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## Intangible heritage and sustainable tourism: impossible clash of cultures or essential meeting of minds?

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It is more than a decade since the term 'sustainable tourism' entered the economic development lexicon. That concept – whether referring to ecotourism in the context of the natural environment or cultural tourism in the context of the human environment – embodies an essential paradox. Just as fostering 'green' attitudes and promulgating 'green' behaviours is about protecting the physical environment from damage, so is transmitting knowledge and understanding of cultural heritage about safeguarding that heritage; tourism, on the other hand, is about consumption. The questions which are addressed in this article are, generally, whether such consumption and conservation can coexist; and, specifically, whether the safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) can be combined with its exposure to and exploitation by tourists. In exploring these challenges, the article will consider such issues as ownership of ICH, and rights and responsibilities in respect of ICH, drawing mainly from experience in Scotland.

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### Introduction and context

At every meeting of tourism with ICH, in spaces where tourists and practitioners of ICH come together, there is potential for socio-cultural conflict. This arises because of different agendas in respect of particular and peculiar ICH, and its meanings for different individuals and groups practicing it, experiencing it, or consuming it. Essentially, these agendas may be distilled into the ethics and economics of the safeguarding, recording, promotion and exploitation of ICH as distinctive cultural and social practices. As an external-facing phenomenon, ICH becomes economically viable but risks distortion to the point of destruction; as an internal-facing phenomenon, ICH remains pure and undefiled but risks imperceptibility and obscurity to the point of extinction. If the foregoing premises are accepted, it behoves us to enquire whether sustainable tourism's close relative 'responsible tourism' – an even more recent, similarly paradoxical and politically correct neologism – is capable of balancing the requirements of both ethical frameworks and economic imperatives.

To do so, it is necessary to go back to first principles and the paper begins by examining both aspects of the economics of ICH as a vehicle for regional development and approaches to the sociology of tourism. The transactional nature of tourism is investigated, as is the role in that transaction of ICH, which is first defined and explored. The discussion then extends into an examination of psychological and anthropological aspects of the complex relationship between the hosts who are ICH practitioners and providers, and the guests who are ICH customers and consumers. Issues such as commodification and (in)authenticity are highlighted, as well as the role of the complicity and collusion-in-duplicity existing between hosts and guests. In pursuing these themes, a case study approach is adopted, which draws primarily but not exclusively upon a UNESCO-endorsed project investigating ICH in Scotland.

### Defining and placing ICH

The profile of ICH in the UK has been raised recently by the above project led by the author to identify, develop and test a method of recording and safeguarding ICH in Scotland in line with best practice for ICH conservation<sup>1</sup>. The "domain definitions" of Article 2.2 of the UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (2003a) comprise: oral traditions and expressions, including language as a

vehicle of the ICH; performing arts; social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and traditional craftsmanship. However, UNESCO – which consulted extensively with member states and ICH experts globally in arriving at definitional workability – does not regard these definitions as either comprehensive or prescriptive, insisting that forms of ICH are defined by the communities themselves that participate in them. Thus the ICH in Scotland Project was able to define ICH as broadly or as narrowly as deemed appropriate. The approach ultimately adopted avoided any attempt to define a Scottish essentialism, allowing ICH in Scotland to be celebrated for its remarkable diversity. That diversity promotes the image and actuality of a cosmopolitan multi-cultural Scotland, and arises from a variety of sources including: a persistent sense of regionalism within Scotland; the existence of distinct linguistic communities within Scotland; and a long history of immigration as well as diasporic emigration (McCleery et al., 2010). The scope for the adoption and adaptation of the ICH of incoming settler groups is evident.

Cultural heritage, as is implicit from the definitional discussion above, is not limited to material manifestations, such as artefacts, monuments and other objects that have been preserved over time. It also encompasses living expressions and traditions that countless groups and communities worldwide have inherited from their ancestors and transmit to their descendants, in most cases orally (McCleery et al., 2008). Many years of research undertaken on behalf of UNESCO on the functions and values of cultural expressions and practices have opened the door to new approaches to the understanding and protection of, and respect for, the cultural heritage of humanity. This living heritage that is ICH provides each bearer of such expressions with a sense of identity and continuity, insofar as he or she takes ownership of them and constantly recreates them. Indeed, in the context of Scotland, it is the ICH of new Scots<sup>2</sup> – rather than that associated with material products such as the 'tat' too often promoted to tourists that masquerades for Scotland's material heritage in the shape of tartan trinkets or 'Nessie' (the mythical monster of Loch Ness) – that has done most to change the nature of Scottish culture as a whole, providing a new Scottish cultural identity. This is well expressed and neatly encapsulated in the Edinburgh International Festival's 'Festival Fringe' activities which take place annually around the main festival in August in Scotland's capital city.

