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Irish Traditional Music and the Great Recession:
Living and Working in the Irish Arts Sector after 2008

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Ethnomusicology

by

Kevin Cory Levine

2018

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Irish Traditional Music and the Great Recession: Living and Working in the Irish Arts Sector after 2008

by

Kevin Cory Levine

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnomusicology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Timothy D. Taylor, Chair

Ireland's entry into an €85 billion bailout agreement with the tripartite entity known as the "Troika" (IMF-EC-ECB) in 2008 placed the Republic of Ireland under obligation to undergo a comprehensive economic adjustment program between 2010 and 2013. The reforms that followed from this period led the country on a characteristically neoliberal policy trajectory involving significant transformations in Ireland's national arts infrastructure. This dissertation draws upon eleven months of fieldwork in Ireland and over forty interviews in order to examine how the recession and subsequent adjustment program affected the livelihoods and working conditions of Irish traditional musicians.

As part of the resulting analysis, I explain how the process of structural adjustment led to severe cuts in the public subsidies available to traditional musicians and reoriented national policy further in line with art commodification. This involved a shift from a traditional European model of arts funding, in which the principal support modality is direct subsidy maximization, towards a more American arts funding model, emphasizing the need for artists to act

entrepreneurially and to deepen engagement with the private market. The Great Recession also involved heightened attempts among policymakers to leverage traditional music and other Irish arts towards foreign investment and tourism revenue. These dynamics deepened the gap between core supports for traditional musicians and expenditure on cultural programming intended to market or “sell” Ireland abroad.

This dissertation synthesizes the above observations towards three general commentaries on neoliberal structural adjustment and its impact upon Irish musicians. First, I argue that Ireland’s structural adjustment process exemplifies what Naomi Klein (2007) has called “disaster capitalism,” a term she uses to describe the phenomenon in which economic crises are seized upon as opportunities to deepen neoliberal policy within various societies. Second, I argue that the expansion of neoliberal ideas into the domain of the Irish arts was principally facilitated by late 20th century ideas about the “creative economy,” which augmented state interest in traditional music as a means to develop foreign investment throughout the recession. Lastly, I draw upon Karl Marx (1990 [1867]) and Marcel Mauss’s (2002 [1925]) writings on value to show how Irish traditional musicians experienced structural adjustment in terms of a “devaluation” of Irish arts.

The dissertation of Kevin Cory Levine is approved.

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2018

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INTRODUCTION

The fall of the Lehman Brothers financial services firm on September 15th, 2008 and the global credit crunch that followed had significant effects on several European economies, including Ireland. The Republic of Ireland, which is home to a relatively small population of four and a half million people, was among the first Eurozone nations to respond to the Great Recession in addition to being one of the most severely affected. In raw financial terms, Ireland was held liable for €41 billion or 42% of all EU debt by 2011, which was more than any other European country at the time (Cahill 2013). The cost of the recession averaged across the Irish population represented a €9,000 burden on each citizen compared to a €192 per capita average across the remaining EU population (Cahill 2013). This only begins to place the recession's broad impact into perspective, which also led to a significant rise in unemployment, emigration, and homelessness throughout the country.

Ireland's economic fallout had significant implications for several populations but had particularly stark effects on the livelihoods of Irish traditional musicians. By the time that I initiated dissertation fieldwork in 2012, many of the musicians I met had already begun to observe major shifts in their performance prospects. The accordionist and traditional music radio host Martin Donohoe was among several musicians that year who observed that the Irish population was "going out less," including to pubs and other places where traditional musicians typically perform (Personal Interview with Martin Donohoe 2012). This trend had reduced the amount of take-home pay Martin and other traditional performers drew from "gigs," forcing them to rely more heavily on alternative sources of income. For those musicians who persisted, making a living as an artist increasingly meant competing for limited governmental grants or venturing into the underdeveloped space of corporate arts philanthropy. It was telling that by the

time I concluded dissertation fieldwork in 2016, many of the music activities in which Martin and I had participated just four years previously had fully discontinued. An increasing number of artists had emigrated from the country to pursue prospects elsewhere.

The experiences cited above are symptomatic of several broad changes that were instigated in Ireland following the Great Recession. The relevant chain of events began with Ireland's decision to accept an €85 billion bailout from the tripartite entity known as the "Troika" (IMF-EC-ECB), which placed the country under obligation to undergo significant economic adjustments between 2010 and 2013. The reforms that followed led the country on a characteristically neoliberal policy trajectory, involving deep reductions in arts subsidies and other areas of public welfare. During this period, the government also effected a shift towards a more "American" funding model, in which artists were increasingly encouraged to seek private philanthropy to support their work. These factors augmented challenges within sector that was by all measures already economically vulnerable. Many Irish arts organizations were relying upon public subsidy for half of their funding, and most artists were earning 56% less than manufacturing workers (Hibernian Consulting and Insight Statistical Consulting 2010, 12).

The implementation of cuts across to arts funding might suggest that art had fallen from governmental priority, but this was far from the case. In fact, the arts became one of the core components of Ireland's comprehensive plan for economic recovery, with a number of large cultural festivals being organized as a means to attract foreign investment. Although this strategy met its targets, it also severely fractured relationships between Irish artists and their government. My collaborators in Ireland widely expressed the belief that government officials had become interested only in the economically salient aspects of artists' labors rather than in artists' livelihoods. This meant that artists experienced an increasing sense of exploitation in addition to

a life marked by heightened precariousness.

Sentiments of exploitation were prevalent across the Irish arts sector but were particularly heightened among traditional musicians, who represent the focus this research. Irish traditional music, which involves the performance of 18th to 21st century instrumental dance “tunes” (e.g. jigs, reels, hornpipes, etc.) on a range of acoustic instruments (e.g. uilleann pipes, fiddle, accordion, flute, harp, etc.), represents one of the more widely recognized symbols of Irish identity across the world. For this reason, Irish traditional music has featured heavily in



Figure 0.1: Traditional musicians playing in a pub “session” in Co. Longford, June 21, 2017 (Photo courtesy of Martin Donohoe).

governmental tourism campaigns, trade missions, and other commercial performance contexts.

Traditional music performance also, paradoxically, represents one of the least publicly subsidized art forms in terms of the available supports for professional musicians. For instance, it was not until 2005 that the Arts Council developed a dedicated funding program for traditional music recording, and grants for traditional arts comprise only 3% of Arts Council funding

generally (The Arts Council 2004, 12).

The disparity between the government's attempts to profit from traditional music, on the one hand, and to fund traditional music activity, on the other, was only further expanded in the context of the Great Recession. Among its other effects, the recession led to a 70% cut in the funding earmarked for Irish traditional musicians, including a 41% reduction in festival funding over a single year (*Journal of Music* 2016). This compares to a 30% cut across all art forms (The Arts Council 2013, 3). Despite these cuts, the Irish government continued to make "a big ask" of the traditional music community to aid in pulling the country out of the recession. This included the use of traditional music as a marketing tool across three major festivals the government launched in order to generate tourism revenue and attract investment. The polarity between these uses for music was not lost on traditional artists, who felt increasingly abused and neglected.

This dissertation synthesizes the above observations towards some general commentaries on neoliberal structural adjustment and its impact upon Irish musicians. I pose three central arguments as part of the resulting analysis. First, I argue that Ireland's structural adjustment process exemplifies what Naomi Klein (2007) has called "disaster capitalism," a term she uses to describe the phenomenon in which economic crises are seized upon as opportunities to deepen neoliberal policy within various society. I base my recourse to this concept on several observations. Chief among them is the fact that recessionary reform has largely served to draw musicians' activities further within the fold of the private market. Second, I argue that the expansion of neoliberal ideas into the domain of Irish arts was facilitated by late 20th century ideas about the "creative economy," which augmented state interest in the arts as a means to accrue foreign investment. Lastly, I demonstrate how these processes were interpreted by Irish artists as "devaluing" Irish arts within national policymaking. This discussion draws upon

anthropological theories of value derived from Karl Marx (1990 [1867]) and Marcel Mauss (2002 [1925]).

The arguments presented in this analysis are based upon 11 months of fieldwork comprising four separate stays in Ireland. This process began with three month-long fieldwork trips to Ireland between 2012 and 2014, and eight months of fieldwork between September 2015 and April 2016. Taken together, I have collaborated with over forty individuals in the development of this research. This includes Irish traditional musicians, government officials, nonprofit leaders, and other parties affected by the Great Recession. I also bring to this research more than a decade of personal experience performing, teaching, and writing about Irish traditional music. My background in “the tradition” contributed significantly in helping me to gain access to several key collaborators. This included traditional musicians, as well as many of the public administrators and nonprofit entities involved in their work. This informs the variety of voices and perspectives that are represented in my ethnography.

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

I began pilot fieldwork for this project in August 2012, when I traveled to Co. Cavan, Ireland to attend the *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann*, Ireland’s largest annual traditional music festival. The *Fleadh* that year had become the focus of several musical performances intended to celebrate shared links between Catholic and Protestant communities living on either side of the Irish political border. My intention in attending the *Fleadh* was to study these performances and to learn how traditional music related with various notions of Irish identity. Consequently, I spent the bulk of the festival asking my collaborators to comment on the ways music informed their sense of individual, regional, and political identification. This project became the focus of

my M.A. paper and two additional fieldwork trips to Ireland, including one month in Co. Derry, Ireland (2013) and another in Co. Sligo, Ireland (2014).



Figure 0.2: Martin Donohoe (right) introducing musicians during the "Concert of No Musical Demarcation" on August 10, 2012. The event opened the 2012 Fleadh Cheoil, serving to highlight shared traditions between musicians from Catholic and Protestant communities (Photograph by Kevin Levine).

The musicians whom I met between 2012 and 2014 made significant contributions to my initial research on music and identification. Throughout my fieldwork, however, it began to occur to me that few of my collaborators spoke much about identity outside the context of direct interviews. This led me to reflect more deeply on the conversations that I had had with musicians over the previous three years and especially on what they discussed in the process of their daily routines. It was through this exercise that I began to recognize the extent to which many of my correspondences with musicians focused not on identity, not even necessarily on music, but rather, on the economy and other factors affecting musicians' livelihoods. During drives to and

from gigs, my discussions with musicians often concerned the number of businesses that had closed due to rising rent costs or the long stretches of “ghost housing estates” that were left vacant due to recent foreclosures. At the dinner table, musicians frequently spoke of receiving diminished pay or of losing performance venues due to such closures. When meeting with friends, their conversations seldom passed without reference to the increasing amount of time that they spent on grant applications or crowdfunding petitions.

The fact that I was conducting fieldwork throughout one of the deepest recessions in modern Irish history had not occurred to me until the latter part of my fieldwork in Sligo (2014). I had spent my time asking musicians how music helped to negotiate or communicate their sense of identity at a time when many artists were losing audiences for their music, experiencing loss in take-home pay, struggling to make medical payments, questioning their career trajectories, and generally trying to fulfill basic needs. My relatively late realization of this circumstance felt embarrassing given how often my collaborators drew attention to the recession. It was not that identity had ceased to be an important subject for them, only that it had become less of a priority for discussion in a period where musicians were preoccupied with fundamental survival.

By complete coincidence, my recognition of the above dynamics made manifest a hypothetical situation described three years later by Timothy Rice (2017) in his book *Modeling Ethnomusicology*. In this work, Rice describes two starting points for ethnomusicological theorizing. His first illustration focuses on an ethnomusicologist who enters the field with capital “T” Theory, meaning that the researcher brings research with a model that proposes a “general [claim] about the nature of music or about the social world” (27). His second depiction is of an ethnomusicologist who does not enter the field with Theory, but rather, with a love for a particular music tradition and a set of “preunderstandings about the way music and musicking

work even if he hasn't reflected on them" (27). In either approach, the ethnomusicologist is beginning with some sort of model or set of preunderstandings that are used to draw meaning from observations made during fieldwork.

Tim Rice proceeds to complicate the first approach to ethnomusicological theorizing, noting the possibility that a researcher enters a field with a particular Theory only to discover that the musicians with whom he is speaking either have no desire to talk about musical experience or that they are suffering in poverty. Rice's point is that beginning research with a Theory in mind does not necessarily mean that an ethnomusicologist will be blind to the broader world around them but that it does give rise to important choices. In the context of my own research, Rice's hypothetical illustration described the literal ethical dilemma in which I was positioned. I had entered the field guided by Theory on the relationship between music and identity but encountered a reality in which musicians were less immediately concerned with talking about what music "does," "expresses," or "negotiates." Rather, they were concerned whether their socioeconomic environment precluded the opportunity to do, to express, and to negotiate through music. Faced with this dilemma, I had to choose whether to continue studying identity or to give up my project and work on a topic that was of more pressing interest to those whom I was consulting. I chose the latter.

