

## Heritage Events as Spaces for Constructing Belonging and Otherness

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An increased awareness of tourism benefits for developing localities across Europe (Kozorog 2011) has been correlated with an increase in the allure of heritage festivals (Testa 2017), and the ‘the proliferation of smaller-scale and specialised festivals in different national and local settings’ (Sassatelli 2008: 7). Apart from local economic development (Graburn 2015), it is now readily accepted that festivals facilitate identity-building (Frost 2016) and can foster cohesion (Kuutma 1998). For migrants, representatives of minority groups, and those inhabiting fragile environments, the sustainability of such events, interpreted here as intangible cultural heritage (ICH) practices (see *inter alia* UNESCO 2003; Bortolotto 2007; Taylor 2016), is vital for transmitting such practices, and for sustaining feelings of belonging (Cornish 2015). Critically, festival performativity can also embody processes of ‘Othering’, suggesting the mobilisation of Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD) (Smith 2006), and inviting engagement with their potential for maintaining alterities. It can also inhibit more holistic expressions of ICH and hinder the sustainable development of interactivity between people and places (See CoE 2005).

Through analysing two seemingly-unrelated festivals, we exemplify some common themes and challenges faced by communities, groups and individuals across heterogenous European settings, including the various effects of migration. Our case studies include two festivals from Scotland and Romania and their processes of inclusion and exclusion. We conclude our analysis with considerations on the

differential implications of safeguarding and/or of rights-based approaches to the heritages expressed in each of the festivals analysed.

### **Belonging, ‘Otherness’, and liminality**

This chapter builds on concepts of identity-work that reflect a binary process (Kockel 2007), of expressing self-identification, and thus belonging, while simultaneously drawing borders (Barth 1969) from ‘Others’. Here, states of ‘Otherness’ are understood as manifesting phenomenological, intersubjective processes through which people construct identities of ‘selves’ and ‘aliens’ (See Husserl [1960] 1982). The processes of constructing ‘belonging’ and ‘Othering’ are conceptualised as co-constitutive community processes, whereby individuals ascribe objectivity to their subjective experiences when associating with others (Husserl [1960] 1982).

Ascriptions of ‘belonging’ or being ‘Other’ can be changed through direct experience, and are malleable to performativity during festivals. Acknowledging that such identity-making is active and ongoing, the ideas that guide our reflections here are progressed through the well-established recognition that heritage is political, and that it is a form of ‘social action’ (Byrne 2008), which enables people to build and assert place-based identities.

Harrison (2013: 245) has noted that ICH practices, including festivals, are activities during which people engage with ‘producing culture’ and, on occasion, transforming their localities. This can support ‘place-belongingness’; an ‘intimate feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place’ which is ‘also unavoidably conditioned by the working of power relations (politics of belonging)’ (Antonsich 2010: 652–53). Festival performances, the work of the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006), can both cement or rebuff

adherence to a group. Understanding the festival as a liminal period (Matheson and Tinsley 2014), following Turner (1969: 96), and its performances as interruptions of regular social life; moments ‘in and out of time’ offers a useful frame for exploring such complexities. In Turner’s<sup>1</sup> triadic understanding of the rites of passage, the liminal phase, the threshold between two conditions of stasis, induces transformation. In his model, ‘initiands’ forge bonds of extraordinary belonging, ‘communitas’, through sharing participation in the ritual. Understanding the festival’s rites as expressions of communitas helps us consider the discourses and experiences that generate feelings of belonging and to assess the normative inclusion and exclusion of certain participants.

Festivals and heritage practices can be identified as expressions of ‘Authorised Heritage Discourse’ (AHD) (Smith 2006), becoming the target of heritage policies at national and transnational level (Noyes 2015). Of particular interest for us here is the interplay of official authentications with performances of apparently unofficial, localised practices, forms of ‘heritage from below’ (Robertson 2012).