As a driving force of a unique blend of cultural expression and sense of identity, living heritage is also fragile. In recent years, this fragility has received international recognition and its safeguarding has become one of the priorities of international cooperation, owing much to UNESCO's adoption and subsequent promotion of its Convention on ICH. The UK is not (yet) a signatory to the Convention, and Scotland must accommodate itself to this state of affairs as best it can for as long as it remains a constituent part of the UK. Indeed, this very fact may have prompted a particularly positive response to the ICH in Scotland Project, exemplified in the warm reception of the project across all parties of the devolved Scottish Parliament<sup>3</sup>. This is both fortunate and timely given the unprecedented commercial interest of late – in the wake of the surge in popularity of things 'green' (as opposed to artificial/chemical) and of the genuine article (as opposed to artificial/superficial) – in the potential for ICH to be employed as a vehicle for economic development. While many would regard commercialisation of ICH as an impossible contradiction in terms, this paper is open to the perspective that it is at least reasonable to explore whether ICH, in carefully controlled circumstances, can be exploited (i.e. used and developed) for economic ends without being exploited (i.e. reduced and diminished) from a cultural perspective.

### **Economic and ethical imperatives for cultural tourism**

In the OECD area, tourism accounts for up to 11% of GDP and even more in terms of employment (OECD, 2010). It represents serious work for those supplying tourist services; serious play for the holidaymakers consuming tourist services and a serious economic development tool for all kinds of intermediaries. As far as cultural tourism is concerned, even before the end of the twentieth century, the World Tourism Organization (WTO) acknowledged that heritage and culture were components of almost 40% of international trips (Timothy and Boyd, 2003). Sigala and Leslie (2005) quote similar statistics to evidence the increasing centrality of heritage and cultural attractions in modern, knowledge-based societies. They elaborate: "it is not surprising that in recent years the cultural heritage sector has gained much political attention owing to its economic potential and its importance for market development in the information society", given both that culture is a major driver of tourism demand and flows, and cultural heritage resources are routinely placed at the centre of both urban and rural development and rejuvenation strategies. The result is that "every country, region or locale has viewed or is viewing its cultural resources in terms of tourism potential", most markedly in the post-industrialised western nations which have been losing market share as traditional visitors go elsewhere (Sigala and Leslie, 2005: xii). Tourist development, in other words, is acknowledged as a legitimate economic development tool by agencies at every level, from local authorities, through regional development agencies and branches of central government, right up to supra-national organisations. As long ago as 1983, Grassie was describing tourism as the 'soft option' seized upon by desperate regional development authorities as a quick-fix tool for the promotion of economic growth. Nothing has changed; nearly thirty years later Greece is looking to tourism to rescue her parlous economy from the catastrophic local effects of world-wide recession.

This is not to deny that the true value delivered by cultural institutions to society is indirect and non-financial, given that they strive primarily to provide intellectual enjoyment and raise awareness of the importance of cultural and historical knowledge. Yet, as Sigala and Leslie (2005: xii-xiii), point out, "this

does not mean that market opportunities are to be ignored, but it implies that cultural institutions and governments need to maintain a realistic view on the exploitability and management of cultural heritage resources, as well as a return on investment in supporting the continuity of these resources". This is where 'responsible tourism' enters the picture, with the balancing of what McCleery (2011a) encapsulates as an ethical framework for safeguarding cultural heritage, against an economic imperative for its exploitation. In respect of ICH, doing nothing may be as morally reprehensible as doing something. Furthermore, doing something may rescue and revitalise ICH which has become stale and anachronistic (or even socially and morally unacceptable in a world which values equality and diversity). While it is obvious that, as an external-facing phenomenon, ICH risks adulteration and dilution, it is less obvious that as an internal-facing phenomenon, in remaining pure and unadulterated, ICH may also become so fragile as to die out altogether. Viewed thus, it stands to reason that evolution is not invariably 'bad', especially if it can simultaneously protect and promote, sustain and support, not only the ICH itself but the ICH ownership community. It bears repetition that non-exploitation may have ethical implications as far-reaching as those of exploitation. Besides, bringing ICH and tourism together under the label of responsible tourism constitutes a conveniently pragmatic and politically correct move.

### **The sociology underlying the economics of ICH for tourism**

According to Urry (2002), tourists may be construed as modern-day pilgrims, searching for an authenticity which is absent from their own everyday lives. What they anticipate in their destinations is not holiness or divine visions which induce feelings of peace and contentment, but something even more miraculous, namely the opportunity to feel different from the way they feel at home (Chaline, 2002). The pursuit of happiness apparently necessitates a requirement for a contrast between home and away, and the representation in the real lives of others of a reality hard to discover in one's own mundane everyday experiences. As MacCannell (1999) observes, "Modern Man is losing his attachments to the work bench, the neighbourhood ... which he once called 'his own' but, at the same time, he is developing an interest in the 'real lives' of others." Smith and Kelly (2006), too, note the search for a sense of community. It is not hard to identify the fundamental incongruity here; tourists' real lives at home are grey and unreal, whereas the everyday lives of others in their homes are not similarly mundane, but somehow interesting and vibrant.