There was much ground to make up to approach my new target research upon my return from Ireland in 2014. Consequently, I spent the bulk of 2014-2015 working with members of my dissertation committee on a comprehensive exam schedule oriented towards economic transformation and cultural policy reform. For my theory exam, I worked with Dr. Timothy D. Taylor on a study list emphasizing the role of neoliberalism in cultural policy and European structural adjustment. This involved survey of cultural studies and economics papers on the

“creative economy.” Concurrently, I worked with Dr. Timothy Rice on a regional area exam comparing various historical approaches to European arts and cultural management.

The knowledge that I gained through exams enabled me to complete my dissertation prospectus in early 2015. By this time, I had confirmed that Ireland’s response to the recession did, in fact, mirror much of what has previously been said about the spread of neoliberal ideas and austerity policy. Ireland’s entry into a bailout agreement led to welfare cuts (e.g., arts, education, etc.), privatization (e.g., land, utilities, etc.), and wealth concentration (e.g., the number of Irish millionaires tripled following 2008), as well as recapitalization of financial institutions, imposition of increased taxes on poor communities, and colonization of areas previously shielded from the full effects of capital exploitation (e.g. the arts). These factors contributed to the types of observations made by my collaborators throughout 2012-2014.

I embarked on the core dissertation fieldwork three months after having successfully completed my prospectus defense, placing me in Ireland by September 2015. I chose Dublin City as my research base for several reasons, not least of which is the fact that Dublin County receives the majority percentage of national arts investment. Dublin city is also home to several governmental headquarters for cultural funding, policy planning, and programming, including the Department of Arts, the Arts Council, the National Concert Hall, Music Network, and other institutions. It was important for me to have central access to these entities, given that they were the institutions through which artists typically receive state funding and those responsible for deploying structural reform in the arts.

Once settled in Dublin City, my initial fieldwork activity involved participation in several public cultural policy meetings. It happened to be the case that only a month preceding my planned departure for Ireland, the Department of Arts announced plans for establishing the first

national-level cultural policy in Irish history. The drafting process was to include a series of town-hall style meetings, where members of the public would be able to provide their opinions on state policies pertaining to arts and culture. It was both fortuitous and imperative that I attended these events given their immediate relevance to my dissertation and the access they provided to potential collaborators. Thankfully, the Secretary of the Department of Arts, Feargal Ó Coigligh, provided me permission to attend the meetings, which began only four days following my arrival in Ireland.¹ This was opportune, as the events helped me to build a solid understanding of Irish arts policy, funding, and structure within just the first few weeks of fieldwork. I also met several artists at the policy events, who were knowledgeable of state arts funding history and were willing to share their personal contacts.



Figure 0.3: Kevin Levine (left) and the Minister of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Heather Humphries (right) on September 15, 2015 (Photo by Kevin Levine).

¹ I discuss the context for these meetings in greater depth in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

The conclusion of the state policy meetings in late October 2015 left me free to use my time to speak with individuals affected by the recession in various capacities. Given that this was my fifth time in Ireland, I had already built a large network of individuals whom I knew to be knowledgeable of national arts funding and who would be able to comment on changes brought on by the economic collapse. This network included Martin Donohoe, Gary Lynch, and other musicians whom I had known since my pilot research in 2012. Martin Donohoe was particularly helpful in putting me in touch with musicians who understood Irish arts funding and policy. Apart from this type of “snowballing,” I cold-contacted (e.g., by e-mail, phone, etc.) many individuals whose work and experiences could shed light on the full impact of the recession. This included not only arts practitioners but also government officials, nonprofit arts administrators, and community arts volunteers. By my return home in April 2016, I had conducted interviews with over forty individuals across two-thirds of the country.

When selecting among potential collaborators for this research, my goal was to work with individuals representing a balance of professional, semi-professional, and non-professional traditional music activities. Most traditional musicians today perform on a non-professional or semi-professional basis, with only a small percentage of individuals choosing to pursue full-time careers. The skew towards amateur and semi-professional participation is no doubt informed by the genre’s deep rootedness in 18th to 20th century rural pastimes. Traditional music performance developed, in particular, to suit the varied rhythms of several social or “country” dance practices that were popular in Ireland throughout the 1700s to 1800s. This tradition and its associated musical practices were spread throughout Ireland by a small number of professional “dancing-masters,” who performed traditional music solo and received patronage for dance instruction (Foley 2016). The dancing master tradition fell into decline by the early 1900s; however,

traditional music and dance continued to be performed on an amateur basis within Irish households alongside storytelling and conversation gatherings. These occasions were part of the fabric of Irish life, functioning much like “sessions” do in a contemporary performance.

The types of professional activities that now take place in traditional music emerged between the 1950s to 1970s due to the culmination of several factors. This process was sparked by the establishment of *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* (CCÉ) in 1951. CCÉ’s efforts to revive traditional music participation in the mid-1900s led to the development of both *fleadhannas* (festivals) and informal music events known as “sessions” (Fairbairn 1994:582).² The session, which occurred in homes, pubs, and other venues, became a principal platform for informal group performance and a minor source of income for paid “host” musicians by the 1960s. The emergence of full-time professional bands occurred simultaneously with the growth of Irish festivals and sessions. Traditional music had been performed in Irish dance-halls by professional ensemble groups known as *céilí* bands up to the 1950s; however, the concept of developing arranged music for concert-style performance was introduced in the early 1960s. The composer and radio host Seán Ó Riada (1982) pursued an interest in combining the group structure of *céilí* bands with classical and folk principles of variation. Ó Riada formed a group called Ceoltóirí Chualann to share this vision, presenting a model for the structure and presentation of many full-time professional bands to follow.

Traditional music performance now spans a broad range of amateur and professional activities, involving all of the aforementioned musical settings (e.g., soloists, *céilí* bands, concert bands, festivals, sessions, etc.) save for the dancing-master tradition. I felt that it was important to field insights from individuals across this spectrum given the expectation that the recession

² CCÉ contributed to the development of sessions but was not exclusive in this regard.

would affect musicians' livelihoods differently. My ethnography affirmed this expectation in the sense that full-time professional musicians (e.g., Martin Donohoe, Shane Hennessey, Caitlín Nic Gabhann, etc.) often needed to develop more comprehensive adaptations to the recession than others; however, I found musicians' commentaries on structural adjustment to be consistent regardless of their careers. This is informed by the fact that many semi-professional (e.g., Joe Carroll, Ciara O'Grady, etc.) and non-professional artists (e.g., Gay McKeon, Antóin Mac Gabhann, etc.) rely upon public funding to support personal and communal art projects despite pursuing other professional work.³ Even casual performers were affected by the economic downturn given the closure of pubs, community centers, and other venues where they typically played music. I will continue to indicate musicians' stakes in policy reform throughout the dissertation where it has a bearing upon their commentary.

My goal in conducting interviews with musicians regardless of their professional or non-professional status was to answer the following key questions: In what ways has living and working as a musician changed since the onset of the recession? What do musicians perceive as the greatest challenges they face working in the arts? To whom or to what do artists attribute these challenges? Do musicians see their work as being valued by the government and by the broader Irish society? To what extent has austerity altered the way the way the government and society ascribe value to the arts? To what extent has neoliberalism played a role in characterizing recessionary conditions? What alternative factors (e.g., historical, political, or economic) can explain musicians' experiences amid the economic collapse?

In larger part, I did not find that I needed to differentiate between the above inquiries and

³ Gay McKeon and Antóin Mac Gabhann both identified as not pursuing professional performance careers for their income; however, both musicians have performed and recorded professionally at various times in their careers.

the interview questions that I posed to my collaborators. This was again by design, as I had opted to formulate my project out of the types of conversations in which Irish artists were already engaged. The only challenge I encountered was attempting to understand which socioeconomic problems cited by my collaborators originated during the recession. What the interview process taught me was that the recession was best understood as a component of long-term systemic issues rather than as a genesis moment. This led me away from posing the formulaic “before the recession” and “after the recession” style inquiries that informed the early part of my fieldwork.

Beyond firsthand interviews, this research also relied heavily upon information drawn from Irish periodicals and other media sources. The timeframe in which I conducted fieldwork overlapped with several important developments in the Irish arts, including the restructuring of the Department of Arts, the launch of the most expensive Irish cultural programs in history, the Irish general elections, and the development of a new national cultural policy. This meant that there was a steady stream of publications on arts matters throughout the duration of my fieldwork. Much of the media during this time dealt with content directly relevant to my dissertation research, such as arts policy changes, urban gentrification, welfare cuts, and other issues commonly cited by my collaborators. Growing media attention to art also introduced me to the forms of resistance in which artists were engaged in response to recessionary reform. For instance, this is how I initially became aware of the work being done by the National Campaign for the Arts, the Irish Association of Songwriters, Composers, and Authors, and other groups that were heavily involved in mobilizing against state cuts.

I felt overall that the methodological approach I chose for this research yielded rich ethnographic data and that the subject matter was of critical importance to musicians’ livelihoods. There are, however, a few ways in which my research led to a substantially different

product than much extant ethnomusicological literature. This research is atypical of the field in that there is not an extensive discussion of what music “does” or how it “sounds.”⁴ For example, this dissertation does not discuss how traditional musicians expressed their sentiments about the recession through music, how music helped them to cope with the harsh realities of the recession, nor how music helped artists to resist austerity implementation. My more immediate concern, and indeed, that of my collaborators, was whether recessionary conditions allowed for musical participation to occur on what terms. It made sense to me that there was space within ethnomusicology for a study that focuses almost exclusively on the non-performance aspects of artists’ lives precisely because it is so often the financial, administrative, bureaucratic, and legal challenges artists encounter that determine what happens in the world of performance.

One consequence of the fact that my research did not emphasize musical aesthetics or social “functions” was that I had a difficult time making much of the extant ethnomusicological literature commensurate with this dissertation. The present work touches upon many of the common ethnomusicological themes that Timothy Rice (2007) and others have highlighted, including music and tragedy (Dirksen 2013; Kartomi 2010), music and poverty (Araújo 2008; Harrison 2013), and music and cultural management (Titon 2009). I did not, however, find strong parallels in the aims of these works with the focal point of my research in Ireland. For instance, these works centered around the “what does music express or achieve” line of inquiry mentioned earlier, whereas I was more focused on questions of “what social structures must be present for musicking to happen, and how do musicians support their livelihoods in times of economic turbulence?” My survey of the available literature led me to lean much more on frameworks from anthropology, cultural studies, and public policy than on ethnomusicological

⁴ The exception is Chapter Two, which describes how structural adjustment has led to shifts in the types of aesthetics that are advanced by a more privatized funding system.

literature, partly for this reason.

The exception to the above concerns the ethnomusicological literature on patronage, which relates strongly with my goal of demonstrating how Irish music patronage has shifted since the onset of the Great Recession. Ethnomusicologists have devoted especial attention to what it means to musicians when the economic systems supporting them undergo change. For instance, William Noll (1991) discusses how processes of urbanization in late 19th century Poland led rural musicians to rely more heavily upon contract-based patronage than upon traditional forms of support based in mutual bonds of social obligation (Noll 1991, 350). Ryan Thomas Skinner (2012) has described more recently how the growth of a wealthy merchant class in late 20th century Côte d'Ivoire fostered an environment where musicians increasingly began to support themselves through private investment instead of state subsidization (Skinner 2012, 524). Tim Rice (1994) has also written on music patronage, focusing on how Communist reform in Eastern Europe (1944-1989) influenced musical practices in Bulgarian rural villages. Rice examines, in particular, how socialist control led to growing audiences for wedding music and a secondary economy supporting wedding performers (Rice 1994, 241). These writings describe socioeconomic shifts occurring in diverse contexts but nevertheless align with my goal of emphasizing how musicians respond to politico-economic shifts and associated patronage systems.

