considerable swathe of professional traditional musicians now working in Scotland. They have access to a successful career as a professional musician, which is a fulfilling profession, and *is* financially and culturally sustainable now and into the long term future. There is a genuine audience and market and a professional network both domestically and abroad. However, as shown in the figures above, the earnings for this full-time professional traditional musician are low, and also there is very little state support either in policy or tax status. This trend is fairly widespread as the Creative Scotland Music Sector review demonstrates:

The music sector is characterized by high levels of self employment, freelance and part time working. 36% of the UK music workforce is self employed (30% in Scotland), and a third of employees (33%) work on a part-time basis (45% in Scotland). . . . Average earnings in music are low. In the UK, 39% of people involved in the sector earn less than £10,000 per annum, with 5% earning more than £41,000. 84% of part-time workers earn less than £10,000 per annum, and there is a high incidence of second jobs within the industry.

([Music Sector Review, Final Report for Creative Scotland, 2013](#), 11–12)

Although the earnings for this musician, and many like her, are low within UK society, it does show that there is now a potential sustainable career for outstanding young traditional musicians in Scotland. This was not the case pre-revival, and has been largely the result of the success of the folk revival in Scotland in the 1950s–1970s. There is a new problem however, apparent from fieldwork which is that this gradual professionalisation of traditional music in Scotland has led to a stratification between the professional performing community and amateur communities of practice. Almost all the state support for individuals goes directly to the elite professional classes of musicians, often emphasising innovative and hybrid musical styles. This means that the forms of traditional music as community living heritage are underrepresented in the policy discourse where state support often depends on having professional administrative and fundraising staff, within a stable Scottish arts network (see Miller, this volume). To be sure, there has been some sizeable grants from Creative Scotland to organisations and individual musicians working directly in Scottish traditional music, and non-profit funding has recently been channelled through commissions distributed by TRACS. However, much of this is a conversation between professional musicians and organisations, and the arena of local, community groups is harder to reach and less visible in the media which makes amateur music making less prominent in the national cultural policy discourse whereas it is

2 Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

often one of the key areas at local authority level and for ordinary members of the public.

The online teacher

A relatively new and innovative pattern has emerged in the last decade of traditional (and other musicians) beginning to derive significant income from passing on the tradition online making use of the full range of digital technologies now available. One such is Jori Chisholm, a full-time bagpipe player and teacher, based in Seattle in the US, who performs at the highest levels of competitive performance and has developed the most established online bagpipe teaching business since the early noughties. He has developed an online business model allowing him to teach pipers in the traditional style across the world. He has a range of online communicative strategies for his business which include: approximately forty students that he takes for live online lessons via Skype once a fortnight; pre-recorded 'tune-lesson' downloads of which there are currently seventy-four available, and in addition to this; he has developed a subscription-only innovative online 'studio' where he has hundreds of lessons and features on all aspects of bagpipe performing including teaching blogs, videos and sound files for his students. He has also begun bringing in other leading players to provide content to the online studio with an appropriate cut of the subscription fees. Jori's Skype students are spread across the United States, Canada, Europe, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia and in Scotland; a genuinely global reach for twenty-first-century oral tradition. In some senses too the online learning Jori has developed offers advantages to face-to-face transmission of oral traditions in the bagpipe tradition in that he can initially provide a 'canned' lesson on a tune for a student, and they can improve their playing so that the lesson time via Skype is spent on really improving their skills at the edge of their ability, essentially offering a flipped classroom model of teaching. He sees technological developments as key to the growth of his business:

The first webcam lesson was in 2003. The technology keeps getting better and better, and now almost everybody has access to a webcam on their phone, iPad, or computer and most of us have access to broadband . . . I think it is a wonderful and natural use of the technology because of our specialized art form or craft that's spread out around the world. I receive emails almost every day from someone who has found me through my website, google search, or social media and they're interested. Online learning is becoming part of the general consciousness. It's quickly becoming just a standard thing.

(Jori Chisholm, fieldwork interview, 21.08.2015)

2 Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

This model is not now an outlier or unusual practice. Many traditional musicians are now transmitting their oral heritage online, and some institutions also offer Skype lessons and pre-recorded online tutorials. This now provides a deterritorialised reach for commercially sustainable tuition of music, and also has created a newly stratified market place for performers and teachers to compete both on the basis of their perceived authenticity, and their commitment to passing it on. This is embodied in the discourses used by these musicians online, with teachers of Scottish traditional music appealing to the heritagised authenticity of their personal performing experience with testimonials, teaching lineage and awards. Here are just three examples from people who offer online tuition in Scottish traditional music which show how this is typically achieved in some of the following ways:

his music lives mainly in a world of oral tradition and memorisation rather than written scores, and of solo unaccompanied presentation rather than ensemble performance.