The drawback here is that, because 'real lives' are found only backstage, the gaze of the tourist involves intrusion into domestic life (Urry, 2002). Because of, at best, the inconvenience and, at worst, the unacceptability which this entails, the people being observed and also the local tourist entrepreneurs ultimately come to construct a variety of contrived backstages; in an effort by the host community both to protect itself from intrusions into the privacy of family life and also to take advantage of the commercial opportunities presented, tourist spaces become organised around what MacCannell (1973) refers to as 'staged authenticity'. The result is that ICH pivots round from being inward facing for the benefit of local people, to being outward facing for the benefit of visitors. Furthermore, as reported by Boorstin as long ago as 1964, in order to protect sacred or otherwise precious ICH from disrespect and damage – albeit caused mostly inadvertently by insouciant visitors descending 'en masse' – 'pseudo-events' are staged specifically for the benefit of the visitors. In consequence, the 'real' experience which tourists crave has become unreal, no matter that it may actually constitute a genuine, commercial initiative which defines the reality of the service provider's current work and life experience. Inevitably, entrepreneurs are induced (or reduced) to manufacturing ever more extravagant displays, effectively removing the observer even further from local people.

It was also suggested by Boorstin (1964) that tourists deliberately seek out inauthentic or 'unreal' experiences. However, a different perspective is taken here and it is proposed that pseudo-events are more likely to result from the increasingly complex and sophisticated social relations of tourism; as explained above, tourists are actually involved in a search for a perceived authenticity which is lacking in their own lives which seem ordinary (boring) and superficial (modern-day) by comparison. These same people would be aghast if, upon their return to their offices and factories, it was decided to replace all computers and automated assembly lines with typewriters and manual processes. Yet, in the context of the physical and psychological dislocation of their holiday, 'traditional' is associated with genuineness and anything 'modern' is eschewed. (That having been said, there is something of a blind spot in respect of 'en suite' hotel rooms, refrigeration in the kitchen and bar. As will be demonstrated later, post-modernity demands complicity and collusion between host and guest). Thus, as MacCannell (1999) observes, almost any sort of [manual] work – from the backbreaking toil of the Welsh [or Scottish] miner to the distasteful work of the Parisian sewerage operative, because these are imbued with the patina of age and tradition and are unencumbered by the artificiality and deceitfulness of automation – can be the object of the tourist gaze and the function of the service provider to supply.

In such circumstances, it does not take much, as Urry (2002) observes, for 'pseudo-reality' to tend towards 'hyper-reality', with the perverse corollary that both the aesthetic sense and the sensuality of the visitors is rendered as restricted as it is at home. This is not helped by the relatively superficial way in which indigenous cultures necessarily have to be (re)presented to the tourist. What may once have been exotic is reduced to the banal. Over time, via advertising and the media, the images generated of the tourist gaze and the tourists' own expectation of that gaze, come to constitute a closed self-perpetuating system of fakery and illusion. Just as the economy of the household cannot be considered in isolation from

the wider regional, national and global economic contexts in which it exists, so the individual guest or host is hostage to the wider social relations of tourism which, themselves, are largely driven by economic considerations on a variety of scales. Boorstin's take on these matters has been superseded in the half-century which has since elapsed, and it is proposed here that pseudo-reality and even hyper-reality is not (or no longer) the 'fault' of either the consumer of such images or the provider, but has its roots in complex macro-socio-cultural and macro-socio-economic influences and relationships.

### **Ownership, rights and responsibilities in respect of ICH**

Whichever theoretical perspective is preferred, curiously, as far as ICH is concerned, such fakery and hyper-reality may constitute either the ultimate strategy for its careful conservation or the immediate possibility of its dilution, diminution and eventual destruction. Creating a pseudo-event specifically for visitors to enjoy protects 'real' ICH from potential adulteration, although this is not without its ethical implications. It is impossible not to question the legitimacy of offering the visitor an inauthentic experience; nor the validity of construing the external visitor as lacking the cultural context to be able fully to appreciate and benefit from the authentic experience; nor, finally, the reprehensibility of allowing the authentic event to be contaminated, diluted or diminished in some other way by exposure to metropolitan values and mores. Whether through coercion by regulatory prescription or the desire to preserve or promote political or environmental reputation, tourism providers now pay at least lip service to potential environmental impacts of tourism. Arguably the cultural landscape deserves to be accorded as much protection as the physical landscape from invasion by tourist hordes. Indeed, it can be argued that damaged vegetation re-grows, whereas damaged cultural assets, whether constructed in stone or created in song, are less amenable to restoration. Whatever the economic or ethical justification, or lack of it, for inauthenticity and pseudo-reality, the fakery of modern market-economy tourism is today universal.