Another unique feature of this dissertation is that it relies heavily upon quantitative, economic, and statistical data to make what are ultimately qualitative ethnographic points. The field training that I received within the UCLA Department of Ethnomusicology involved few discussions of when and how to involve quantitative data as part of our ethnographies, as the emphasis was largely placed upon qualitative data and phenomenological musical experience.

Nevertheless, it was imperative for me to use a wealth of statistics in order to represent the types of issues artists were facing. The use of quantitative data when describing social behavior occasionally sets off alarms for ethnomusicologists, who often critique such approaches for being “non-ethnographic,” “reductionist,” or top-down.” The irony I encountered was that quantitative data and analysis was an inherent part of musicians’ own interpretations of their qualitative experiences. Many of the figures utilized in this dissertation were brought to my attention by my collaborators as being meaningful to their understanding of the world around them. This dissertation reflects such understandings in addition to other qualitative insights.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE

The theoretical arguments presented in the introduction to this chapter represent the synthesis of my fieldwork observations with concepts drawn from anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, public policy, and several other disciplines. This dissertation focuses most especially on anthropological critiques of neoliberalism, neoliberal capitalism, or late capitalism in characterizing the forms of structural adjustment implemented in Ireland following the onset of the Great Recession. In anthropological texts, these terms are used to identify both (a) an aggressive stage in capitalist development and (b) a theory proposing “that all human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms...within a framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey 2005, 2). The spread of this particular set of economic principles is most commonly placed during the 1970s, a period in which Keynesian economic theory began to lose its foothold in American and European policymaking. Michel Foucault (2008 [2004]), whose work is referenced throughout this dissertation, has provided a more comprehensive history of neoliberalism that identifies the

origin of neoliberalism or *ordoliberalism* in the 1930s (see Chapter Two).

Significant to this research is the fact that the spread of neoliberal policies is frequently linked with the onset of economic disasters. Scholars across anthropology, sociology, and a several other disciplines have observed that recessions or other major economic events (e.g., natural disasters, conflict, etc.) tend to serve as a “fertilizer” for the mandate and adoption of neoliberal policies. This phenomenon has been detailed by the journalist Naomi Klein, whose writings in *The Shock Doctrine* (2007) have been referenced extensively by anthropologists (e.g., Sherry Ortner 2011). The thrust of Klein’s argument is the suggestion that adherents to the neoliberal dogma have developed a pattern of transforming disasters into opportunities to further the spread neoliberal ideals and to acquire assets among debt-laden countries. She develops this thesis, which she refers to as “disaster capitalism,” through extensive case study and direct references to writings by Milton Friedman and other Chicago School economists.

What Naomi Klein describes in *The Shock Doctrine* is not the first observation of how neoliberal reform often follows out of economic disaster. Rather, Klein’s work builds upon what has often been referred to as the “Washington Consensus.” This concept has been utilized for at least two decades to describe a set of economic policies developed by the International Monetary Fund and other U.S.-based entities to enforce structural adjustment in crisis-struck nations. The application of the Washington Consensus characterizes a process in which a nation in the midst of a recession agrees to undergo prescriptive structural adjustment orchestrated by the IMF in exchange for financial relief. The adjustment program invariably calls for the country in receipt of assistance to lower trade barriers, deregulate the domestic market, and privatize government assets, as well to implement a range of range of welfare reductions and other austerity provisions to ensure timely debt repayment (Harvey 2005, 29).

The anthropological literatures on neoliberal capitalism aided extensively in the development of this dissertation given their immediate resemblance to Ireland's chosen recovery course from the Great Recession. Indeed, Ireland's decision to enter into an €85 billion bailout agreement with the Troika in 2010 came in tow with all the standard elements of the Washington Consensus. This included prescriptions for the country to loosen regulations on the financial market, privatize state assets (e.g., Aer Lingus, National Lottery, Irish Water, etc.), reduce welfare expenditure (e.g., cuts to the arts), and to affect a range of other transformations. Activities in several of these areas directly benefitted Ireland's creditors in addition to foreign corporations, which gained increased access to Irish assets following the agreement. Ironically, the austerity program also served to further reify the same principles of market fetishism that originally perpetuated the economic recession. This was observed by many Irish scholars in the wake of the recession, including Colin Coulter and Angela Nagle (2015). The title of their book, *Ireland under Austerity: Neoliberal Crisis, Neoliberal Solutions*, could easily fit this dissertation.

Incorporating scholarship on neoliberal capitalism in my analysis was important for elucidating not only the recession's general impact but also the forms of structural adjustment imposed directly on the national arts infrastructure. Ireland's plan for supporting artists amid the recession was largely characterized by attempts to place artistic processes into the fold of the private sector. This resonated with a commonly cited facet of neoliberal policy, which is its tendency to draw all aspects of human behavior into the free market. David Harvey (2005) is one of several theorists who has remarked on the fact that society tends to place boundaries around what is deemed amenable or appropriate to commoditize based upon its culture and values. As Harvey suggests, however, the promotion of market liberalization has tended to lower such boundaries and to catalyze processes of commodification (2005, 165).

The theoretical framework Harvey and Klein provided for analyzing expansions of neoliberal capitalism was extremely useful in my own research given the extent to which Irish reform encouraged musicians to engage with the private market. The government's solution for supporting Irish artists was to wean them off public subsidy through a variety of policies that incentivized recourse to corporate philanthropy. This included the launch of a new government program known as RAISE, which provided art institutions with subsidies they could use to hire fundraising staff. The problem with this strategy was its tendency to disadvantage musicians who lacked music industry training who performed artistic genres that had smaller domestic outreaches. This was the case because corporate entities tend to sponsor artists who reach larger audiences. Overall, structural reform created an environment in which it was more challenging for traditional musicians to compete for funding and other forms of support.

Another concept that I drew upon in developing the points made in this dissertation pertains to what is known as the "creative economy." Discussion about the creative economy emerged between the late 1990s and early 2000s among economists and policymakers as a way to describe a new period in which creative ideas and immaterial labor were thought to have gained greater economic importance than traditional manufacturing or raw capital (Howkins 2013 [2001]). This perspective was based upon the observation that the cultural industries—now commonly called the creative industries—had become one of the fastest rising and most profitable sectors in the global marketplace (European Union 2012, 6). The rediscovery of the cultural industries led policymakers as well as scholars in economics, urban planning, and other fields to try to isolate the creative processes that made these sectors profitable. This process began in the UK during the tenure of Tony Blair (1997-2007), who partnered with a cadre of "think-tank" researchers, "cultural economists," and "arts economists" (e.g., Pratt 1997; Leadbeater 1999) in

steering the direction of cultural policy formation to economic discourse.

In the process of dissecting the creative industries, multiple theorists began to place a heightened premium on the arts. For instance, the American urban studies theorist Richard Florida (2002) identified artists as a key demographic of the new “creative class” that drove much of the new wealth-creation between the 1970s and 2000s. The economist David Throsby similarly considered the arts to represent one of the “core” components of the creative industries (2001, 149). This was to suggest that the center of (economic) value within the creative industries were the types of creative processes enacted daily by artists and their compatriots. This led economists and policymakers to the conclusion that any government desiring a “competitive advantage” in the international economic marketplace would ultimately need to find ways to leverage the arts towards creative development across society. It was on this basis that cultural policy reform increasingly sought to maximize the spillover of arts to private industries.

In the case of Ireland, growing ascription to these ideas helps to explain why the Irish government incorporated the arts in national plans for economic recovery despite cutting core arts funding. For instance, the Irish government spent around €60 million on three Irish cultural festivals during the recession as a means to brand Irish creativity and increase foreign investment. Government officials also sought to tap into the American market by leveraging Ireland’s shared cultural history with some forty million American citizens with Irish descent. These strategies were supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), which suggested that arts and culture were Ireland’s global “calling card (DFAT 2011, 29), “unique brand identifier[s],” and “selling point[s] for Ireland abroad” (DFAT 2009, 21). In this way, prevalent ideas about the “creative economy” helped to legitimize heightened arts commodification. It is also on this basis that I refer to the creative economy as the principal

ideological “technology” that ushered neoliberal strategies into the domain of arts policy.

The final two concepts that I drew upon in developing my theoretical framework comprise Karl Marx’s (1990 [1867]) labor theory of value and Marcel Mauss’s (2002 [1925]) conceptualization of the “gift.” These theorists both discuss how value is construed within different social contexts in their respective works. Marx’s analysis of the “commodity” emphasizes how the value of cultural goods tends to be calculated on the basis of their economic exchangeability in capitalist society. Conversely, Marcel Mauss’s ethnography of gift exchange illustrates a context in which the value of social products is seen to emanate from the broader intrinsic and societal meanings with which they are invested. Both theorists’ analyses adopt a critical lens towards capitalist value production and are often referenced jointly in anthropological texts to explicate alternative ways for interpreting meaning.

In the context of the present research, the opposition between Marx’s labor theory of value and Marcel Mauss’s writings on gift-giving helps to communicate a shift that has occurred in the framing of musical activity in Ireland. The nature of this shift has foregrounded music’s commodity status and the de-emphasized its broader value as a source of enjoyment, a facilitator of sociality (Taylor 2015, 107), and a representation of cultural heritage. I suggest that this dynamic helps to explain why the vast number of my collaborators in Ireland viewed the recession as devaluing arts within Irish society. This is a more nuanced argument than simply saying that the arts have become “commodified,” as it speaks to the matters of scope, extent, and reception. With this last component, it is furthermore possible to state the full theoretical framework of this dissertation: *The recession is an example of disaster capitalism, enabled by the technology of the creative economy, and resulting in a shift in the framing of value.*

DISSERTATION STRUCTURE

The remainder of the dissertation comprises five chapters, providing a multilayered exploration of the themes discussed in this introduction. Chapter One begins this conversation by presenting an outline of the socioeconomic and political factors that led to the Irish recession. Emphasis will be placed on the country's adoption of characteristically neoliberal economic strategies during the Celtic Tiger period (1990s-2007), which led to unsustainable debt and a housing "bubble." The following section provides an outline of the forms of structural adjustment Ireland underwent between 2008 and 2016. This concludes with an ethnographic overview of the adjustment program's impact traditional music communities.

Chapter Two examines the facets of the Irish recovery program that directly affected Ireland's national arts and cultural infrastructure. This includes a discussion about welfare cuts in addition to Ireland's wholesale plans for adopting a more "American" approach to arts funding. For instance, I discuss how the government began to encourage artists to become less reliant upon state subsidies and more so on philanthropic forms of support. Drawing upon the work of Michel Foucault (2008 [2004]), I show how the transition to a more Americanized arts funding model placed responsibilities upon artists that had historically been shared with the government. I seek to highlight what these transformations entailed for Irish musicians, utilizing their testimonies concerning the differences between public and private financing.

Chapter Three focuses on the types of artistic activities that saw increased rather than decreased funding following the onset of the recession. This discussion places emphasis on the state's decision to spend €65 million on three year-long cultural programs between 2011 and 2016. I explain the disparity between expenditure on these events and on "core" arts funding through reference to Ireland's longstanding pattern of leveraging arts and culture towards foreign

direct investment (FDI). Since as early as the 1950s, Irish government officials utilized art as a tool for engendering job creation and investment in Irish industry. This strategy was reinforced during the early 2000s due to the dissemination of new ideas about creativity that posited a direct relationship between cultural investment and national “economic advantage.” Ireland has latched strongly to such ideas, which I argue has played an important role in the government’s decision to cut some forms of arts funding while expanding others.

Chapter Four builds upon the previous chapter through an analysis of artists’ responses to national growth strategies. In the larger part, my musician-collaborators expressed the view that Irish recovery plans exploited their labor and glossed over their fundamental economic needs. Artists highlighted this sentiment by explicating the many ironies inherent in the government’s three year-long cultural programs, which purported to celebrate the contribution of Irish arts to society abroad as cultural funding was slashed at home. Artists’ sense that state officials paid “lip-service” to the arts was further informed by their observations of longstanding gaps in the Irish social security net. More specifically, many artists viewed the lack of appropriate unemployment and social housing benefits as evidence to the fact that neglect towards artists was systemic among government officials. Several artists also identified direct connections between Irish economic strategies and urban gentrification, which deeply affected artists’ livelihoods.

The Conclusion synthesizes the above observations in addition to providing a brief update on what has occurred in the Irish arts since my return. The concluding chapter also offers some recommendations for further ethnomusicological study on the “creative economy” and urban gentrification. I suggest, furthermore, that researchers will increasingly need to look to extra-musical facets of musicians’ lives (e.g., taxes, services, etc.) in the analysis of musical life.

NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY AND USAGE

The fact that this dissertation draws heavily upon publications from the British Isles meant that a decision needed to be made with respect to differences in regional spelling and punctuation. To best preserve the character of Irish and British content, I decided to maintain regional grammatical conventions in publication titles, quoted material, and institution names rather than adapting content to American-English usage. The only exclusion to this pattern concerns quoted material from first-hand interviews that I conducted, which will appear in Standard American English. Beyond this, it is also important to preface that this dissertation will refer to Ireland's primary government ministry for cultural and artistic development as the "Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht," "The Department of Arts," or DAHG. The Irish government has altered the name of this branch of government no less than eight times in the span of twenty-four years; four of these changes occurred during the period of my fieldwork. The decision to refer to the ministry by a single name will help the reader follow the institution's historical lineage and avoid potential confusions.

CHAPTER ONE

THE GREAT RECESSION AND TRADITIONAL MUSIC

The period between the mid-1990s and late 2000s was one marked unprecedented economic growth for the Republic of Ireland. Within this decade, the small island nation saw its gross domestic product nearly quadruple, rising from €36 billion (1990) to €138 billion (2003) alongside a similar pattern in per-capita GDP growth (Harris 2005, 23). The country had also become one of the largest sites for foreign direct investment in Europe, with foreign-owned firms accounting for 49% of all Irish manufacturing jobs by 2004 (Barry 2007, 263). Spurring such growth were a range of factors, including Ireland's low corporate tax rate, young workforce, and export-based economy. Ireland also received a significant investment boom following the nation's induction into the Single European Market in 1992. The country thereafter served as a headquarters for many European and American firms, which sought to take advantage of the country's low-tax environment and strategic positioning within the EU.

Notwithstanding the growth factors cited above, the country was heading towards one of the deepest economic recessions in the nation's history. Indeed, rapid economic growth during Ireland's "Celtic-Tiger" period translated into a culture of hyper-consumerism and risky decision-making that foregrounded the country's immense financial exposure to the global credit crunch that followed. The gains that Ireland had made during the Celtic Tiger, including the government's progress in building the social safety net, were rolled back by several decades following the onset of the Great Recession in 2008. Associated with this decline were patterns typical of previous Irish recessions, including mass emigration, unemployment, and inequality. These dynamics were underpinned by the state's decision to nationalize over €400 billion in private debt in the weeks following the fall of the Lehman Brothers. This move was based in the

assumption that the initial part of the economic crisis represented a “natural” correction of the financial market but led to a €9,000 per-capita debt burden.

Growing consensus that the Irish economy would not come to a much-anticipated “soft landing” in the initial years of the crisis led Ireland to accept an €85 billion relief package from the Troika (International Monetary Fund, European Commission, European Central Bank) in 2010. This decision marked the country’s entry into a period of prescriptive structural adjustment, characterized by severe welfare retrenchment, privatization, financial deregulation, and other neoliberal reforms. These shifts placed increased financial upon the whole of Irish society, including on the traditional music communities at the center of my dissertation research. For instance, mandates that Ireland implement €15 billion in fiscal adjustment led a cut of 73% to grants earmarked for traditional arts by 73% (*Journal of Music* 2015a). The loss to personal financial income instigated by bailout reforms also severely reduced the opportunities available to traditional musicians throughout the recession, with arts increasingly appearing to be a luxury for those suffering under the weight of austerity.

With the above in mind, the purpose of this chapter is to highlight the broad impact of neoliberal structural adjustment upon the lives and working conditions of Irish musicians. This discussion is developed in three parts. The first section provides an outline of the Celtic Tiger period, emphasizing the specific dynamics that propelled the country to economic collapse. This includes an explanation of how Ireland began to move away from Keynesian economic policies of the postwar era and to the more risk-laden practices of late capitalism over last part of the twentieth century. The second part of the chapter provides an outline of the economic collapse itself. This involves a discussion of the bailout’s principal features and its general effects upon the Irish economy. The final section weaves these discussions together towards an illustration of

how the recession affected traditional musicians. This provides a birds-eye-view of the Great Recession and serves as a preface to more focused analyses elsewhere.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE GREAT RECESSION

Ireland's entry into the Great Recession was precipitated by the convergence of several socioeconomic changes occurring against the backdrop of Ireland's Celtic-Tiger economy. This term is used to describe a period placed between 1994 and 2007 in which the Irish economy experienced significant growth, modernization, and globalization. Irish scholars continue to debate on the particular confluence of factors that triggered the Celtic-Tiger, with Ireland's open-economy, low corporate tax rates, and large foreign investment portfolio being most frequently offered. Whatever balance of these elements engendered the Tiger, the results were clear: Irish GDP nearly quadrupled between 1990 and 2003 (Harris 2005, 23), with the Irish unemployment rate falling from 12% to 4% by the mid-2000s (Corcoran and Arensman 2011, 209). Ireland also became one of the most important sites for U.S. foreign investment in Europe, with foreign-owned firms investing more in Ireland than Latin America and China combined (Burke-Kennedy 2016). The scale of growth was perhaps best marked in 2007, by which time Irish GDP had surpassed the European average by 30% (Hick 2014, 396).

The forms of growth that occurred in Ireland between the mid-1990s and late 2000s had a tremendous impact on the nation's economic life and culture. Increases in national revenue first led to heightened government spending on social services and infrastructure. Many areas of public spending increase were beneficial to lower-income families, including growth in child benefits, jobseeker support, and pensions (Hick 2014, 401). The personal take-home pay for many Irish citizens also increased during the Celtic Tiger, with heightened disposable income

and market confidence leading to a greater atmosphere of consumerism (White 2013, 97). Irish citizens increasingly began to seek the same material comforts to which their American and Continental European counterparts had become accustomed at the same time as corporate media outlets espoused the merits of consumerism, investment, and entrepreneurship.

The national infrastructure supporting musicians and other artists also experienced significant growth on the back of the Celtic Tiger economy. The Arts Council saw its grant-in-aid expand from £11.5 million in 1993 to €83 million by 2007. The general growth in grant-in-aid translated into a greater funding availability for artists through both one-off grants and regular finance channels. The effect on the traditional music scene was marked by a sharp increase in the number of new festivals and albums launched between the 1990s and 2000s. The rising economy also led to the formation of several governmentally-funded programs specifically targeting the traditional music community. For instance, in 2005, the Arts Council established the Deis Traditional Arts Fund. This program made over €600,000 in subsidies available to traditional musicians between 2006 and 2008, which represents a six-fold increase in governmental funding for traditional music since the mid-1980s.⁵ To place this in context, an annual Deis Traditional Arts Fund of €600,000 provided the support for roughly 120 additional album bursaries at €5,000 a piece, or alternatively, funding for 30 traditional music festivals in bursaries valued at €20,000.

The irony of the Celtic Tiger economy is that many of the growth factors for which it was celebrated were one and the same as the features that eventually deepened Ireland's exposure to the Great Recession. This is particularly relevant to the growing spirit of consumerism and entrepreneurship that characterized the Celtic Tiger economy. A singer from Dublin by the name

⁵ This is based upon funding figures from *The Arts Council Annual Report 1985*.

of Fiach Moriarty conveyed this atmosphere to me in a humorous manner, parodying what he framed as typical behaviors of the period. This included his simulation of a hypothetical phone call between an individual and their investment banker, with Fiach yelling out “Buy Low, Sell High!” Underlying his caricature was a more serious commentary on the sudden interest in “investment portfolios” and loose credit that marked the Celtic Tiger (Personal Interview with Fiach Moriarty 2016). Fiach similarly drew attention to the rising culture of venture capitalism Ireland between the 1990s and 2000s, noting the number of new businesses that arose in Dublin during the period. For instance, Fiach drew attention to a studio offering a *Riverdance* Massage, wherein an individual could be pampered to the soundtrack of the popular 1990s traditional music and dance showcase. Fiach’s point was, again, to highlight the growing culture of personal entrepreneurship characteristic of the Celtic Tiger.



Figure 1.1: Fiach Moriarty performing on TG4 in 2013 (Photo Courtesy of Fiach Moriarty).

Among its broad effects, the spirit of consumerism and venture described by Fiach provided the impetus for an intensive inflation in the Irish property market. This was especially true with regard to Irish housing. For instance, the number of completed Irish dwellings (e.g., houses, apartments, etc.) tripled in the ten-year span between 1996 and 2006 even though the population of Ireland had only increased by 17% (Drudy and Collins 2011, 343). This was also accompanied by a fourfold increase in Irish private mortgage debt that heavily outweighed average income gains (Norris and Coates 2014, 300). To place these figures in context, the UK built only twice the number of houses Ireland in 2006 despite having fifteen times the size of Ireland's population (2014, 302). The Irish mortgage debt-to-GDP ratio also grew to about a third higher than the EU average (2014, 302).

Prices continued to grow well into the late 2000s despite early efforts to curb inflation, with the price of a house in 2006 being on average 270% higher than in 1996 (The Irish Times 2006). Several factors underpinned such growth. For instance, growing competitiveness among mortgage lenders helped to drive down home interest rates. The anticipation of continued property growth also led many Irish citizens to consider purchasing more than one home to rent or flip. Amid these shifts, the Irish government became increasingly dependent upon revenue generated by the same property market that state officials originally sought to curb. For instance, reductions in the stamp duty alongside other reforms more than doubled national revenue generated from property taxes in addition to the proportion of total government revenue from property taxes (Norris and Coates 2014, 302). Increases in Exchequer funds from the property market helped to inform the types of welfare expansion discussed earlier. Even arts subsidies were tied to the property market, with funding for public art being supplied as a percentage of a

city or county's capital construction budget.¹

Rising property costs and lax governmental regulation in Ireland eventually created the infamous housing bubble that stood at the crux of nation's economic collapse. In simple terms, the housing "bubble" described a critical point at which the supply of houses outpaced the demand for new development. Once this critical point was reached, which occurred in late 2007, the bubble burst. Prices for houses fell dramatically, leaving Celtic Tiger homebuyers with property valued below the amount of their mortgage debt, construction companies with insufficient revenue to offset development costs, and state officials with dramatically reduced funds. Blame for this series of events was placed in large part on governmental regulators, who were seen as inadequately working to address the formation of a housing bubble. Irish news sources were particularly critical of the government's continued suggestion that the housing market would eventually stabilize, which did not occur.

The rate of growth seen in the Irish housing market could not have occurred without the simultaneous expansion and deregulation of the Irish finance industry. Investigation of these factors begins not with the Tiger itself, but rather, with the period between the mid-1980s and the early 1990s. It was during these years that the Irish government began to turn away from the policies advanced by William Maynard Keynes and towards neoliberal strategies for economic growth. The historical impetus for this shift began in large part with the 1970s petrol embargo, which set off a major inflation spike throughout Europe. Ireland attempted to recover from this crisis namely through increased borrowing and welfare expansion. These strategies were based on common Keynesian principles of crisis management but served only to throw the country on the pathway to an economic recession. By 1985, Ireland had one of the highest debt-to-GDP

¹ This is known as the "Percent for Art" scheme and was discussed with me during a personal interview with Fingal Arts Officer Rory O'Byrne (2015).

ratios in the industrialized world. This precipitated a major turn in Irish economic policy (House and McGrath 2004, 37).

The perceived failure of Keynesian economic policy in managing the global inflation spike had by the mid-1980s led government officials to seek alternative ways of stimulating national economic growth. This climate provided fertile terrain for a shift towards ideals of government deregulation championed by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan throughout the latter half of the 20th century. From this point onward, the Irish government enacted increasing measures to reduce public expenditure and to deregulate the flow of financial capital. This involved passage of legislation that dramatically reformed the banking industry, including measures that lifted caps on credit expansion and lowered the amount of reserve funding banks were required to maintain (Kelly and Everett 2004, 95). The formation of the Single European Market Act (SEA) in 1992 led only to further loosening of financial restrictions at the intergovernmental level.