. . . is a singer of Gaelic & Scots song from Neilston, a small town near to Glasgow. Drawn to Gaelic song through the Fèisean movement as a child, she went on to study the language and moved to Uist for several years to deepen her knowledge learning from local tradition bearers. Now living back in the Central Belt, she is involved in many musical projects has a great interest in exploring the links between the Scots & Gaelic song traditions. Her wide knowledge of both traditions means that she is much in demand as workshop leader and class tutor, and she offers song lessons both online and in person.

. . . a U.S. National Scottish Fiddling Champion, is a frequent and popular performer throughout the United States and beyond. Always drawing a crowd, she has been heard at everything from highland games and Celtic festivals to a Hard Rock Café and Esterházy Palace in Austria. She has also had the honor of performing for the 37th Lord Lyon King of Arms of Scotland, David Sellar . . . Melinda has won numerous awards for her solo playing and her original compositions at regional and national Scottish F.I.R.E. competitions. She achieved fiddling titles such as the Allegheny Mountain Fiddling Champion and the Potomac Valley Fiddling Champion several times prior to winning the 2003 U.S. National Scottish Fiddling Championship and becoming a sanctioned Scottish F.I.R.E. competition judge. She was a finalist for the 2008 Niel Gow International Scottish Fiddle Composition Competition held in Pitlochry, Scotland.

2 Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

These discourses focus around the personal authenticity of traditional musicians both in terms of their relational musical heritage, awards and experience. Competitions in fiddle and piping often provide clear badges of authenticity, and these musician-teachers often use recorded music invariably from a commercial album or sometimes with videos from live music events and testimonials from satisfied online students. These are innovative and essential ways in which traditional musicians are now making sustainable incomes online, and the quality and availability of these online portals across a range of different instrumental and vocal genres is proliferating and improving every year.

The institutional context

Many different institutions both physical, or simply symbolic, have come and gone in Scottish traditional music. Those that have survived have been those that have thought about their own long-term sustainability. One such example is *The National Piping Centre* in Glasgow. This is the premiere bagpiping institution in the world and arguably, the most sustainable and successful traditional music commercial heritage organisation in Scotland or its diaspora. The mission is stated simply: ‘The National Piping Centre exists to promote the study of the music and history of the Highland Bagpipe’.¹¹¹ Having been established in 1996, the centre has grown substantially from its beginnings as an institution that provided fairly local traditional-style tuition in bagpiping, to an institution that has a global reach with tuition, summer schools both at home and abroad, a library, a national museum of bagpipes, online tuition, a major international festival (Piping Live!) every summer and that delivers elements of a degree in Scottish Music – Piping in partnership with the national conservatoire, The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. From inception however, the institution also developed a commercial arm, which hosts a restaurant, bar, hotel and caters for weddings throughout the year and is crucial to its model of sustainability. The institution has grown substantially over the years and has an annual turnover well in excess of a million pounds per annum, and has developed a model of best practice in the arts, splitting its non-profit and commercial operations into two separate companies. The commercial arm channels all profits back into the educational charity business and this, alongside the city centre premises and staff is one of the key aspects of its sustainable success. Often, other large organisations or arts businesses do not properly conceive of the financial sustainability of their organisations, or that they rely fundamentally on state-support or grants from various third sector sources in order to stay afloat. The National Piping Centre has in many ways proven its sustainability over the past twenty years or so precisely because of its approach to long-term financial independence from the state or other third sectors (notwithstanding short term occasional grants from *Creative Scotland* to the institution). The National Piping Centre is therefore one of the only

2 Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

sustainable large-scale traditional arts organisations in Scotland, and has remained where others such as Balnain House, The Glasgow Folk and Traditional Arts Trust, various Folk Festivals and many others indirectly involved with traditional arts such as 7.84 Theatre have come and gone. What marks out this organisation as sustainable financially and musically, is its breadth of activity and the underlying structural model for sustainable support of its piping activities that relies on its commercial activities.