The analysis presented here draws on each author’s own fieldwork. Cristina Clopot undertook participant observation and ethnographic interviews, and used archives, to evaluate ethnic heritage-making practices in Romania’s *Proetnica* festival. Catherine McCullagh mobilised participant observation and interviews alongside visual ethnography to consider identity-building through Shetland’s *Up-Helly-Aa* festivals, in Scotland’s Northern Isles. Bringing together two distinct settings, from different corners of Europe, has afforded useful, mutually informative comparisons and contrasts for our inquiries into the politics of festival performances. We are inspired by Byrne’s (2008: 163) arguments that ‘it is critical for any assessment of the social

significance of heritage places and landscapes that inter-generational transmission and change be treated seriously', and that communities be given the space and power to do their own heritage work. Given this framing of the significance of festivals as heritage-making identity-building actions, we present these case studies as examples of the various ways in which festivals can appear to mobilise 'heritage from below' (Robertson 2012) to facilitate feelings of belonging, and experiences of *communitas* (Turner 1969) across diverse spaces.

< FIGURE 4.1 HERE >

### ***Proetnica* Festival in Romania**

Situated in the heart of the most Eastern and relatively recent member of the European Union, Romania, *Proetnica* festival has been taking place for 15 years. Each summer, during a week in August, representatives of ethnic groups in Romania travel to Sighisoara during peak tourist season. In this walled UNESCO world heritage citadel, over 600 members of officially-recognised minorities gathered to celebrate multiculturalism and create opportunities for intercultural dialogue. The festivities include a mixture of performances of ethnic heritage and identity, presentation booths and displays. ICH is on display through dances and songs performed by amateur groups. A parallel scientific stream was organised with talks and debates on issues of interest as well as an intercultural academy for young people. The festival is organised by a German ethnic NGO and began as an initiative of the German forum in Romania aiming to bring together all the ethnic groups that enjoy official protection under Romania's legislation. The festival is held with the support of the Government and its dedicated Department for Intercultural Relations.

Sighisoara sits centrally in Transylvania, an area which has become a major tourist attraction in recent years. For one week though, the attention of locals and tourists alike is diverted to ethnic heritages, whereby ‘heritage from below’ (Robertson 2012) foregrounds otherwise invisible narratives (Harrison 2013). Speaking at the opening ceremony, a representative of the Culture Ministry said:

*Proetnica* Festival has become a valuable tradition in the Romanian cultural landscape, as the most important cultural event of all ethnic minorities from our country, a real celebration promoting intercultural dialogue, diversity of culture, art and spiritual life. (Redactia 2008)

In 2018, as national debates and events focused on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of Romania, the core theme of the discussions revolved around the contribution of minorities in this national heritage. Claiming their place in heritage narratives of the past (Whitehead and Bozoğlu 2017), representatives of the national minorities have been engaged in heritage-making, as characterised by Byrne (2008: 165), that is ‘the self-conscious, reflexive business of producing their heritage’. The difficulties in accommodating ethnic/minority heritage in national narratives have been discussed within and beyond heritage studies (see for instance Harrison 2013; Hall 1999). Given the range of complexities identified it is unsurprising that ethnic minorities feel their voices are not represented in national celebratory events. Onstage, at *Proetnica*, it was emphasised repeatedly that promoting minorities’ heritage is promoting Romania. Offstage, in the scientific programme, discussions revolved around ethnic minorities’ contribution to Romanian history and the development of the state and other themes.

< FIGURE 4.2 HERE >

### **Shetland's *Up-Helly-Aa* Festivals**

At 60 degrees north, Shetland is the British Isles' Northernmost archipelago. Lying equidistant between mainland Scotland and Norway, it bears the cultural legacies both of having been under the jurisdiction of the latter until the late-fifteenth century, and of being positioned as periphery of the former since then. Relatively economically buoyant since the 1970s, due to revenues generated through its use as a North Sea oil terminal, the vulnerability of Shetland's open economy is re-emerging. A downturn in fossil fuel prices, Governmental austerity, and the uncertainties of Brexit have promoted fiscal concerns leading to intensifying interest in tourism development, including the active promotion of Shetland as a year-round holiday destination, despite the inclemency of its North Atlantic climate in any period from November to March.