This not only promotes what Urry (2002) refers to as 'trinketisation' of local crafts, but may also pervert local customs and insinuate itself into and corrupt family life, however well-meant the substitution of the pseudo-event for the 'authentic' one. As already indicated, the relationship between guest and host is no longer an uncomplicated one and both tourist and service provider are subject not only to quasi-managerial nomenclature but also to a raft of professional intermediaries waiting in the wings, namely the tourist authorities and central and local government departments in whose jurisdiction the host communities fall. Ownership is control and – as if unthinking public bureaucracy is not sufficiently hostile to fragile ICH – many tourist sites remain in private hands, but in the rapacious and unsympathetic hands of larger corporations or commercial cowboys without local connections. Nash (1989) dubs these intermediaries – who interpose themselves between grass-roots producers (in this case ICH practitioners) and their potential clients (ICH consumers) – 'culture-brokers'. The degree to which the state, central or local, or arm's length body, or commercial enterprise actively seeks to promote ICH through tourism (or endeavours to prevent it) is highly significant. Thus is ownership of ICH diluted and diverted away from the indigenous population which has practised it for reasons of shared enjoyment in a familiar and traditional context, and which should properly enjoy moral rights over any decision to exploit it. Whether the intermediary is a state or a commercial organisation matters little, as both are promoting ICH for outward-facing reasons of generating income streams and sustaining not local community and identity, but metropolitan economy and society.

The counter-argument is that local community is all well and good, but if the economic viability of, say, a rural community on the North Atlantic periphery, is not sustainable, both the community and its ICH disappear. If generating tourist income from ICH changes the nature of that ICH but maintains the community more or less intact, is that too high a price to pay? It is suggested that the issue of 'ownership' of ICH and rights and responsibilities in respect of ICH – particularly when dealing not only with fragile ICH but also with the fragile communities in which that ICH resides and which are 'marginal' in both geographical and economic terms – is almost indistinguishable from ownership and control of the means of production, where the latter can be arranged with the specific objective of retaining local control of assets. This is entirely typical of resource-based peripheral economies, which are historically vulnerable to absentee owners and boom and bust. The issue is seen to relate to the mode of incorporation of the marginal regional economy within the metropolitan core economy, for which one late twentieth century solution in both the Irish and Scottish Gaeltachts<sup>4</sup> has been to establish area-based multi-functional community cooperatives, set up with the specific objective of wresting control back into local hands and rebalancing the terms of advantage vis-a-vis the political and economic centre (Johnson, 1979; Hetherington, 1981). This is a theme which is worthy of reconsideration below. Meanwhile, the comments of an official of the regional development agency responsible for the establishment of the community co-operative scheme in the Scottish Highlands are noteworthy, underlining as they do that 'co-operatives are subject to most of the difficulties that beset small scale enterprises in remote locations, to the extent that it has been questioned whether many would survive without protracted state assistance' (Storey, 1982: 71).

The issue of fragile cultures is inevitably complicated by the difficulty, noted by Smith (1989), in differentiating between the roles of modernisation and tourism in the process of culture change. Urry (2002) reiterates that some local objections to tourism are in fact objections to 'modernity' itself. Not only is there the possibility of dilution or diminution of any ICH on display; there is also the reality of devastating change as a direct result of over-exposure to global metropolitan culture. Nepalese children

living not only in urban Katmandhu, but also in the Himalayan foothills in proximity to the Annapurna trekkers' circuit, are not shy of demanding money from western visitors in the appropriate language and currency. Traders in Turkish markets raise smiles from UK visitors with their less than traditional cry of "cheaper than Asda, cheaper than Primark, cheaper than shoplifting!" (McCleery, 2011a). Festival organisers the world over begin to give their offer an outward-facing commercial veneer as opposed to an inward-facing indigenous appeal; and pre-existing traditional activities such as weaving, originally carried out as elements of a subsistence economy, with often limited potential for commercial gain, translate into the identical activities performed as a tertiary sector performative activity with disproportionately enhanced potential for profit.