These three snapshot case studies of the individual, the digital and the collective, indicative approaches to sustainability both in an economic and in a socio-cultural sense but are not outliers, but are certainly drawn from successful case studies. Traditional models of sustainability in ethnomusicology do not quite capture the essence of how sustainability works in these case studies. Whether the theorisation of ‘endangerment’ or the UNESCO ‘rights-based’ approaches, or simply as in the United States, where the use of public funding is directly used to support artists and community groups. It is clear from fieldwork, that in each of these Scottish examples, various approaches to sustainability both in an economic and in a socio-cultural sense are largely based upon commercial success building on heritagised authenticity. This is important for the largely Anglo-American world that has not, and is unlikely to, sign up to the UNESCO convention on intangible cultural heritage. Therefore in national contexts like Scotland and the wider UK, that are not signatories to the convention, commerce is fundamental to sustainability, and the scholarship and policy-making for a sustainable traditional arts must recognise this, and somehow develop a means for the non-commercial and amateur aspects of ICH to be recognised and flourish in the absence of a rights- or endangerment-based approach grounded in law.

The future in Scottish policy and practice

Cultural policy itself should recognise complexity in artists’ lives, and also, especially in relation to traditional music, that making money at one end of the continuum of practice does not preclude individuals from being engaged at the other. That commerce is not mutually exclusive with sustainable ICH. The policy context that supports traditional music as ICH in other European nations is of course slightly irrelevant in the UK context as the UK government has not formally signed the UNESCO convention. However, a partial form of a rights and access based approach to traditional music as ICH has been partially implemented by proxy in Scotland and elsewhere, via key cultural gatekeepers such as the Arts Councils, television and radio executives and producers, local authorities, education departments, commercial tour operators and national tourism agencies. This agenda rests upon the views of the powerful cultural gatekeepers, with substantial cultural capital lending them the authority to take financial decisions that directly affect the communities of practice. The current socio-political context

2 Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

therefore in Scotland means that the only state support for the traditional arts comes via the national arts funding body Creative Scotland, where as of 2015, traditional arts have no ringfenced funding on the grounds of intrinsic national cultural value, but are provided with the opportunity to apply in competition with all other art forms. Therefore in Scotland today, the arms length arts funding body exists in a policy where support for the traditional arts generally flows to professionalised organisations such as TRACS, Folk Festivals, The National Piping Centre, Feisan nan Gaidheal, Feis Rois, amongst others, and it remains the case in the Scottish context that most professional activity in traditional music rests upon market competition from audiences, broadcasters, educationalists, administrators and tourists. Of course, some of those organisations such as TRACS and the Feisan in particular are involved in provisioning music tuition for local and amateur groups (including school children), but mostly this is achieved through paying for professional musicians to teach small groups under the aegis of those organisations.

The problem with this approach is that professionals trained in media, tourism, education, cultural policy and civic administration have been taking decisions about what aspects of traditional music are worth focusing on, broadcasting, supporting through educational initiatives or advertising to tourists or in festivals and so forth. We are in the odd position in Europe where there is currently no meaningful role in Scotland for non-profit-driven approaches to ICH. The academy in Scotland and the UK has no real influence over how the national cultural heritage is supported, accessed, or valued in education and the public discourse. The most significant non-commercial resource for traditional music in Scotland in recent decades is the *Tobar an Dualchais* digital archival project, ironically funded by the UK Heritage Lottery Fund which by its nature made it a finite five-year project. There is no national archive for traditional arts, the national school curricula have fared slightly better in recent years, but music syllabi in schools, teacher training and even the national arts funding is still dominated wholesale by the art music tradition (which is ironically less popular with the Scottish public than popular or traditional musics).^{viii} Clearly, the implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention on ICH in the UK would help to alter this situation (despite its failings elsewhere), primarily, the benefit would arise from the implementation of a legal and state-supported route for the non-profit support and development of national cultural heritage. In a contemporary social context of increasing marketisation and a relentless focus on profit, that is why those of us in the applied leaning disciplines must be lobbying for some form of state-recognition of the cultural and intrinsic value of traditional arts more broadly to our society.

One of the obstacles to this approach is the UNESCO 2003 Convention itself. [Labadie \(2011\)](#) analyses the policy discourse surrounding the 2003 Convention on ICH and makes the point that because the ‘authenticity’ of

2 Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

ICH traditions was not considered in the 2003 convention, the decision on whether to include a particular tradition rests upon its position with the communities of practice (2017, 132). Furthermore, because article 15 assumes that the state is the principal arbiter of representation of communities, this effectively filters the possible representations of ICH through the European states, and provides no formal route for oppressed or underrepresented minority communities to access the legal safeguards of the UNESCO convention. In the Scottish context therefore, unless and until the Westminster UK government ratifies the convention in its current form there it is difficult to see how any non-profit driven approach to ICH could be supported through the state. An alternative of course would be for UNESCO to alter the convention to allow non-state actors to represent their interests directly, or perhaps via a network of scholars of the traditional arts. This would provide both non-professional communities of practice, and oppressed minorities with support from the academy, the ability to find legal recognition at the European level for their own (sometimes contested) cultural heritage.