Each year, between January and March, people across Shetland observe a series of twelve fire festivals called *Up-Helly-Aas*. The origins of these unique celebrations, and of their naming, have been debated for many years. Varied accounts, including folklore suggesting that they date back to Shetland's past as a dominion of Norway (Brown 1998), are now set aside in favour of local scholarship tracing *Up-Helly-Aa*'s customs to the 'spontaneous popular creation[s]' (Smith 1993: 24) of radical movements formed by Shetlanders during the late nineteenth century (Brown 1998; Smith 1993).

Each *Up-Helly-Aa*'s 'front-stage' performances (Goffman [1969] 1990) are impressive. They include carnivalesque suspension of quotidian activities, making

way for parades of ‘misrule’. Public spaces are given over to representatives of the common populace: the *Jarl’s* or ‘Earl’s’ Squad, who, dressed as Vikings, are first among equals, leaders of numerous other troupes, comprising up to thirty costumed participants, or ‘guizers’. At every *Up-Helly-Aa*, these squads process with flaming torches, marching to hand-built wooden galleys, which they ignite; an astonishing finale to each festival’s public spectacle.

*Up-Helly-Aa*’s sensory immersions are captivating: exposure to extreme cold; disorientation in crowded, darkened streets, and the embodied enchantment of the ‘collective’ as the processions accelerate through their repertoires. Almost all of the islanders who contributed to this research, each one speaking in their own dialect, shared how their sensations of *Up-Helly-Aa* are intensified by their perceptions that it strengthens their connection to Shetland, manifesting their ideas of ‘place, history, tradition and belonging’ (Whitehead and Bozoğlu 2017: 1):

It’s a real moment of pride in being a Shetlander.

This is active identity-building. It is heritage-making as defined in the European Council’s Faro Convention, affording expressions of ‘values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions’; reflecting synergy between people and place, through time (Council of Europe 2005, Art. 2a). It emphasises ICH and ordinary people as its identifiers and transmitters (Nic Craith 2008). As one Shetlander, and *guizing* squad member, put it: ‘You could say [it’s] a bit like democracy: for the people and by the people’.

This positioning of *Up-Helly-Aa*, as ‘heritage from below’ (Robertson 2012), contrasts it with a darker aspect of the archipelago’s heritage, a history of elites who for two hundred years instrumentalised the islands’ *folk*, the Shetland dialect term for

‘people’, using them as non-free labour in the industrialisation of the North Atlantic fisheries (Fenton 1997). Ethnologist Ullrich Kockel (2008) proposes that this peripheralisation of ‘folk’ is a recurrent theme in European cultural history, reaching hegemonic zenith when such spaces replace the dynamic specificity of ordinary people in places, and times. *Up-Helly-Aa* appears to revoke such displacement. Its festivities, presented locally as sustaining traditions of local radicalism (Brown 1998), are invoked as ‘re-investitures’ of people and place; of Shetlander’s own selves: ‘it’s no<sup>2</sup> about you, it’s about wiz [us]!’

### **Belonging – *Proetnica***

The *Proetnica* festival’s core is centred around staged performances, which generate a sense of belonging as discussed further. Groups of men, women and children rotate in a dizzying spectacle of diversity in the citadel’s main square for days in a row. Dressed in traditional costumes, people, to quote Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998: 377), ‘become living signs of themselves’.

Groups representing each minority present themselves on stage articulating their identities through the performances. Materiality (Clopot 2016) plays a key role in this, with each group donning their ethnic costumes. The communicative event included either a dance or a song performed in a traditional manner by an amateur group. A standardised pattern was used with the dancers afforded 20 minutes for stage performances followed by one or two dances in front of the stage with festival participants. The performances, as one of the speakers at the opening ceremony observed, aimed to reflect the ‘spirit of a shared European cultural diversity’. References to the desired commonality, to creating shared experiences through



performances, were a repeated slogan throughout each day. As one speaker mentioned, the spirit of friendly competition, enacted through putting forward the best performance, ‘maintains the vitality of each ethnic group’. Heritage practices, instrumentalised and objectified as each ethnic group’s ‘best assets’ were meant not only to reflect the group’s celebrations of ICH, but also generate ‘tolerance for the identities of the other’ as another speaker put it.