The shift towards financial deregulation was foundational in providing the Irish banking sector the legal flexibility to meet heightened consumerist demands by the Celtic Tiger period. Deregulation led not only to increased credit flow among Irish lending institutions but also a culture of increasingly risky financial practices. Especially problematic was the fact that Irish banks began to fulfill Irish credit demands by borrowing from banks in other European countries. In other words, Irish banks were lending on borrowed money rather than out of their own financial reserves (Kitchin et al. 2012, 1315). This practice led Irish banks to accumulate a tremendous amount of debt to external European financial institutions. Borrowed credit was utilized namely to fulfill Irish mortgages, with mortgage debt equating to half Irish GDP by the late 2000s (Norris and Coates 2014, 304).

The basis of increased risk among Irish banks, on the one hand, and of increased spending by Irish citizens, on the other was the notion that the pace of international capital flow would continue. This premise was proven false in light of both the housing bubble issue and the collapse of the Lehman Brothers financial institution in September 2008. The subsequent fallout resembled a chain of toppling dominos: First fell the housing market and consumer demand, then fell employment rates in the property industry, then fell the banks laden with debt and with no source of deposits. The final domino to fall was the Irish government itself.

THE GREAT RECESSION

Despite the onset of the global credit crunch, government officials remained convinced that the downward economic spiral represented a mere stabilization of the market after years of aberrant growth. This notion led the state to enact several domestic reforms between 2008 and 2010 with the expectation that Ireland would eventually reach the anticipated point of equilibrium. It was this assumption that led to the declaration that the Irish economy would skirt past the worst parts of the global credit crunch and achieve a “soft landing” (Kitchin et al. 2012, 1316; Hick 2014, 397). It became apparent by late 2010 that no such landing would occur through domestic reforms alone, leading Ireland to accept an intergovernmental bailout with additional adjustment mandates. Consequently, both domestic and intergovernmental phases need to be taken into account in discussing structural adjustment following 2008.

Domestic Structural Adjustment Phase, 2008-2010

Irish attempts to stabilize the economy began in late September of 2008 exactly two weeks following the Lehman Brothers collapse and after several smaller Irish banks had begun to

default. Mounting fears that some of Ireland's "pillar" banks were in danger of a similar fate informed the state's decision to issue a blanket guarantee to the six banking institutions with the largest holdings on September 29th (Fraser et al. 2013, 41). The government additionally created a state body known as the National Assets Management Agency (NAMA) to clear the market of the failing mortgage assets that Irish banks had accrued over the course of the housing boom. With these two reforms, the government assumed full responsibility for €485 billion in accumulated private debt (271% of GDP). This gamble was based on the idea that the state could absorb many of the poor decisions made by private entities during the Celtic Tiger years. Irish officials also hoped that the guarantee would ensure "confidence" in the financial market, such that the flow of credit would not come to a full stop.

The new monetary demands placed on the government by the bank guarantee and NAMA informed further reforms in Irish welfare and in the public sector generally. For instance, the 2009 budget included extensive reductions in national provision through such programs as the Child Benefit scheme, Disability Allowance, and other social services that had seen increases during the Celtic Tiger (Fraser et al. 2013, 47). Public sector employment was also subject to major reforms, including terminations of around fifteen thousand employees as well as pension levies and pay cuts amounting to 14% of take-home income (44). These cost reductions were paired with additional reforms aimed at generating additional state revenue, such as new forms of taxation. For instance, the government introduced a fixed-rate Universal Social Charge (USC) on all personal income of €13,000 and higher. There were also increases in motor registration, petrol, and VAT taxes, which had a disproportionate effect on lower-income households (47).

Notwithstanding the above reforms, it was becoming increasingly clear by late 2010 that domestic efforts were proving insufficient to offset the government's surmounting debt. Irish

officials had significantly overestimated the national capacity to guarantee against banking sector losses, which led state borrowing to exceed well beyond the allowable deficit as part of Ireland's EU membership. These factors and others led to several consultations between the Irish government, the European Union, and the International Monetary Fund over the final months of 2010. What resulted was Ireland's acceptance of an €85 billion Euro Memo of Understanding from the tripartite intergovernmental entity known as the Troika. The terms of the agreement called for Ireland to adhere to an austerity program involving €15 billion in domestic budgetary adjustment (i.e., reduction) over a three-year period between 2011 and 2013. This was coupled with quarterly oversight by the Troika institutions.⁶

It was not revealed until four years after Ireland's acceptance of the Memo of Understanding that Irish leadership had not entered the bailout on fully voluntary terms. A series of letters exchanged between the European Bank and the Irish Finance Minister were uncovered in November 2014 revealing that Ireland was under threat of having emergency liquidity assistance cut off should the country fail to adopt the Troika offer. Ireland was pressured to accept the bailout on the basis that the prescribed reforms would help to ensure the "recapitalization" of Irish banks (Humphries 2015; Taylor 2014). European authorities were especially concerned that a decision to forgo the bailout would result in a loss of financial liquidity and confidence in the European banking system. Thus, a key factor of Ireland's entry into austerity was pressure to restore funding to the same financial institutions that had helped push Ireland towards economic recession in the first place.

⁶ The bailout funding comprised of €45 billion in assistance from the European Central Bank, €22.5 billion from the IMF, and €17.5 billion from Ireland's own National Pension Reserve.

Intergovernmental Structural Adjustment Phase, 2011-2013

Ireland's acceptance of the Troika agreement in late 2010 entailed drastic transformations for the Irish economy and Irish social life over the next several years. The bailout involved a range of mandates namely intended to (a) reduce social service costs, (b) privatize Irish assets, (c) deregulate the economy, and (d) recapitalize the banking sector. These adjustments that followed out of the bailout were presented as necessary to national economic stabilization and Irish debt repayment. What resulted, however, was an intense period of emigration, unemployment, and precariousness followed by continuing trends of wealth stratification and social disenfranchisement. Even following Ireland's official "exit" from the bailout program in the mid-2010s, many Irish citizens have yet to experience the recovery's effects.

Given the above trends, it is one of the core arguments of this dissertation that Ireland's structural adjustment program can be regarded as characteristically "neoliberal." The structural reform program prescribed by the Troika and co-developed by the Irish government involved all the hallmarks of neoliberal capitalism, including calls for privatization, deregulation, and welfare retrenchment. These transformations led to the development of several commonly-cited symptoms of neoliberal reform. This included the substitution of social services for discourses of entrepreneurship (Bourdieu 1998, 3; Foucault 2008 [2004]) and "personal responsibility" (Harvey 2005, 76), the commodification of sheltered cultural products (166), and the buying up of previously domestically-owned institutions by foreign corporations (Klein 2007, 12).

I suggest alongside the argument that Ireland's structural adjustment program was "neoliberal" that it is also indicative of what Naomi Klein (2007) has referred to as "disaster capitalism." Klein uses this term in *The Shock Doctrine* to highlight instances in which government and corporate entities treat international crises as opportunities to exploit financially

ailing nations. She describes how this process has often followed a pattern in which one nation, suffering the fallout of some type of disaster, strikes an agreement with another for economic relief. The country is subsequently mandated to undergo a range of adjustments constructed as necessary for socioeconomic stabilization but make the nation vulnerable to economic exploitation. Klein observes that such adjustments typically involve a shift to the “policy trinity” of privatization, governmental deregulation, and welfare retrenchment (2007, 18)—in other words, the core features of neoliberal reform identified in the Irish structural adjustment program. The remainder of this section details the features of the Irish bailout, further elaborating upon its relationship to disaster capitalism and neoliberalism.

Welfare Retrenchment, 2011-2014

One of the primary outcomes of Ireland’s entry into the Troika bailout agreement was a severe deepening of cuts in Irish social services. Budgets 2012 to 2014 saw drastic retrenchment in such areas of public subsidy as healthcare, education, and family benefits as a result of Troika mandates. Regarding healthcare, Budget 2013 alone slashed funding to national health programs by one billion Euros (Fraser et al. 2013, 47). These reductions were coupled with a 12% healthcare staffing cut that severely decreased the quality and availability of healthcare in Ireland. The lack of hospital beds frequently appeared in Irish media during the period (Robbins and Lapsley 2014, 95). In terms of education, efforts to reduce national spending led the government to retrench funding in such programs as the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance. Similar adjustments to the One Parent Family Payment and Child Benefit programs made life made life especially challenging for the lower-income communities that the programs supported (Fraser et al. 2013, 47; Hick 2014, 403).

The national arts infrastructure also experienced retrenchment, with Arts Council grant-in-aid being reduced by 34% between 2007 and 2014 (The Arts Council 2013). This slash translated into reduced bursary amounts through the Council's various grant programs. The Director of the Arts Council, Orlaith McBride, further informed me that these cuts were implemented at the same time as the institution was operating at a third of its staff and had been barred from filling employment vacancies (Personal Interview with Orlaith McBride 2015). For example, the 2009 moratorium on recruitment had led the Arts Council to have a missing post for Head of Music and Opera for two and a half years. Compounding these strains was a 27% increase in the receipt of grant funding applications. This provides a rough sketch of the dissymmetry between the supply and demand for arts subsidy following the recession.



Figure 1.2: Director of The Arts Council, Orlaith McBride (Photograph Courtesy of Orlaith McBride).

Additional attempts to reduce state expenditure targeted national unemployment programs. Given the rapid rise in Irish unemployment, however, the Irish government opted not to cut unemployment subsidies directly. Irish officials sought instead to mitigate unemployment payouts by reducing the amount of time unemployed individuals could receive supports and by creating new eligibility criteria meant to expedite transitions into the job market. For instance, the Jobseeker Benefit, which provided citizens temporary assistance as they looked for work, had its eligibility period cut by three months. It was further required that any individual seeking the Jobseeker Benefit had to fully avail him- or herself of the new “Pathways to Work” program, which comprised a series of training courses intended to help program participants secure long-term employment (Fraser et al. 2013, 46). In many cases, these training schemes required Jobseeker applicants to participate in unpaid community service programs in order to gain job experience. These courses in tandem with required office visits had the ironic effect of detracting from the time jobseekers had to find a job.

Jobseeker program reforms were coupled with other attempt to “activate” employment in the form of the new JobBridge program, which was instituted in 2011. Aimed specifically at the alleviation of youth unemployment, the JobBridge scheme added a nominal sum of €50 per week to social welfare payouts to young adults in exchange for their time engaging in short-term internships with private corporations. The program was designed in order to provide young jobseekers with the skills they would need to gain permanent employment; however, the program was widely criticized on the basis that it allowed corporations to exploit the labor force. This was first brought to my attention by the accordionist Luke Deaton. During our conversation, Luke explained that Tesco (grocery chain) and other large companies had been utilizing JobBridge in what he saw as an attempt to acquire cheap labor (Personal Interview with Luke Deaton 2016).

He added that the training JobBridge internships provided appeared to have no discernable benefit to youth career mobility and generally seemed to devalue work. This led him to draw a comparison between JobBridge and the state's collective efforts to manage the crisis. He noted that government "couldn't let a huge corporation fail, so they treated the banks the way people needed to be treated [...]—the same thing with the JobBridge scheme."

The JobBridge scheme represents but one of the many avenues through which Irish officials sought substitute state funding with public-private partnerships. Another example of this shift can be found in Ireland's 2011 Programme for Government, which included a commitment to deploy a new model for financing social interventions known as the "Social Impact Bond" (SIB) (Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service 2015, 2). The SIB model advocated for the government to tackle major social issues through private fundraising instead of direct subsidies. The government began running pilots of the SIB model in 2011 with the intention of using this new model to curb soaring homelessness rates. In this case, the government functioned more as a fundraising facilitator than as a direct funding body. This involved work alongside private funding entities (e.g. charities, trusts, foundations, etc.) in the financing and delivery of social services that had traditionally been the responsibility of the state.

The shift towards public-private partnerships in Ireland is more broadly indicative of what Klein describes as the "disaster capitalism complex" that often develops in wake of major world crises. Klein uses this concept in *The Shock Doctrine* to indicate that one of the most common symptoms of contemporary structural adjustment programs is the strengthening of the bond between the corporate and public spheres (2007, 15). The development of this bond occurs both *passively*, in the sense that deregulation and privatization help to create a path dependency towards corporatist relationships, and *actively*, in the sense that the corporate actors frequently

position themselves to capitalize upon transfers of public funding during times of economic crises. For these reasons and others, Klein places corporations at the center of the disaster capitalism complex.