'Edinburgh's Hogmanay' (New Year's Eve celebration) is a commercially driven 'festival' or collection of events taking place over the New Year period. Initiated through collaboration between the private sector and the local authority, this event now attracts thousands of visitors and their spending to the city. However, other than 'seeing in the bells' at midnight on 31 December, the Edinburgh mass entertainment bears no relation to traditional Scottish New Year customs such as 'first-footing', that is, being the first person to cross the host's threshold bearing traditional food, drink and fuel (black bun, whisky and a lump of coal). 'Edinburgh's Hogmanay' may have become an example of ICH itself, but it is legitimate to consider whether local traditions have been overtaken by the event, or whether 'ownership' of this representation of 'Hogmanay' has been removed from 'local' practitioners (McCleery, 2011b). Similarly, we may also enquire about the effect of commodification upon what is now the heavily income-generating phenomenon of Up Helly Aa, the Viking winter fire festival in the North Atlantic Shetland Islands, which has become a high-profile visitor attraction, having featured in, among other things, Lonely Planet's *BlueList* (McCleery et al., 2008). On a more local level, but with a global reach, there is the example of Burns suppers.

Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, is celebrated widely in Scotland on the anniversary of his birth, 25 January. Haggis and neaps – a savoury pudding containing sheep's offal minced with oatmeal and spices and all contained within the animal's stomach and served with mashed turnip – is traditionally eaten at Burns suppers. Burns poetry is read aloud and in particular there is an address to the haggis – a Burns poem – which is ceremonially piped into the dining hall and toasted by all present with a dram – a glass of whisky. However, the detail and character of this event has changed with the changing times so that ladies are now admitted and there is toast to the lassies and a reply to the laddies. There are vegetarian alternatives as well as non-alcoholic beverages for those with dietary preferences. Notably, the custom of Burns suppers has been exported abroad along with the poverty-induced diaspora which dispersed Scots to the four corners of the world. Whether in the English university town of Oxford – where there is an informal Burns week when the colleges celebrate Burns night with a dinner and a ceilidh (an evening of Scottish dancing) – or in the United States, Canada and Australia – where Burns celebrations have been adopted, assimilated and adapted beyond diaspora and beyond all recognition – there is a certain inevitability that where living culture is concerned, evolution is inevitable and not inevitably bad.

### The host-guest relationship as theatre

ICH is not frozen in aspic and nor should it be. Yet, the requirement for it to evolve, as for example in the Burns Supper example to meet modern social norms, should be distinguished from its potential diminution and dilution as a result of over-exposure to external influence. The essence of tourism is defined by its transactional nature and the peculiar nature of the inter-group contact involved. Because that contact frequently involves groups differing in degree of productivity and power who find themselves in very unequal positions relative to each other, with the tourist area invariably being the less productive and powerful, early investigations focussed upon the related topics of modernisation, urbanisation, and the effects of exploitation by the dominant metropolitan centre (Nash, 1989). This is merely a variant of the dual economy thesis which informed seminal regional economics texts of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Robinson's *Backward Areas in Advanced Countries* (1969). The dual economy thesis, however, constitutes too superficial an explanation of the relationship of the periphery with the core and was largely discredited in the 1970s when Pratts (1977) argued that so-called 'backwardness' was not a primitive condition capable of being defined as the opposite of modernity, resulting from isolation from the metropolitan core; rather, it was the consequence of a mode of incorporation within the modern sector on terms of disadvantage. What was required, and what the Gaeltacht co-operatives mentioned above sought to achieve – even if it was privately acknowledged to be virtually impossible – was not to attempt to foster further integration of the periphery with the core, but instead to alter fundamentally the terms of the relationship between them.

In the case of a tourism-based relationship, this means rebalancing the relationship between destination region and region of origin, by correcting the imbalance in status between host and guest. In this regard, a paper by Hollowell, published over half a century ago, contains the germ of an idea which Nash (1989) found worthy of exploration and development. Hollowell was concerned with the frontier effects of host and guest communities rubbing shoulders and, as Nash (1989) emphasises, it is the fact of the two-way nature of the tourist transaction that is significant. Viewed superficially, the consequences of tourism in the destination area may appear to derive from the introduction from outside of a new socio-cultural reality, but especially in today's world of virtual/electronic connectivity, both parties are in fact performing a self-conscious dance with a known and accepted choreography. Urry and Sheller's sub-title is

instructive. *Places to play, Places in play* encapsulates the way in which “places are shown to ‘move’ as they are put into play in relation to other places ... made and remade by the mobilities and performances of tourists and workers, images and heritage” (Urry and Sheller, 2004). Crang (1997) notes the ‘performative’ nature of the host’s role as service provider, and Gabriel (1988) and Callan (1989) the intangible elements of that service provision. Each party has a role to play and this is acted out as a piece of theatre in which the actors are partners who know their respective lines which harmonise perfectly. When a capable and cheery ‘madame la fermière’ welcomes visitors to her rural gîte, and offers them a tantalising sample of a regional delicacy on her best china plates in the formal oak dining-room, she studiously avoids showing them the business end of the farm where her gruff and awkward spouse is dealing as best he can with the leaking slurry heap behind the redundant pile of rusting machinery (McCleery, 2004). Equally, visitors know better than to look, and conveniently and self-consciously avert their gaze so as not either to spoil the view or break the unspoken compact. In the post-modern world in which we live, there is knowing complicity, connivance and collusion between host and guest, accepting that in many non-western tourist destinations the former may (have to) arrive at the attitudes of post-modernity before achieving the actuality of modernity.