Conclusion

In Scotland today, one of the reasons that this wider, relational view of policy is so necessary is the structural inequity in current Scottish cultural policy. Fewer than a quarter of Scottish state schools provide bagpipe lessons (Peterkin, 2016), this musical genre bias in favour of classical musical instruments is totally at odds with the statistical evidence from the Scottish Household Survey which typically shows that four to five times more Scots attend live popular or traditional music than attend classical music or opera performances, and these figures have been maintained across a number of surveys (Scottish Government, 2017a, 2014). Furthermore, the 2003 UNESCO convention explicitly defines 'safeguarding' as: 'measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the ICH, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalisation of the various aspects of such heritage' (UNESCO, 2003, 3). Little of this access and archival work has been carried out in relation to traditional music with the one exception of the precariously funded *Tobar an Dualchais* archive at the University of Edinburgh. Most media and digitalised access for traditional music is driven via market forces through the commercial ends of various record companies and private individuals or the BBC which has no real archiving policy for its programmes on traditional music. The British Library's focus necessarily provides London-centred support for sound preservation, where there is little incentive or money to properly sustain the traditional music of Scotland. Today, Scotland has recently set up a National Sound Archive, *Scotland's Sounds*, however, rather predictably there is no funding for a physical

2 Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

headquarters, or fieldwork and the project is essentially a means to corral pre-existing recorded music and sound archives into an online portal. Neither is there any ring fenced arts funding for traditional music from *Creative Scotland* that is not subject to the political whims of quangos or politicians. These sort of disjunctures between educational and cultural policy landscape and the community of practice mean that there is urgent work to be done in securing the place of Scottish traditional music in relation to the wider policy landscape. We have not recognised traditional music as an issue of national cultural heritage for its intrinsic value, but have made some developments towards a professional and commercially sustainable industry both at home and abroad. This has largely been done independently of any heritage or arts state policy, but has meant that the focus for any financial support or policy recognition has almost exclusively gone to professional musicians working in a variety of contexts. By shifting the policy debate away from the UNESCO rights-based or any endangerment-based approaches to ICH, and considering instead the balance of various exchange values for traditional music, we might be able to offer a more meaningful policy framework for supporting both commercial and non-commercial traditional music as sustainable intangible cultural heritage. This framework would enable the economic exchange value of traditional music to be considered alongside the social, cultural and heritage exchange values of traditional music to produce a more balanced understanding of the sustainable heritage threshold in cultural policy within the UK. Whilst the hard left might criticise this view of musical value, it is clear that the extreme relativism in the ethnomusicological literature and even the grey literature within the UK has itself had little to say about the financial aspects of any sustainable approaches to traditional culture. To continue in this manner will ensure the irrelevancy of the academy to public (and private) debates about traditional music and dance into the future. However, understanding that making traditional music in a late modern, capitalist society is itself always already an activity requiring special dedication, often at odds with the legal, tax and even arts policy structures in Scotland and the UK, requires the academy and policy makers working in the arts, cultural and heritage fields to recognise these realities in their approach to traditional arts. Especially in the Anglo-American world where 'rights-based' discourses in the arts are under sustained attack, and in any event, difficult to defend in an increasingly unequal world.

Notes

2 Traditional music and cultural sustainability in Scotland

ⁱ I would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of the AHRC (grant number AH/L006502/1) and Newcastle University in both the production of this research and the support for the conference in October 2014 at Newcastle University.

ⁱⁱ See www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/projects/intangible-cultural-heritage/ and www.tracscotland.org/.

ⁱⁱⁱ See www.bagpipelessons.com.

^{iv} www.simonchadwick.net/harp/about.html [accessed: 29.03.2016].

^v www.naomiharveymusic.com/biog/ [accessed: 29.03.2016].

^{vi} www.melindacrawford.com/biography.html [accessed: 29.03.2016].

^{vii} www.thepipingcentre.co.uk.

^{viii} See for instance the Scottish Household survey results and (McKerrell, 2014).