In the case of Ireland, substitution of private-public partnerships for direct welfare significantly aided the corporate sector in acquiring additional revenue or business opportunity. For instance, the replacement of robust unemployment support with the JobBridge scheme provided Tesco and other corporations an opportunity to obtain labor at low cost and with little commitment to employee career mobility. As suggested by Luke, the program “[gave] the wrong set of people or institutions an easier time” (Deaton 2016).⁷ Similarly, suggestions for moving to the SIB social provision model led the government to work largely through private entities in meeting growing social service needs. It is no wonder that many businesses intensely advocated social entrepreneurship despite the less than promising findings of the initial SIB pilot (Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service 2015, 3). Additional issues generated by the shift from a public to public-private subsidy model will be introduced in the following chapter.

Privatization and Deregulation, 2011-2014

The terms of the 2010 bailout agreement required that Ireland pursue fiscal adjustment not only through social service cuts but also privatization. This mandate led the Irish government to sell off a significant number of publicly-owned institutions after 2011. This further entailed the deregulation of state control over certain national programs and resources. Some of the more notable public-to-private transfers included the sale of Irish Life (€1.3 billion Euros, 2013),

⁷ This program was also coupled with other recessionary reforms directly allowing employers to renege on prior work agreements they had previously made with their employees, which further served to weaken employee securities.

Ireland's largest life assurance and pension company, Bord Gáis Energy, the national gas and electricity utility provider (€1.1 billion, 2014), the National Lottery (€405 million Euros, 2013), and Aer Lingus (€400 million, 2015). The government also began to commercialize state services in a manner that many Irish citizens viewed as a *de facto* privatization. Such was the case in 2013 when the government began to charge Irish citizens for water utilities for the first time in history. This move was widely seen as the first step to water privatization, particularly given that the state spent €80 million Euros in private consultancy fees as part of the project (Melia 2014).

The privatization of public resources also occurred through the National Asset Management Agency. It was mentioned previously that the Irish government established NAMA in 2009 with the intention of clearing the banking sector of “toxic” mortgage assets. What this meant in simple terms was that NAMA would purchase property development loans on behalf of Irish banks and sell them over a longer period to recoup the purchase cost. In doing so, the government would relieve banks of bad assets and maintain credit flow among private institutions. Given the terms of the 2010 bailout, however, the government was forced to relinquish properties at a much more expedited pace and at far lower selling prices than expected. This meant that Ireland would have to offset debt over a long period and that NAMA would have to temporarily forgo plans to turn properties into much-needed social housing facilities (Leahy and Bardon 2017). This was a major blow to traditional musicians and other artists, who frequently identified the need for affordable housing during the cultural policy meetings I attended (see Chapter Four).

The forms of privatization occurring during the recession were in many cases facilitated by the joint process of deregulation. A key example can be found in the growing number of land

survey licenses the Irish government sold between 2011 and 2013. Leading up to this period, the national Environmental Protection Agency had under no circumstances provided licenses to any company seeking to conduct hydraulic fracturing for commercial use. Efforts to pay down bailout debt, however, led the Department of Communications, Energy and National Resources to request the allowance of survey drilling licenses on behalf of several foreign companies. This included Tamboran Resources (Australia), Enegi Oil (UK), and Shell Oil. The decision to loosen regulations received criticism from many Irish citizens, who were concerned with both the immediate environmental impact and the potential for change in rural lifeways. I was able to witness this firsthand through my participation in the 2014 *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann* in Sligo, where traditional musicians played part in protests against fracking developments in neighboring County Mayo. Dee Armstrong of the traditional music band Kila and others could be seen wearing “Love Farmers, Hate Fracking” shirts in solidarity with the communities affected by fracking in the region.

The dual processes of privatization and deregulation just described had similar benefits for corporations as had the process of welfare retrenchment. For instance, the pressures that were placed on the Irish government to sell national assets gave private entities unprecedented access to previously guarded “markets,” including—as is described above—access to nature itself. This process speaks strongly to David Harvey’s commentary regarding the tendency of neoliberal reform to “roll back the bounds of commodification” (2005, 166), a theme that is highlighted throughout this dissertation. The forms of privatization that proceeded from the bailout also resonate with Klein’s observation that public loss frequently becomes constructed as a private opportunity in the wake of economic crises (2007, 348). This is seen most explicitly in the case of NAMA, where the pressure to expedite debt repayment led to quick gains among foreign

multinationals at the loss of an opportunities to help less fortunate communities domestically. This all occurred during a period in which Ireland's homeless community had increased by 81% and when many of my collaborators in Ireland were struggling to afford housing (CSO 2017).

Financialization and Corporatism, 2011-2014

Equally telling of the character of Irish structural adjustment are those domains the Troika and the Irish government have explicitly *excluded* from the severe forms of austerity experienced by the rest of the Irish population. I am thinking especially of the Irish finance industry, which has experienced an unprecedented level of protectionism throughout the timeline of the crisis. Ireland's initial decision to provide a blanket guarantee to Irish banking institutions was itself a choice to put the public at risk for the sake of cushioning poor discretion on part of the finance industry. Ireland's entry into the bailout agreement two years later further formalized state support of banking institutions, with most foreign relief (€64 billion) going towards the recapitalization of the Anglo-Irish Bank (AIB), the Bank of Ireland, the Educational Building Society (EBS), and other financial institutions. This was accompanied by a strict mandate not to penalize Irish senior bondholders for their part in fomenting the recession. It is estimated that €9 billion could have been saved had the Irish government been encouraged to hold senior bondholders accountable (Hancock 2016). This would have offset more than half of the €15 billion in fiscal austerity required by the Troika.

Protectionism of Irish corporations was also seen in the domain of taxation. For instance, the Irish government made the explicit choice to maintain the Irish corporate tax rate of 12.5% despite the contribution higher corporate tax would have made to debt repayment. Consequently, Ireland maintained one of the lowest corporate tax rates in Europe during a period in which Irish

citizens had one of the highest per capita tax burdens. Underlying this decision were concerns that raising corporate tax rates would strip the country of one of its greatest selling points for foreign investment; however, the government took this strategy one step further. Rather than merely protecting Irish corporations from increased taxation, the government provided both direct and indirect subsidization to corporate entities during the recession. This included the institution of the Special Assignee Relief Program (SARP, 2012), which applied a 30% income tax break to employee transfers from foreign corporations. The plan was intended to help draw further investment from foreign corporations but contrasted severely with domestic policies that depressed Irish wages (Fraser 2013, 46).

The drastic disparity between the treatment of Irish individuals and of Irish corporations during the recession is reminiscent of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s well-known suggestion that the world order had developed "socialism for the rich, [and] rugged individualism for the poor."⁸ In the case of Ireland, the debt accrued by rich multinational institutions during the Celtic Tiger became the social burden of Irish citizens. Meanwhile, traditional social protections enjoyed by the Irish public were replaced with JobBridge and other schemes that emphasized "individual responsibility" over direct subsidy. Taking all into account, the bailout tripled the number of Irish millionaires while simultaneously increasing Irish deprivation rates (CSO 2015).⁹ These factors reinforce Harvey's (2005, 19) suggestion that neoliberalism is founded upon upward wealth transfer, or alternatively, Klein's (2007, 14) thesis that economic crises have become constructed the world over into avenues for strengthening corporatist relationships.

⁸ This quote is jointly associated with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Gore Vidal, and Andrew Young.

⁹ Deprivation Rate refers to the inability to sustain basic needs or to afford expenses beyond minimum subsistence levels.

TRADITIONAL MUSIC AND THE GREAT RECESSION

The onset of structural adjustment placed a tremendous burden on Irish citizens. Most individuals and households experienced a net reduction in disposable income due to a combination of wage cuts, subsidy reductions, and increased taxation. Other individuals lost their jobs entirely, including the many civil service employees who were laid off or “redeployed” following the Croke Park Agreement (2010-2014). The lack of opportunities across the private market further informed a wave of emigration, with many Irish youths choosing to seek better prospects outside the country. These dynamics only begin to gesture to the emotional and psychological facets of the recession, such as the loss of societal confidence and pride that characterized the Celtic Tiger period. There was also diminished trust between Irish citizens and political leaders, which led many individuals to feel disaffected with the government.

The dynamics described above had particular relevance to the communities of Irish traditional musicians among whom I conducted my 2012-2016 dissertation fieldwork. This was the case for several reasons. First, many traditional musicians were already in danger of falling below the poverty threshold prior to the onset of the recession. Consequently, cuts in arts subsidies created a need for many artists to take on additional jobs or to tour more aggressively outside the country. Second, while wages were reduced across Irish employment, professional musicians experienced disproportionate setbacks due to decreasing consumer spending on arts and entertainment. Fluctuations in discretionary spending also led to closures of pubs, restaurants, community centers, and other venues from which traditional musicians most frequently drew private support. Lastly, traditional musicians found themselves in the unique position of having had little part in the practices that engendered the recession but also having their lifeways and values most disrupted by the character of the recovery. This disparity led

traditional artists to be especially critical of the structural adjustment program.

The remainder of this chapter serves to further highlight the above observations through ethnomusicological ethnography. I focus especially upon my early observations of the recession alongside the well-known Irish traditional accordionist Martin Donohoe, who served as a valued mentor over the last six years. Martin was also one of the individuals who initially directed me to austerity as a potential research subject. As part of the ensuing illustration, I will highlight how the bailout program affected Martin's livelihood in addition to those of other traditional musicians. This will serve as a preface to more nuanced discussions appearing throughout the remainder of the dissertation.

Early Observations of the Great Recession, 2012 Fieldwork

The Great Recession's impact on Irish musicians was not in the scope of my research when I first began conducting fieldwork. Rather, I arrived in Co. Cavan Ireland on a self-funded pilot trip in August 2012 with little more than the intention of attending Ireland's largest traditional music festival, the *Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann*. I had been playing traditional Irish music for fifteen years within the Los Angeles "trad" community and hoped the festival would provide adequate inspiration for a dissertation topic emphasizing traditional music performance. The problem with this plan, however, was that I had no personal contacts in Ireland, no knowledge of County Cavan, and no navigational instinct whatsoever. Being keenly aware of these deficiencies, I made it a point to initiate fieldwork with a visit to the Tourist Office in Cavan Town, the county's central city.

I initiated conversation with one of the staff members at the Tourist Office, the same day as my arrival in Ireland, leading to the point that I had traveled to the country to study Irish

traditional music and was unfamiliar with the local area.¹⁰ The office representative informed me that there was a traditional music session held at the Farnham Arms Hotel in Cavan Town each week and offered to place me in contact with Martin Donohoe, whom she mentioned as being the leader of most of the music activities in the region. Her kind offer led to a phone call from Martin two days later alongside an invitation to meet him during the next session at the hotel. This would be the last gathering of the local musicians prior to the launch of the ten-day *Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann*, meaning that it was also imperative that I met some of the musicians before they became involved in festival activities.

I arrived at the Farnham Arms Hotel pub the following night and expected to have a relatively short window to meet with Martin given that he was both one of the *Fleadh Cheoil* organizers and a leader of the Farnham Arms session. The evening unfolded much differently than expected. Not more than an hour after having introduced myself to Martin, he had already invited me to the center position within the session, announced to the entire company that I would be shadowing him throughout the festival, and handed me the microphone to the pub speaker system so that I could talk more about a research idea I had formulated all but half-a-day prior. This was an unexpected beginning to my fieldwork experience but one that provided me with an immediate introduction to the local traditional musicians and festival organizers. It was also my initial insight into Martin's prominent place within the traditional music scene, his gregarious personality, and his penchant for making wisecracks at my expense, or "slagging" as it is known culturally in Ireland.

Keeping true to his declaration at the Farnham Arms, Martin encouraged me to shadow him on a daily basis throughout the remaining days leading to the *Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann*.

¹⁰ I had initially drawn her attention in the process of inconspicuously collecting every brochure, map, and pamphlet available in the tourism office.

The first part of this experience involved accompanying Martin to a series of local traditional music competitions he had organized as part of his work leading a nonprofit music organization known as NYAH. Martin had founded NYAH over a decade prior in order to provide young musicians with a supportive and encouraging performance outlet. He had scheduled NYAH's annual festival and music competitions before the kickoff of the *Fleadh* both to ensure that participants in the national competitions could practice their “sets” and to offer an avenue for those not competing to be included.



Figure 1.3: Cavan Town Ireland, August 2012 (Photograph by Kevin Levine).