Where does this leave us? The guest returns to his or her office or workshop, refreshed, re-energised and re-vitalised; paradoxically, the dirty and dangerous farm cleanses, while the clean and contained office sullies. Hosts are hardly less sophisticated in their duplicity. Yet, just because of this, it is either naïve or insulting to imagine that the commercialisation of ICH for purposes of economic development inevitably leads to disaster. It is equally plausible that hosts, in understanding the significance of their performance – and in identifying the importance of the ‘intangible’ in the delivery of their service – cannot conceivably fail to discern the essential difference between outward- and inward-facing ICH. The one is for guests; the other represents a heritage which they or others in their community cherish for its special meaning and value for their private consumption. Arguably, where danger actually lies, is in the real possibility that if ICH is not being delivered for the benefit of visitors, it may not be being practiced at all, so that outward-facing ICH, far from being a risk factor for community ICH, is in fact a pre-requisite for its survival.

### Cultural policy for development

UNESCO has not been slow in identifying cultural policy as a main component of endogenous and sustainable development policy. Specifically, the 1998 Stockholm Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development highlighted the emergence of new approaches to the protection and enhancement of the cultural heritage, reflecting a broader definition of culture, with certain parallels with the now classic WHO definition of health (see, e.g., Saracci, 1997). “Culture ... should be seen as the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or social group. Hence, in addition to the arts and literature, it includes life styles, fundamental human rights, value systems, traditions and beliefs” (Barré, 2000). Unsurprisingly, this summarised re-statement of the Stockholm definition of culture, by the then head of research and development in the cultural heritage division of UNESCO, has echoes in the definition of Intangible Cultural Heritage subsequently adopted by UNESCO in its 2003 ICH Convention (UNESCO, 2003a). Barré, expressing a personal view, is prepared to go further, stating that “cultural heritage cannot be adequately protected for future generations unless protection is carried out in harmony with the economic, social and cultural development of current generations” (Barré, 2000: 26). It is legitimate to enquire as to whether this constitutes an early argument in favour of cultural policy being perceived as a vehicle not only for protecting the cultural heritage for future generations but also for achieving the economic, social and cultural development of current generations.

That question has to remain unanswered even if Barré’s perspective upon other dimensions of cultural policy is distinctly and distinctively liberal. For he argues that in today’s world of constant and rapid change, societies must ask themselves what kind of heritage they should be preserving for future generations and how properly to guard the memory of a people and a geographical area. Cultural policy, he concludes, can answer such questions and show that solutions do exist somewhere between the extremes of homogenisation and erosion of cultures on the one hand and nationalist, ethnocentric, futile and violent tensions on the other. Reflecting this position, the approach to ICH in Scotland ultimately adopted by the Edinburgh Napier University team avoids any attempt to define a Scottish essentialism, allowing ICH *in* Scotland to be celebrated for its remarkable diversity (McCleery et al., 2008). A key reason for defining the scope of ICH in Scotland broadly was in order to ensure that the definition resonates with the Scottish Government’s commitment “to serve all the people of Scotland, regardless of a person’s race, religion, culture, ethnicity, or other background” (Scottish Government, 2008). In the words of the ICH team, Scotland, as an outward-facing, cosmopolitan nation deserves, and must demonstrate, an inclusive and comprehensive ICH which reflects the essential diversity deriving from its many cultures (McCleery et al., 2010).

Against the framework for cultural policy sketched out above and drawing upon Barré’s logic, it does not seem impossible to this author that ICH could be pro-actively employed as a deliberate policy for economic, social and cultural development which achieves the desired social inclusion and integration by providing links between certain key objectives, namely: protection of the heritage and cultural identities, on which tourism depends; understanding of and search for cultural interaction by tourists; and

contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of local populations. As Barré (2000) notes, tourists' reasons for travelling and cultural expectations are at the very source of tourism, and the services which support them in turn depend upon the job and income creation which is associated with enhancement of cultural identity and of the numerous artistic, craft, agricultural and industrial skills which constitute the backbone of ICH. Strategies are all very well, but policies are necessary to deliver them, so that, for example, as this author has observed elsewhere, the sort of admirable words which comprise the rhetoric of the high-minded guiding principles of UNESCO also need to be translated into action on the ground (McCleery, 2011b).