A conscious effort was made to involve locals and tourists in these performances. This was done, as the organisers mentioned, in order to share experiences and encourage intercultural interaction. Moreover, organisers noted that they had purposefully asked that guards stand behind the stage so that the performance area was a space of interaction rather than a separate space.

Exposure to extreme difference can result in downplaying variances between ethnic groups, a sign of what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998: 77) calls the ‘banality of difference’. There was certainly a sense of this when one of the Jewish speakers in a debate organised for the festival’s scientific section mentioned the performances from the previous day. He recalled only two of the ethnic groups and continued by referring to the others as ‘whoever else there was there also’. The fast rotation of groups (20 minutes per performance and at least 10 groups per day) and their poor introduction - only by ethnicity, name and locality - did not help the case.

The act of celebrating ICH through performance brought a sense of *communitas* (Turner 1969 for participants who emphasised their histories of attending the festival and connections made throughout the years: ‘A real synergy is created around the stage’, explained one organiser. Groups, sharing space in the same hostel, dance and

sing together personifying interculturalism. Another organiser, though, asked about the opportunities and willingness of the groups for interaction with each other, mentioned a past attempt to organise an ethnic minorities ball during the festival only to have no one show up. At first sight, the offstage effects of *communitas* (Turner 1969) were difficult to observe. However, as the festival advanced, and audiences multiplied, there was increased inter-mixing between groups, particularly during the participative section of performance. Towards the end, the groups that joined the shared dancing sessions became so large, that several circles of dancers were formed, and the dedicated space in front of the stage was overcrowded. At those points, the mechanism of communicating ICH through performance and the embodied act of ‘practicing culture’ (Colomer 2018: 210) seemed to enhance the sense of belonging to a community of equals.

### **‘Othering’ selves – proscribing belonging at *Up-Helly-Aa***

In January 2018, in Lerwick, Shetland’s capital, home to around one third of the archipelago’s population of twenty-three thousand, five thousand onlookers watched as one thousand costumed men performed the festival’s public spectacle. People cheered and then gasped as the guizers flung flaming torches into the dragon-headed galley. Walking through the dispersing crowds, a new campaign, promoting *Up-Helly-Aa* season to prospective tourists (Promote Shetland 2018) formed the topic of discussion with companions. They considered the outsider’s gaze (See Urry 2002) looking to Lerwick, the largest, most famous of *Up-Helly-Aa*, and the only one that prevents women from joining the guizer squads.

In later conversations, participants in the research shared knowledge and experience

of ten of the remaining eleven *Up-Helly-Aas* that also place constraints on women's public participation, prohibiting post-pubescent women from their *Jarl* Squads. This variability of practices was articulated in nuanced terms, suggesting layered negotiations and expressing varying degrees of comfort along the festivals' exclusion/inclusion axes.

Contemporary, feminist historians portray Scotland's past as a landscape populated with the normative ever-presence of men, their activities unscrutinised regarding their suitability to meet gendered expectations (Abrams and Ewan 2018). These commentators propose that such 'hegemonic masculinity' succeeds because of its mutability. It is contestable, but also vigorously variable, and thus, independent of its 'assumed opposite': 'femininity' (Abrams and Ewan 2018: 2). In 2018, at Lerwick, the most evident 'folk' were certainly men, emplaced centre-stage. Their march traversed every route connecting the civic, ecclesiastical and commercial nodes of the town. Their guizing under fluid masculinities, re-presented as super-heroes, rock-stars and astronauts, was performed through costumes, including animal heads, false breasts, and blackened faces. Read non-critically, these transformative enactments invoke *Up-Helly-Aa* as the ultimate-North *Mardi Gras*, it's *Jarl's* Squad 'Lords of Misrule', reversing the status-quo and implementing a people's coup (see Brown 1998). But not everyone feels represented in this folk rule performance.

