CASE STUDY 49

Online inventorying of living culture in Scotland

#### Notes to the facilitator

The participants can use this case study to reflect on the opportunities and challenges presented by online data entry models. They can discuss the kinds of information that can be collected in an inventorying project and how collecting this information may contribute to safeguarding and awareness raising.

The pilot inventory of ICH in Scotland uses an online format – a wiki – not just for presenting the inventory entries but also for data entry and editing by community members and the general public. A similar approach has also been tried in Trinidad and Tobago where an online form can be submitted and a facebook page is an active source of commentary on the inventory.

<http://www.culture.gov.tt/remember-when/>

The use of online entry and dissemination formats for ICH inventories has many advantages in countries where internet access is quite widespread, and in those from which there have been large diasporas that retain their connections to the country. However, such an approach does require resources to check and review entries made online to ensure that they contain content appropriate to the project. It is also not always possible to see who is making contributions online, and to establish whether they actually practise the ICH forms themselves. Some communities may not have internet access. Online approaches are therefore usually combined with other forms of information gathering, checking and dissemination. Participants could discuss what other information gathering and management strategies might be required alongside an online wiki, what information might best be gathered online, and how information submitted online could be checked or verified by the relevant community members.

The Scotland case provides an opportunity for participants to reflect on the kinds of information that can be collected in an inventorying process, and why certain kinds of information are collected. The information contained in an inventory should identify and describe an ICH element, and assist communities and other stakeholders (such as local government or NGOs) in safeguarding it. The IMP manual contains a questionnaire in Annex 2 that indicates some kinds of information that could be collected. The Scotland case presents some different suggestions, including information about whether an event takes place indoors or outdoors, financial support for it and how many people are involved. Participants can use the case study to discuss ways in which the information collected could be used in raising awareness about and safeguarding the Orkney Folk Festival, and what processes could be put in place to help communities concerned review the information provided.

Elements are included in the Scotland ICH inventory for which only very limited information is provided (see the Hansel example). Participants could have some discussion about the implications of this, and ways in which additional information could be gathered in such a case.

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#### Questions to consider:

1. What are the advantages and challenges of using an online wiki model for inventorying the ICH in Scotland? Could this model be applied successfully in your country or locality?
2. What kinds of information have been collected in the pilot inventory of ICH in Scotland? Why do you think this kind of information has been collected? What processes could be put in place to help communities concerned review the information provided? How can it contribute to safeguarding the ICH in the case of the Orkney Folk Festival?
3. Only very limited information is provided about the Hansel element. What would the implication of this be for the safeguarding of the element? How could additional information be gathered in such a case?

#### Introduction

In 2008, the UK National Commission for UNESCO Scotland Committee, in partnership with Museums Galleries Scotland and the Scottish Arts Council, requested a report on ‘Scoping and Mapping Intangible Cultural Heritage in Scotland’. This was a remarkable initiative since the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which includes Scotland in its territory, has not yet ratified the Intangible Heritage Convention.

Following the publication of the report, Edinburgh Napier University was awarded a grant from the [UK Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)](http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/) between 2008 and 2011 to start inventorying the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Scotland, working in partnership with various other organizations and government agencies.

The inventory project's two main objectives were:

* to provide a dynamic record of ICH practices in Scotland (including diverse groups that have come to Scotland over the years) and thereby promote general awareness of ICH; and
* to enable the easy identification of the fragility of practices (and thus enable safeguarding to take place, where this is deemed appropriate)

As a first step, Edinburgh Napier University ran a pilot scheme for the collection and entry of data, developing an inventory in the form of a customized Wiki. In very basic terms, this is a database that is accessed through web pages – located on the ‘[ICH in Scotland’ Wiki](http://www.ichscotlandwiki.org/index.php?title=Intangible_Cultural_Heritage_in_Scotland) - that anyone is permitted to update, thus enabling wide participation for those with internet access. A number of videos and a FAQ (frequently asked questions) page help people to understand how they can update the wiki and thus contribute to the inventory. The pilot project faced a number of problems dealing with inappropriate entries on the public website, and had to put in controls to check the data being entered. Changes made to each entry can be tracked and monitored.

By the end of 2013 the inventory had just over 160 entries; their distribution by domain (‘type of custom’) is as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Domain (‘type of custom’) | No. of entries by December 2013 |
| Festivals | 39 |
| Social Practices and Rituals | 47 |
| Games | 10 |
| Music | 6 |
| Traditional Theatre & Dance | 2 |
| Traditional Craftsmanship | 10 |
| Oral Traditions and Expressions | 7 |
| Knowledge about Nature and the Universe | 7 |
| Culinary Traditions | 24 |
| Other practices and knowledge | 9 |
| Total | 161 |

The inventory features some elements from recent immigrants, for instance ‘Chinese New Year’ under Festivals, and Mehndi, ‘the application of henna as a temporary form of skin decoration’ practiced by ‘women from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities living in Scotland’.

Each element has its own page, on which participants may read a short summary, including:

Brief description of the custom

* Its history:
  + when and where did it originate
  + how, if at all, the form of the activity changed over the years
* Whether the custom is well-supported or not
* Whether it will still exist in 5 years, giving reasons
* Any other useful information

Key facts about the element are also recorded (see the Orkney Folk Festival entry below for the format used).

The entries can be searched by domain, location and calendar (the time of year in which it takes place). This means that visitors to a specific place in Scotland can search the site to see what cultural events might be happening in the place they are visiting, for example. Residents in a town or city can use the website to learn more about ICH activities happening in their area or elsewhere in Scotland.

For the Orkney Folk Festival, one finds the following information on the wiki (as of December 2013 this page had been accessed 1,564 times):

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| |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | Orkney Folk Festival Orkney Folk Festival started in 1982 and has established itself as an important event in both the Orkney and Scottish folk calendars. The festival is based in Stromness, however events also take place in Kirkwall, Deerness, Evie, Finstown, Harray, Hoy, Rousay and Sanday. There is a deliberate policy in the festival to combine local talent with well-known and talented musicians from further afield. The festival takes place every May. | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Key Facts** | | | Categories: | Festivals, Music | | Local Authority Area: | Orkney | | City, Town or Village: | Stromness and venues around Orkney | | Does it take place indoors? | Yes: music venues around Orkney | | Does it take place outdoors? | Yes: street performances | | When does it take place? | May | | Material: | Musical instruments | | Number of participants: | >500 | | Who can take part? | Only suitably qualified musicians | | Financial support: | Unknown, Ticket revenue | | Other support: | Materials, Premises, Advertising | | Websites: | [http://www.orkneyfolkfestival.com](http://www.orkneyfolkfestival.com/) |   See http://ichscotland.org/wiki/orkney-folk-festival |

For some other elements, the information is rather more limited.

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| Hansel ‘A silver coin (nowadays probably a one or two pound coin) is placed by well-wishers into the pram or under the pillow of a new baby when they meet him or her for the first time. This is to bring good luck (and fortune?) to the baby and perhaps to the giver.’  See http://ichscotland.org/wiki/hansel   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Key Facts : Hansel | | | Categories: | Social Practices and Rituals | | Local Authority Area: | Anywhere | | City, Town or Village: |  | | Does it take place indoors? | No | | Does it take place outdoors? | ‘ ‘ | | When does it take place? | Year round | | Material: | Coin | | Number of participants: |  | | Who can take part? |  | | Financial support: | None | | Other support: | None | | Websites: |  | |

#### Further information:

<http://ichscotland.org/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oy47guq0S5M>