

## **Festivals, heritage, boundaries? How differing interpretations of heritage impact on community connections at cultural festivals.**

Cultural festivals consist, in the majority, of intangible displays and performances, a great percentage of which could be described as having heritage value, the 'living expressions and traditions inherited by communities and transmitted to their descendants' (UNESCO, 2003). In critique of this convention, there is a persuasion in some academic circles that the 'dominant preservationist norm' of such institutions may actually fail to safeguard intangible heritage (Duarte, 2010:856/8).

Within my presentation I aim to explore the potential impact of this dominant narrative upon perceptions of heritage 'on the ground', within the festival hosting communities. I suggest that variations between stakeholders as to how heritage is perceived impact on the contributions festivals make to the social sustainability of their communities, the manner in which these events enable connections and cross boundaries between place and people. Through case study examples of small-scale festivals in Northumberland, I consider how heritage is initially (or consciously) perceived and how these perceptions change. I argue that many of the cultural scopes and expressions of creativity within these communities are not primarily or consciously recognised as heritage and thus devalued or ignored both to some degree within that community and by external decision makers. In addition I argue for greater recognition of the social and cultural value of these 'subconscious' elements of heritage and their contribution to community sustainability.

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