To be fair to UNESCO, it also assists, through a number of specific (pilot) projects such as its cultural tourism thematic routes (e.g. in Andalusia and the castles route in Central Europe), in implementing cultural tourism policies which pursue these objectives (UNESCO, 2008). At the field level, promoting improved tourism practices is a concern at many World Heritage sites and biosphere reserves (UNESCO, 2003b). In addition UNESCO sets out practical principles for a kind of tourism which guarantees the sustainability of cultural assets, such as: supporting the concept of cultural and economic enhancement of local areas; understanding that tourists today are well informed and search for fulfillment through enriching activities; recognising that civic awareness needs to be developed among local inhabitants as well as among tourists through education and awareness-raising; accepting that tourism policies cannot be drawn up separately from cultural policies, so that festivals and events are planned taking account of envisaged/expected tourism; acknowledging and evaluating the economic, cultural and social costs of tourism, as much as the environmental costs, in potentially fragile situations and spaces, whether of the tangible or intangible variety. Barré is right to assert that we need to know that destructive tourism can be avoided while we also need to be convinced that there is a 'responsible tourism' alternative to badly planned tourist development which harms the environment, the cultural heritage and the balance of societies.

### Operationalising responsible tourism

Responsible tourism, like reducing, re-using and recycling, is generally regarded with approval except when it comes to the matter of resourcing it, whether with money or time. Inculcating new behaviours, however, demands more than simply personal effort. Children can be informed and educated, and all can be exhorted. But for responsible tourism to assume more than a superficial role in sustaining ICH, crucially, there needs to be initial consensus that action is needed, and a way of demonstrating that costs which currently fall externally are in fact collective global costs which are the responsibility of us all. Tax regimes need to reflect this, although, realistically, the possibility of success in this aspect is as remote as reaching international agreement over aviation fuel duty. Furthermore, the operationalisation of any strategy requires to be managed and co-ordinated, as well as monitored and evaluated. This is no less true of tourism than of any other area, if the responsibilities of those at the geographical, economic and political centre are to be accepted and discharged and the rights of people who, whether regionally, nationally or globally, may be physically, economically and politically marginalised are to be recognised and upheld.

In the case of the tourist industry, the former are too often synonymous with these same consumers from the metropolitan core who wield political and economic power, but lack global vision. The latter equate with the providers at the destination who are, comparatively speaking, downtrodden and destitute. And yet, as the practitioners of distinctive cultural and social practices, they are also the unseen and unheard guardians of ICH. However, to support individual practitioners in that role, it is essential that the responsible tourism movement takes a lead by establishing a balance sheet of externalities which specifically includes the risk to ICH, which is currently much less visible and much less taken into account than the materiality of the physical environment. 'Ecotourism' and 'Heritage Tourism' are well understood terms which include coasts and castles, mountains and museums, but not so readily understood are matters immaterial. 'Ethnic Tourism' exists as a term in academic journals, but rather less, if at all, in tourist brochures, and is too redolent of the new age pilgrims of yesteryear. Urry (2002) discusses the rationale of treating tourism as a positional good. What is needed is for ICH, too, to be elevated to its proper status as a positional good, which requires to be handled with care but also regarded as offering potential as a development tool.

Consumption of ICH must be acknowledged as being inherently relational and dependent upon the position of one group's consumption vis-à-vis that of other groups, including providers and practitioners. But it must be acknowledged as such not only by UNESCO and its worthy but largely ineffectual pronouncements from on high, but also at the level of national and local governments, tourist authorities and other intermediaries – the 'culture-brokers' who are interacting with providers, mediating between interested parties and frequently either funding or part-funding tourist-facing events for profit or for wider economic development purposes on the ground. As ever, the problem is financial and in the present era of global economic downturn and constrained public funds, there is only limited scope for immediate initiatives. Yet there is also reason to be optimistic; for hosts are quick learners when it comes to distinguishing between outward-facing and inward-facing ICH; and post-modern tourists are wise enough to be complicit in providers' pretences where these are necessary to sustain mutual myth and expectation.

## ICH, empowerment and identity

As Scheyvens (2002: 244) observes, tourism brings myriad pitfalls and yet also offers considerable potential for local development and what Chambers (1997: xiv) calls 'good change'. "Ultimately, it is vital to find ways in which tourism is able to work for regional economic development because it is the world's largest industry. Furthermore, as well as promoting economic development, tourism can help meet social and political goals such as building capacity, strengthening community-level institutions, reinforcing cultural integrity and ideally, self-determination." This perspective upon [cultural] tourism is curiously similar to a perspective from Scotland upon ICH, which concludes that "the Scottish Government ... has certainly appreciated the potential advantage of an approach to ICH which, by promoting inclusivity and diversity, can simultaneously foster a coherent and cohesive national identity" (McCleery et al., 2009: 149). If the objectives of tourism and ICH are genuinely so similar, it is worthwhile spending time and energy developing models of good practice which can be followed by local development agencies and other stakeholders, in both the public and private sector, to ensure that exploitation of heritage and culture occurs in an equitable and sustainable manner.