South Mainland<sup>3</sup> *Up-Helly-Aa* Committee's decision to elect a woman as *Jarl* in 2015 has intensified what one informant described as Shetland's 'big chat about equality'. Local print and social media platforms increase the visibility and pace of this discourse. One interviewee's comment (below), exemplifies observable perspectives that position *Up-Helly-Aa* performances as processes of making 'Others' from fellow

selves:

It all just seems excessively masculinist to me. Although there are women involved in some of them.

Interestingly, none of the interviewees expressed concern about men appearing to caricature objectified femininity whilst proscribing women's participation. Indeed, temporary transvestism was often perceived as simple pantomime, much the same, for some observers, as the *Jarl's Squads'* Viking costumery:

[T]hey dinna often look like Vikings, not the historical image that I have.

What was made clear by female informants, was that being excluded from full participation in these performances was what really mattered. It contravened their idealisations of *Up-Helly-Aa* as identity-work that should be made by and for 'the whole community', the social work mentioned above (Byrne 2008). Some expressed that they recognised this most clearly once they had experienced being included as guizers, beyond Lerwick, in the 'country' *Up-Helly-Aas*<sup>4</sup>.

## **Othering and exclusion - *Proetnica***

The *Proetnica* festival played down gendered differences, otherwise not uncommon in the lifeworlds of ethnic groups in Romania (Clopot and Nic Craith 2018). It reflected instead a different axis of inclusion-exclusion: that between the majority/minority population. Whereas discourses during the festival emphasised the aims to contribute to a pluralistic democratic society and send positive messages including 'together we can' to Europe, the ability of the festival to achieve such ambitious aims was short-circuited by the social realities. A striking difference was noted by the fact that events onstage were gaining a lot of attention, with hundreds of

locals and visitors watching and participating in the dances. Events off-stage were poorly attended, and organisers lamented the lack of official representation, including dedicated legislative representatives, or delegates representing the majority population. Whereas the onstage celebration was held in a positive key, akin to the folkloric performances of the past with an enhanced tone of festivalisation, the scientific session foregrounded Othering and intra-ethnicities friction(s).

Romania's complex ethnic landscape is a testament to the limits of accommodating multiculturalism at national level (Hall 1998). *Proetnica* takes place in an area where ethnic tensions are fuelled by nostalgic claims (Clopot 2017) to a past when borders were traced differently. Equally, treatment of the Roma population has generated significant debates. These concerns shadowed debates during the festival, although not all were explicitly addressed. Discussions revolved around present problems faced by ethnic members in exercising their rights and transmitting ICH practices. Dialogues in the scientific session also revealed the tensions and problems that ethnic groups experience, including prejudices, stereotyping, and a lack of access to rights, even when legislative measures are in place.

Tensions between different ethnic groups surfaced offstage too, notably during a Roma group recital. A group of local Roma, some under the influence of alcohol, were enjoying the music and dancing frantically in front of the stage as others looked on in both amazement and condescension. The guards kept a low profile, while other participants danced away from the Roma, marking spatially and symbolically the tensions that this ethnic group face in the country. Yet, organisers, and some of the guests in the scientific sessions, lauded the peaceful cohabitation of ethnic groups in Romania today, characteristics also noted by some researchers (see for instance van

Assche and Teampău 2009), some proposing that Romania should serve as a model for the European Union. *Proetnica*'s layers of Othering, and inclusion/exclusion were present not only along majority/minority lines but also between ethnic groups.