Like many other nonprofits, NYAH had received much of the support for its annual festival in the form of Arts Council grants and donations from local organizations. I was unaware at the time that the 2012 NYAH festival was among the few institutions that saw continued funding throughout the greater part of the recession. Generally speaking, those organizations that maintained state funding after the bailout tended to be larger institutions with broad public outreach. Martin's ability to keep the locally-based NYAH event afloat through state funding

represented more of the exception than the rule. This became increasingly clear over the next few years. Nevertheless, it was difficult for me in the initial course of shadowing Martin to perceive that Irish traditional music had anything less than a good bill of health.



Figure 1.4: Kevin Levine (left) and Martin Donohoe (right) taken at the Farnham Arms Hotel in August 2012 during the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann (Photograph by Kevin Levine).

The fact that I did not sense the effects of the recession was no doubt further colored by my experiences over the following ten days as a participant of the *Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann*. Despite the official implementation of austerity policies in 2012, the event that year was both the longest and the largest *Fleadh Cheoil* in Irish history, attracting an estimated 360,000 people to its broad range of music concerts, workshops, and demonstrations. A likely factor in the event's success was the fact that events were priced accessibly for those suffering the effects of an ongoing recession. Through Martin, I became aware that this would not have been the case if not for substantial aid from the European Union Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) (Personal Interview with Martin Donohoe 2012). Festival organizers were able to tap into this funding

source given the incorporation of events featuring performers from both sides of the Irish political border. The European Union provided ESIF funding especially on the basis that positive collaboration between Irish Catholics and British Protestants might help alleviate economic impoverishment in the area related to sectarian conflict.

Beyond support from the ESIF, the 2012 *Fleadh* received funding from a handful of multinational corporations that had recently entered the Irish market. This included the American-based property insurer, Liberty Insurance, whose sponsorship of the festival led the company to have a dedicated stage. Liberty's presence in Ireland was made possible only a year prior when the company acquired Quinn Insurance for €1. Quinn was one of the many Irish-owned businesses sold to foreign multinationals following the onset of the banking crisis, with Liberty's sponsorship of the 2012 *Fleadh Cheoil* serving largely to smooth the way into the Irish market. The same strategy was utilized by Shell Oil two years later, with both companies using communal events as a way to distract from otherwise socially disruptive activities. For instance, Shell's sponsorship of the 2014 *Fleadh Cheoil* followed on the tail end of highly controversial gas extraction projects in northwest Ireland. Likewise, Liberty's sponsorship of the 2012 *Fleadh* preceded the company's decision to lay off 285 former Quinn Insurance employees.

Despite their present clarity, it was not until after the Cavan *Fleadh Cheoil* had concluded that I began to make the types of connections described above. My introduction to the recession's broad effects occurred largely over the two weeks following the festival, when I had the opportunity to accompany Martin throughout his weekly routine. This included travelling with Martin to a number of Irish traditional music concerts and to several sessions he hosts in Cavan Town, Drumlish (Co. Longford), and Mohill (Co. Leitrim). I also spent several evenings with Martin and his family at their home in Cavan Town, which provided me an opportunity to

place Martin’s performance engagements in the context of other facets of his work and livelihood. This process led me to gain insight into the time that Martin invested in discussions relating to national healthcare, taxation, grants, utilities, education, and politics independent of the many conversations we had about music.



Figure 1.5: Stage at the 2012 Fleadh in Cavan. The banner behind the stage includes Liberty Insurance’s logo with the phrase “supporting our community” (Photograph by Kevin Levine).

I recall with particular emphasis the many car trips that Martin and I shared after the *Fleadh* Cheoil, as we traveled between his house and various music engagements. It was during our time on the road that Martin began to draw attention to the recession’s visible effects. This included several instances in which he directed me to look out the car window to regions with dozens upon dozens of vacant, fully-built houses. Martin explained that these “ghost estates” represented the product of overdevelopment during the housing boom, with most of the properties continuing to be unoccupied despite selling at a fraction of their value. He also pointed to the long stretches of buildings with “for let” (i.e., for lease) signs in many of the rural towns through which we traveled on our way to various music events. Martin informed me that the

majority of those properties were occupied by local business owners only a few years prior but were closed not long following the economic collapse.¹¹

During our evening outings, Martin drew additional attention to what he saw as general transformations in Irish social patterns over the last two decades. For instance, he frequently pointed to the low number of people going out to pubs and other venues in the evening hours, with parking lots frequently being occupied by only one or two vehicles. He explained that it was typical in years past for the same pubs to have a much livelier atmosphere, including during the weeknights. For Martin, the decline in Irish nightlife was a factor of both long-term trends in Irish social life and shorter-term dynamics introduced by the recession. Regarding the former, he explained that many individuals had begun to buy satellite television, home entertainment systems, off-license (privately purchased) alcoholic beverages, and other forms of consumer entertainment during the Celtic Tiger years (Personal Interview with Martin Donohoe 2016). These factors alongside changing legislation pertaining to public smoking and drinking had led Irish citizens to spend an increasing number of evenings at home.

Another factor contributing to changes in Irish life was the recession itself. Martin indicated that the recession had made outings to pubs and other entertainment venues more challenging for Irish individuals, who did not have the amount of disposable income as they did during the Celtic Tiger. The rising cost of going out was in part linked to alcohol tax increases within Budgets 2009 and 2013, which led to significant declines in alcohol purchasing (Butler and Hope 2015, 624). These and other factors have led to the closure of more than 1,000 Irish pubs since the onset of the recession, representing around 10% of Irish public-houses generally

¹¹ Much of Martin's commentary on the atmosphere of the recession was communicated to me outside the context of direct interviews given that the recession was not in the scope of my interviews in 2012. For this reason, such commentaries are not referenced as "personal interview."

(Kennedy 2014). This figure is disproportionately represented by pubs outside of major Irish cities, where there were fewer tourists to help make up for gaps in domestic consumption.

The “death of the Irish pub” has been alarming to the Irish population as a whole given the prominent place of the public-house within national culture and tourism. The trend has been particularly challenging for Martin and other traditional musicians, however, given the fact that pubs represent principal institutions for sessions, concerts, and other settings for traditional music performance. For example, I recall several instances during my 2012 fieldwork where Martin expressed disappointment over the low number of patrons present at pub sessions in which we participated. This included sessions in Mohill and Drumlish, where the musicians often outnumbered the pub patrons. Of particular significance to Martin was the fact that these pubs were representative of the rural environment in which you could still hear what many traditional musicians call “the pure drop.” This term is commonly used among “trad” performers to indicate a sound or style that is seen to encapsulate the spirit of Irish music. Martin used the expression at one of the sessions we attended to draw attention to the older company of musicians, who played in a contemplative style not as commonly heard outside rural areas.

It is telling of overall economic trends that both the Mohill and Drumlish sessions had been discontinued by the time of my 2015 fieldwork. Martin informed me then that the publican in Mohill had been forced to close the institution given the drastic decline in patronage that characterized the recession (Donohoe 2016). Like many others, he had left the country in hopes of finding better employment prospects overseas. Martin indicated that the Drumlish session had also discontinued alongside several other sessions in Cavan. This was not always representative of full closures. Sessions were occasionally ousted in order to bring in popular entertainment or higher-paying demographics. Most Irish musicians, Martin included, understand that traditional

music is not a big draw for pubs from a financial standpoint; however, publicans have continued to host sessions for the love of the music and culture. The recession has made it such that many pubs can no longer risk pushing away potential patrons, nor to pick up musicians' tabs. This is in large part why many sessions discontinued throughout the years of the recession.



Figure 1.6: Traditional music session at a pub in a rural area of Co. Longford, taken in the late August 2012. This was the site of one of the sessions in which Martin Donohoe regularly participated alongside Irish flute player, Noel Sweeny (left) (Photograph by Kevin Levine).

Late Observations of the Recession, 2015-2016 Fieldwork

Donohoe continued to provide valuable insights into his experiences of the Great Recession upon my return to Ireland in September 2015, by which time the economic collapse had moved to the forefront of my research. This transition led us to increase discussion of the administrative and financial facets of traditional music-making. For instance, many of the conversations we had over the following eight months revolved around the time he spent filing

for governmental arts grants, organizing traditional music festivals, negotiating performance rates, seeking advertising outlets, and balancing intermittent income sources. These represented some of the key areas of his work that were affected by the economic collapse and structural adjustment program.

Part of my continuing discussions with Martin involved learning how national and local arts funding retrenchment had made it difficult for him to organize opportunities for traditional music performance within his local community. Significant reductions in grant provision between 2012 and 2016 (see Chapter Two) made it especially challenging for him to sustain funding for the NYAH festival introduced earlier in this chapter. For instance, I learned upon my return to Ireland that the nonprofit's annual event had its funding application rejected for the first time in twelve years (Personal Interview with Martin Donohoe 2016). Not uncoincidentally, this pertained to the same budget year for which the Arts Council reduced traditional arts festival funding by 41% (*Journal of Music* 2016). Direct funding for traditional arts had also fallen by 73% since the onset of the recession. The magnitude of these cuts is highlighted by the fact that a significant proportion of Irish arts institutions were receiving around half their funding from public grants by the time of this research. This was brought to my attention by the uilleann piper, Gay McKeon (Personal Interview with Gay McKeon 2015).

Martin's disappointment over the loss of funding to the NYAH festival in 2016 led him to participate in an interview that was published in the *Anglo Celt*, the county's principal newspaper. In the article, he appealed to the fact that festival had developed into an important fixture within the Cavan community, having brought in both musicians and business interest to the area (Enright 2016). Martin expressed to me separately that he felt the festival might have lost its funding due to a misconception among government officials that traditional music could

support itself in Cavan. To provide context for this conversation, Irish leadership had by that time begun to encourage Irish artists to seek support from businesses and other private entities in order to make up for the lack of state resources. Martin Donohoe, Gay McKeon, and a number of my other collaborators drew the mutual conclusion that some of Ireland's larger arts institutions were receiving the bulk of the cuts on the basis that these entities were better positioned to make recourse to private funding.

Martin's suggestion that there was a misconception within the Arts Council was to problematize any notion that hosting the *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann* put County Cavan in an improved position to sustain traditional music without state subsidization. Martin explained:

Maybe someone in the Arts Council is looking at it from a geography perspective and saying, "Well, Cavan must be doing great to have the *Fleadh* for three years. We've seen it on the television; they had seven shows; we heard it on *Raidió na Gaeltachta* and RTÉ radio; we read about it in *Treoir* Irish music magazine—the web is full of it. Google 'All-Ireland *Fleadh* in Cavan,' and you'll see 80,000 people have viewed Sharon Shannon playing in the Market Square." And, they may turn around and say "there were 350,000 people that attended that, there was a huge explosion, they don't need any funding. They just need to use what's down there and capitalize." (Personal Interview with Martin Donohoe 2016)

He added that there had been a temporary boom in the number of individuals participating in *CCÉ* activities following the *Fleadh*, but there had not been any notable change in patronage or other private support of traditional music in the area. It was in following these remarks that I asked Martin what had happened with the €35 million that was estimated to have been brought to Cavan following the 2010 *Fleadh Cheoil* (O'Reilly 2011). Martin's reply was that he "as a musician and as an organizer of the NYAH group, and also chairman of the *Comhaltas* group" could not see evidence of any boost to funding for traditional music. Rather, he felt that the principal benefactors of the festivals were "the country as a PR tool, tourism...hotels, beverages, food," and other county businesses (e.g. Liberty Insurance) (Donohoe 2016). He concluded on

the note that the “culture [wasn’t] strong enough to sustain without outside involvement.” By “culture,” Martin was referring to traditional music and arts.



Figure 1.7: Martin Donohoe (right) performing with the NYAH group at the 2012 *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann*. President Michael D. Higgins (left) has promoted the event and its contributions to the Irish economy on an annual basis.

Martin’s suggestion that the NYAH festival could not be supported without external funding was to point out what he saw as a general decline in traditional music audiences since the onset of the recession. Indeed, the lack of public audiences or what Martin and others called “bums on seats” was highly apparent across the many concerts, festivals, and other performances that we attended between 2012 and 2016. This included a concert we saw in Dublin’s Smithfield area, where the renowned musician Reg Hall (keyboard) played to a three-quarter empty room at The Cobblestone, one of Dublin’s most well-known traditional music pubs (see Figure 1.5). Martin and I both noted that most of the individuals in the room were guest performers or personal friends of the musicians. We observed the same trend at the Seán McAloon festival we

attended in Fermanagh on Easter Sunday 2016, where the pinnacle concert was performed to a half-empty auditorium. Both Martin and the event's organizer informed me that the event had been running for over four decades and had recently seen a turn in audiences.