As already noted, UNESCO already promulgates tourism strategies based on principles which serve the organisation's twin aims of protecting the cultural and natural heritage and promoting development. But, as also noted, it is important that high-level objectives are translated into action on the ground. In situations where tourism is a strategy of community development Scheyvens (2002) emphasises: active participation fostering control over form and function of tourism; empowerment of community members through training courses, information sharing and participation on decision-making bodies; following up immediate tangible benefits with intangible benefits such as skills development and team-building; implementing mechanisms to achieve wide dispersal of benefits as well as costs; pursuing tourism alongside a range of livelihood options; and developing partnerships between communities and other tourism stakeholders in order to maximise benefits. Others have attempted to produce community-focused best practice guidelines to assist stakeholders in addressing the main operationalisation issues facing destinations wishing to develop tourism sensitively. Walker (2003) has developed a 'locality profiling' stage and step modelling methodology as a tool to promote sustainable approaches to tourism development, while Inskip (1994) proposed a balanced and methodical application of socio-economic impact control measures in order to maximise the benefits of tourism.

## Conclusion

In assessing whether there can be a role for tourism in sustaining ICH, this paper has reviewed rights, responsibilities and realities in respect of distinctive cultural and social practices in the context of spaces where tourism and ICH come together. Accepting that purists will hesitate to accept that ICH should intentionally be employed as an economic development tool, it is equally necessary to issue a warning that much ICH may be doomed, precisely because of a well-intentioned unwillingness to expose arguably fragile cultural and social practices to a wider audience. It is recognised that, even in circumstances where safeguards are assiduously applied, there are risks with such strategies, as for example where delivery is at local level by tourism intermediaries not accustomed to that role or attuned to that agenda. Specifically, the transactional nature of tourism has been noted and the essential delicacy of and potential inequity in that relationship, with all the possible adverse outcomes for ICH and its practitioners, as well as the role of complicity between host and guest and duplicity on both their parts.

Having rehearsed these various themes, the disappointing but realistic conclusion must be that, to date, the case for cultural heritage as a tool for economic development is not yet fully proven. There remains work to be done in respect of both hosts and guests, and of the all-important intermediary 'culture-brokers', before it is certain that heritage consumption and conservation are not, quite simply, antithetical to each other. A key condition must pertain before it is possible to arrive at that desired outcome: namely, that it is ordinary people themselves within their communities on the ground who must take the initiative and be facilitated to take the initiative. Beyond this, existing models can provide a baseline for a future pilot project commissioned from the present authors by Creative Scotland. This will seek to design good practice guidelines for communities, initially in Scotland, seeking to operationalise promotion of the traditional arts and crafts subset of ICH as a sustainable development option. If a way can be found for ICH in outward-facing expression to retain its intrinsic internal values, it may not be unreasonable to envisage a role for tourism in remaking cultural heritage.

As Smith (2003) observes, tourism need not be perceived as a last chance. Indeed, some of the more intangible benefits of responsible tourism may include the renewal of cultural pride, the revitalisation of customs and traditions, and opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and integration. This perspective resonates with the ICH in Scotland Project team view that it is possible to exploit ICH sensitively to benefit the economy through cultural tourism, with the result that "the creation of funding streams through such economic exploitation is itself a key factor in the long-term safeguarding of the diversity of ICH practices in Scotland" (McCleery et al., 2011). Indeed, it may be not so much a question of tourism constituting a last chance, as the absence of tourism constituting a lost opportunity.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Implementation of an online inventory of ICH in Scotland*, funded by 3-year Arts and Humanities Research Council Knowledge Transfer Award, AH/G010102/1 2008-11
- <sup>2</sup> The story of an early group of in-migrants to Scotland is told by Bashir Maan in *The New Scots: The Story of Asians in Scotland*. Edinburgh: John Donald (1992). Subsequently, there have been successive waves of arrivals from different origins, each contributing to the diversity and vibrancy of Scotland's evolving culture and identity.
- <sup>3</sup> While the matter of signing international conventions is reserved to the Westminster Parliament in London, cultural matters are devolved to the Holyrood Parliament in Edinburgh.
- <sup>4</sup> 'Gaeltacht' is an Irish-language word which refers to that western part of Ireland where Irish is commonly spoken. The corresponding Scottish Gaelic 'Gaidhealtachd' while properly denoting a linguistic and not a geographical region, is commonly taken to refer to the Scottish Highlands and Islands.

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