### **Restricting or widening belonging - 'Communitas' in *Up-Helly-Aa***

Considering the apparent gendered dichotomisation in some *Up-Helly-Aas* requires a following of 'plots' and 'conflicts' (after Marcus 1998) that goes beyond front-stage performances of parades, and media debates, to the festivals' hidden rites. These take place in what Shetlanders call the 'halls': civic buildings that are given over each *Up-Helly-Aa* for what has been termed a 'ritualised socialisation' (Brown 1998: 9) that will last throughout each night. Every hall holds an assembly of Shetland residents who have accessed entry by offering to serve refreshments. They are joined by relatives and friends from 'South', and further abroad, and, more usual now, by tourists in groups organised through local associations. Between twenty and fifty squads will visit each hall during *Up-Helly-Aa* night. In each, every squad performs a satirical sketch or dance, often based on locally topical events. After, the guizers join their families and friends to drink and eat together in a decorated side-room. Following this they all return to the main hall and, as the band plays a traditional tune, the squad and their hosts dance together. The guizers then move to the next hall on their itinerary, and a new squad enters, beginning the process again. For the guizers interviewed, performing at the halls generated feelings of belonging with people and place.

Through applying Victor Turner's refinements of the rites of passage model (Turner 1969; 1974) to these back-stage traditions, it is possible to observe three distinct rites.

These are: separation from the community during months of secret preparations; liminality, during the guizers ludic performances both as subjects and provocateurs of ridicule, and, finally, reintegration, through sharing food, drink and dancing. In Turner's (1969) conceptualisation of such rites, it is those who share the liminal stages, adopting a collective status as ritualised 'fools', who access the ritual's most potent outcome: the development of *communitas*, bonding them as peers in mutual solidarity. Using such analysis lends thickness to descriptions of much of the *Up-Helly-Aa*'s powerplay, used to maintain wider societal alterity. For example, whilst all informants agreed that both hosts and guizers participate in *Up-Helly-Aa* night, most of the women interviewed also shared their frustration at the restrictions placed around how they participate, intensified when they alone served the refreshments, whilst men shared the bonds of guizing.

'It's tradition, it's in our blood' explained one younger member of Lerwick's *Jarl's Squad*. Historically, the culturally specific gendered divisions of men working at sea and women labouring onshore that predominated in Northern Europe's commercial fishing economies (Byron 1994) also defined lifeways in Shetland. Since the late twentieth century, the traditions of the 'joint maritime household' have altered in response to socio-economic changes (Byron 1994). Similarly, extrinsic forces have also affected *Up-Helly-Aa*. For example, in the 1970s, following an influx of people coming to develop the archipelago's oil pipeline terminal, some Shetlanders feared that their culture would demise. The Lerwick *Up-Helly-Aa* Committee introduced a five-year residency rule, for the first time prohibiting migrant male workers from participating in the squads (Brown 1998). In this century, the welcome of women guizers at the country *Up-Helly-Aas*, including South Mainland's election of a female *Guizer Jarl*, demonstrates local reflexivity. Both responses evidence Shetland

residents adapting to changes in context in order that *Up-Helly-Aa*'s identity-work can continue to be transmitted.

Leaving the hall, discussion with companions returned to the increased promotion of *Up-Helly-Aas*. There is concern that far from stimulating change, the wider world's gaze may contribute to maintaining stasis. The marketisation of the Lerwick's *Jarl*'s Squad as ambassadors for their isles<sup>5</sup>, attending national and international events, commodifies their *communitas* and reifies their representation of masculinity as the normative form for Shetland identity. Men as 'wiz'. Might people in Shetland lose agency in adapting and changing their own identity inscription?

Indeed, while responding to questions about whether Shetland residents see *Up-Helly-Aa* reflecting the values that they are forming around their present-day identities, one person shared a story of how they felt empowered to bring their own deliberation of such values to the community when witnessing what they perceived as ridiculing homosexuality during some *Up-Helly-Aa* performances:

[I]t was well below acceptable [...] I wrote to the committee and complained about it.

Other informants also mentioned how the enactments performed during the liminal stages of *Up-Helly-Aa*'s rituals sometimes extended beyond lampooning the public acts of authority figures. Complaints were made to the organising committees, and, as one person said 'that being personal side of it has changed', people 'are saying "we are getting offended by this"'. Such endogenous agency is central to *Up-Helly-Aa* heritage-making. It is evident in the stories about the festivals' origins in home-grown radicalism. It is active in the adaptation of the festivals to suit changing contexts.



Kockel (2008) reminds us that this being able to change from within builds capacity for sustainably and regeneratively transmitting culture. In Shetland, the islands’ residents’ practices of publicly and/or collaboratively deliberating the values that form around local identity-work can be seen in the contests around the complexities in the *Up-Helly-Aa* festival tradition.

### Shared learnings in different contexts

The case studies discussed here reflect shared themes, albeit manifested differently. There is much to be shared across the two cases, in spite of their seeming dissimilarities. Both festivals afford opportunities to consider the transmission of intangible cultural heritages as manifested through ordinary people. Materiality (especially costume) plays a key role in both festivals. Costumes emphasise identities in the case of *Proetnica*, whereas in *Up-Helly-Aa* they are central for the guizing experience. Moreover, as each of the sections has shown both festivals emphasise the role of participation, a key theme that was repeatedly emphasised by partakers, as active heritage-making. Participation, however, was also problematised in the two case studies as it brought to the fore the politics of the festival and the two main themes of concern for us, belonging and Otherness. We briefly summarise the discussion of the two main themes in the table below.

Theme	<i>Proetnica</i>	<i>Up Helly Aa</i>
Belonging	Singers and dancers	Guizers, Jarl’s squads
Belonging	Minorities (ethnic groups)	Hosts and guests
Otherness	Majority population	Women (post-pubescent)
Otherness	Across ethnic groups	Recent migrants

Table 4.1 Summary of themes discussed in the case studies

As previously discussed the liminal state of the festival affords participants a sense of belonging. In the case of *Proetnica* this reinforces intra-group belonging of singers and dancers as well as a sense of *communitas* that is inclusive of other ethnic groups and, temporarily, for the liminal period of the performance, of tourists and local viewers. Similar feelings of belonging are shared through participation in the guizing and halls for socialisation in the different *Up-Helly-Aa* locations.

The second theme that is highlighted is that of exclusion, or Othering. Conflict between diverse participants in heritage processes has been theorised in heritage studies for decades (see *inter alia*, Meskell 2002; Ashworth, Graham and Tunbridge 2007; Silverman 2011). Tunbridge and Ashworth's (1996: 20-21) argument that dissonance arises because 'all heritage is someone's heritage and therefore logically not someone else's' remains compelling as is the alterity implied by Smith (2006) in her conceptualisation of *AHD*. Both commentaries provide useful frameworks for understanding reasons and uses for the regulation of women and migrants' participation in *Up-Helly-Aa*. These reflections also provide useful ground to understand the processes at *Proetnica* festival in Romania, where ethnic boundaries are negotiated through reference to the majority population but also amongst different groups.

Although this short summary might seem to give a sense of neatness to the politics of these festivals, the close look (as presented in the previous sections) analysis suggests that Othering and belonging dynamics are not only layered but malleable and dependent upon context in both cases. This flexibility gives festivals a transformative

potential, and could serve as a fertile ground for rights-based approaches as we discuss below.

## **Concluding remarks and rights-based approaches**

These concerns and the experiences of dissonance raised in the case studies in this chapter inspire us to key questions for our own research and for all engaging in critical studies of heritage. How do we develop useful praxes with people who are assembling and transmitting their cultural expressions of place, history, tradition and belonging, now, and for their futures, and support these heritages from below as important social action?

The tensions we have experienced in the two case studies seem to contravene key articles in the Faro Convention aimed at ensuring that partaking in heritage be understood as ‘cultural participation as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights’, and that member states guarantee to use heritage to construct ‘peaceful and democratic’ societies (Council of Europe 2005: Art 2a and 2d). Whilst at the time of writing the United Kingdom’s status as a European Member State is uncertain, the convention’s articles could still provide recourse for those, who, as one interviewee put it, would like *Up-Helly-Aa* ‘to be for everybody’ and not just ‘for everybody to watch’.

In a similar manner, the ethos of *Proetnica*: inspiring intercultural dialogue and enhancing awareness and participation in diverse heritages, falls short of its aims.

Whereas legislation such as the European Charter for Regional or Minority

Languages or the contentious Framework Convention for the Protection of National

Minorities, as well as provisions in international human rights instruments<sup>6</sup> ensure such events can take place, their implementation in different nations is not equal (see also Kaina and Karolewski 2009 on difficulties of establishing a common identity). As Laia Colomer (2018: 213) has argued recently ‘the core of the controversy lacks an articulate definition (at least in European countries) of what exactly is meant by “multicultural discourses of culture”’. This ambiguity resonates with Romanian ethnic groups’ experiences and their feelings of exclusion along the majority/minority lines but also in the frictions between ethnicities.

One possible approach to mitigate such shortcomings would be to develop rights-based approaches. For instance, William Logan’s (2014 amongst others) work exemplifies and advocates for situated, broad-based, educative, and collaborative approaches to heritage management, aimed at facilitating effective and democratic context for safeguarding principles and their implementation.

Adopting rights-based approaches can also be problematic. Just as the contestability of heritages inspires critical engagement, so too do the intersections between heritages and human rights, particularly following UNESCO’s adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH (UNESCO 2003, Silverman and Ruggles 2007); emphasising human rights and local perspectives over international legislations (Hill, Nic Craith and Clopot 2018). Regardless that the convention has not been ratified by the UK, rendering its provisions inapplicable for those deliberating *Up-Helly-Aa* practices, it’s suitability as a framework for generating greater equity may also be contested. For example, anthropologist, Marilyn Strathern posits that human rights as constructs of a ‘Western’ ‘constitutional model’ of what a human being should be (Strathern 2016: 196) inspire a polarising discourse, depicting people in perpetual combat, fighting to

win their rights above the rights of others. Such an approach thus necessarily needs to be sensitive to the needs of the communities and the wider social patterns in a society. With all their shortcomings, when dealt with sensitively such approaches can support communities, as we reflected at the beginning of this essay, to do their own heritage work and sustain ‘heritage from below’ (Robertson 2012).

Our comparative analysis has shown that two unrelated festivals, in two very different contexts in Europe, can demonstrate similar patterns and offer diverse communities occasions for strengthening belonging. They also show that such apparently inclusive performances can, by contrast, be used to proscribe the participation of selected groups, all the while with official sanction. The learnings from this analysis of these two festivals that seem worlds-apart can help communities reconsider their practices.

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<sup>1</sup> It is often acknowledged that Turner has developed the ideas of Arnold van Gennep.

<sup>2</sup> The analysis of the *Up-Helly-Aa* festival includes quotes given in Shetland dialect, a form of the Scots language. The authors uphold the argument that Scots spellings are not contractions of English and therefore the phenomenon of an 'apologetic apostrophe' is not used here.

<sup>3</sup> The southern part of Shetland's largest island, called 'Mainland', is a narrow peninsula, extending some 25 miles from Lerwick. Here, the dispersed communities rotate the responsibility for hosting the 'SMUHA' parade and galley burning.

<sup>4</sup> Outside of Lerwick *Up-Helly-Aa*, the remaining eleven festivals do permit women to participate as guizers, taking part in the parades and squad performances in the halls. However, only the South Mainland *Up-Helly-Aa* allows adult women into its *Guizer Jarl's Squad*.

<sup>5</sup> As well as attending events throughout the UK, the Lerwick *Guizer Jarl's Squad* are regularly invited to participate in New York City's 'Tartan Day' parade, an event designed to promote Scotland to prospective tourists (see *inter alia* Shetland News 19 March 2003).

<sup>6</sup> See for instance the 1966 *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* or the 1992 *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*.