Figure 1.8: Photograph of the Reg Hall concert hosted at The Cobblestone Pub in Smithfield in late November 2015 (Photograph by Kevin Levine).

The decline in audiences at traditional music events has been personally discouraging for many traditional musicians in addition to making it increasingly difficult for them to host events. The majority of my collaborators in Ireland suggested that they were more often than not breaking even on the performances they hosted once the income from tickets was weighed against advertising, musician rates, and venue fees. This trend lent to a dynamic in which event organizers were becoming increasingly conservative with the fees they offered to musicians for gigs, as there was less of an expectation that the audience would be present to recoup organizer costs. Or, as was the case with the McAloon Festival, organizers coped with diminished

audiences by booking lesser-known musicians or by shortening the length of events. Martin explained that this type of conservatism was not pronounced prior to the recession, with the accessibility of arts funding allowing organizers to balance expectations for an audience with other sources of support. In his words, “with no funding, you’ll not take the risk. That’s what the lack of funding does” (Personal Interview with Martin Donohoe 2016).

An alternative strategy that organizers have used in recent years to boost income from traditional music events is the adaption of performances to attract broader audiences. This was exactly what Martin and a number of other volunteers attempted to do in 2012 for a concert in Cavan featuring Matt Molloy (flute, The Chieftains) and John Carty (fiddle). In the process of planning for this event, the volunteer committee made the decision to have the performance staged in a marquis with a pop-up liquor bar. This was intended less to increase attendance among traditional music enthusiasts and more to increase the likelihood that individuals simply looking for a night out would participate. What resulted from this decision was a noisy congregation around the bar, drowning out music from two of the most well-known and admired figures in Irish traditional music. Martin was serving as the master of ceremonies and had to halt the performance to ask the audience for *ciúnas* (quiet) four times.

Martin informed me that it was only in recent years that players with the type of renown as Matt Molloy and John Carty would be booked for local festivals and certainly not at the rate that they were paid for the evening. The general “trickle-down” in the scope of traditional music events was explained separately and in greater detail to me by Bernadette Morris, a Belfast-based singer and fiddle player I met during my 2015-2016 fieldwork. She explained:

The money isn’t there for those big gigs anymore, so I think those bigger acts are taking the medium-sized gigs that would have been there before, and those medium-sized acts that are established but not as famous are taking the smaller gigs. You’ll see some of the more famous people playing in arts centers and

playing in smaller venues that they would never have played before because they're just taking what is available. (Personal Interview with Bernadette Morris 2016)

The dynamic Bernadette describes above also helps to explain why professional organizers and musicians have increasingly sought opportunities outside the country. Indeed, the majority of my collaborators suggested that it had become “virtually impossible” for a traditional musician to make a living in Ireland without also touring extensively outside the country, where larger audiences could be expected. This point was noted by the flute player Ciara O’Grady:

You constantly need to be touring in America or Europe...The attendance at gigs is so poor, it’s so incredibly poor...Music is not, unfortunately, as accessible for people as it used to be, because they can’t afford it as much. So, I think that’s one of the main reasons why it’s really hard to tour in Ireland. (Personal Interview with Ciara O’Grady 2015)



Figure 1.9: Bernadette Morris (Photograph Courtesy of Bernadette Morris).

One demographic that several traditional musicians have indicated still seem to be attending traditional music events despite the recession are persons over the age of 65. This was first brought to my attention by Ciarán Ó Maonaigh, a well-respected fiddle player from Co. Donegal and member of the band Fidil. During one of our discussions, Ciarán relayed his observation that attendance at Irish gigs has become disproportionately represented by older individuals. By contrast, he was seeing fewer individuals below the age of 50 attending traditional music events. Martin commented upon the same trend several months earlier, explaining the fact that retirees represent one of the few populations that continued to have a predictable source of income during the recession:

The area that is most supportive to us, that have more money in their pocket even though they suffered during that time [i.e., the recession] would be the pension people, the older, retired person... They have no liabilities to children and college, and they've their houses paid for, their car paid for, and they have a weekly disposable income to spend. (Personal Interview with Martin Donohoe 2016)

Both Ciarán and Martin's observations are supported by recent scholarly literature suggesting that pensions have been one of the areas relatively protected from austerity measures (Hick 2104, 403; Murphy 2014, 135). Conversely, Irish youths represent one of the groups most severely affected by the economic crisis, with 10% of youth populations emigrating from the country at the height of the recession (Cahill 2014). Ciarán's reaction to these dynamics led him to question where the next generation of the audience for traditional music will come from.

The changing demographics of traditional music participation has resulted in concerns not only for "the tradition" generally but also musicians' personal finances. Indeed, the decline in audiences for traditional music has had the inevitable effect of depressing the average fees that Martin and other full-time professional musicians can make from performances. Martin spoke on this issue during the latter part of my fieldwork in 2016, noting that his monthly income had

dropped by around €1,000 since the Celtic Tiger (Personal Interview with Martin Donohoe 2016). This comprises loss from teaching revenue, concert attendance, album sales, session fees, and other professional activities. His financial loss was also compounded by some of the tax adjustments introduced earlier, including new water fees and property taxes. These factors have led traditional musicians to experience a greater need for welfare at a time when welfare programs were being systematically downscaled. For instance, Martin noted that he would likely have to fall back on public grants to support his younger children through college, whereas he had been able to aid his older children out of pocket. Martin also expressed uncertainties for his future given that musicians do not receive a pension or regular income.

The recessions' effects upon artist incomes also an appreciable influence on the way that musicians approached album financing. In the last few years, there has been an especially marked increase in the number of artists who are resorting to “crowdsourcing” websites, such as Kickstarter and FundIt, to finance album production. It is telling that about half the traditional musicians I met over the course of my 2015-2016 fieldwork had used crowdsourcing methods to fulfill their project needs. Bernadette Morris indicated to me that the need for crowdsourcing was directly tied to the decreasing accessibility and scope of public grants. She added that “even Altan,” one of the most famous groups in Irish traditional music, had to use Kickstarter to produce an album in recent years. This was to point out the fact that the need for crowdsourcing was not limited to unknown or emerging musicians (Personal Interview with Bernadette Morris 2016). I also noted this trend myself, having seen Pauline Scanlon (of the band Lumiere), Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh (Danú), and other Irish artists with several albums already recorded advertising their crowdfunding campaigns during the course of my research.

One of the many interesting features of musicians' spending habits is that they were far

removed from the types of risky practices that contributed to the recession. Ciarán Ó Maonaigh was one of several individuals who commented on musicians' relative financial conservatism, noting that most traditional musicians had not found themselves with "a big wad of cash" to spend on a home deposit or other investments (Personal Interview with Ciarán Ó Maonaigh 2016). He suggested, in particular, that traditional musicians tended to place little value in material possessions given the amount of time they spent travelling and living away from their homes. Fiach Moriarty commented more directly on the dissymmetry between musicians' financial habits and those of the wider population during the Celtic Tiger period:

I was never living the high life anyway. I never lived beyond my means...But that was the thing. Everybody was and credit cards and spending money they didn't have...That's something I never did because I never had a regular income. I was even offered a credit card. I didn't have a regular income, and I was offered a credit card from the bank. That's fucking insane...I said no. (Personal Interview with Fiach Moriarty 2016)

Fiach also mentioned not having owned a car or a house, which seemed to be common among the majority of the traditional musicians whom I met. These practices seemed to contradict frequent commentaries by Irish government officials suggesting that ordinary Irish citizens had joined wealthy bondholders in sowing the seeds of the recession.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has been to introduce the major features of the Great Recession and to provide a general illustration of the ways it affected the living and working conditions of traditional musicians. The remaining chapters take a more nuanced approach towards this analysis, each detailing a specific problem cited by my collaborators. Chapter Two initiates this transition by turning from general economic challenges to the recession's direct impact upon arts subsidies. The ensuing discussion places particular emphasis on the state's

decision to adopt an “American” model of arts support, involving growing encouragement for Irish artists to pursue private philanthropy and corporate sponsorship as alternatives to state welfare. My Irish collaborators have expressed numerous concerns with this shift, noting the historical underdevelopment of private philanthropy in Ireland and the unlikelihood that corporate sponsorship would fill certain gaps left by the withdrawal of the state. I shed light upon these concerns in continuing with the broader discussion of neoliberal structural adjustment.

CHAPTER TWO

WELFARE RETRENCHMENT AND REFORM IN THE IRISH ARTS

Irish attempts to recover from the 2008 economic crisis and meet the terms of the Troika austerity program led to significant cuts across government subsidies, including in the arts. Both of the nation's principal arts funding bodies were subject to reductions in their budgetary allotments throughout the recession in addition to being restricted in their capacity to fill employment vacancies. The Arts Council alone saw its grant-in-aid reduced by over 30% over the four years between 2009 and 2013, with spending on behalf of the Department of Arts also falling by just over 40% between 2007-2011 (The Arts Council 2013). The severity of these cuts for Irish artists is underscored by the fact that public subsidy commonly accounts for over half of the budget of many Irish arts institutions. Such reliance on government subsidy meant that many institutions had to downscale, transform, suspend, or discontinue much of the artistic activities in which they were engaged throughout the recession.

An anticipation of the wide-ranging effects of arts funding cuts led Ireland's national arts bodies to the conclusion that fundamental changes were needed in the nation's longstanding cultural provision model. This consideration has since resulted in the launch of several government initiatives that were intended to reduce what was viewed as the disproportionate reliance of Irish artists and arts institutions upon government funding sources. The state's primary strategy for achieving this shift involved the creation of new programs that encouraged artists to "diversify" funding streams and deepen relationships with private funding sources (e.g., trusts, foundations, philanthropists, etc.). The government's long-term strategy was to combine "US-style philanthropic support with the best of European-style state support." In practice, this entailed the growing use of public subsidy to leverage private arts fundraising. This represented a

departure from Ireland's historical model of arts funding, which overwhelmingly placed emphasis upon direct funding maximization (Merrionstreet.ie 2012).¹

Recent adjustments in Irish cultural funding have affected individuals participating in all artistic idioms, with traditional music being no exception. In the first instance, cuts to Arts Council grant-in-aid have resulted in significant reductions across the types of programs that directly fund traditional musicians. These include decreases in grant-provision amounting to 73% for the traditional arts category (2008–2014), which supports Irish music albums and festivals, and a 41% reduction in traditional music festivals (*Journal of Music* 2016). Traditional musicians have expressed deep concerns regarding these cuts and their ability to strike the type of public-private funding balance being pursued by the state. Traditional musicians' fundraising experiences strongly suggest that private funding is unlikely to fill diminished levels of state subsidy without skewing who or what is supported.

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the above observations within the continuing analysis of neoliberal structural adjustment and its effects on cultural policy. Drawing primarily from the work of Michel Foucault, I aim to show how recent Irish arts policy reforms leverage ideas about free market liberalization, entrepreneurship, and "human capital" to deepen artists' engagement with the private market. I also demonstrate how recent governmental arts reforms do not adequately account for factors that limit musicians' capacities to balance public and private funding streams. This involves discussion of the historically weak culture of private arts giving in Ireland, the differential capacities of artists to finance fundraising activities, and the skewed nature of commercial arts sponsorships.

The remainder of this chapter is broken into two halves. The first part describes the

¹ Merrionstreet.ie is a government news publication.

historical functioning of Ireland's foremost arts funding institutions, including The Arts Council and the Department of Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht. This helps to contextualize the ways that Ireland's funding model shifted over the course of the recession. The second half of the chapter analyzes the major challenges Irish musicians have encountered with recent arts policy reforms. Ethnographic material for this chapter is drawn from conversations with over a dozen traditional musicians as well as government officials and several other individuals involved in the arts funding process. This includes direct representation from the Arts Council and from several key nonprofit arts organizations in Ireland.

PUBLIC ARTS SUBSIDY (1951–2007)

Prior to discussing the character and effects of recent arts policy reforms in Ireland, it is necessary to outline both the basic structure of the country's national arts infrastructure and the development of public supports related to traditional music. The ensuing discussion provides the basis for understanding what is in fact "new" about the arts funding model the Irish government has attempted to build since the onset of the recession. It additionally draws attention to some of the concepts that have informed the character of Irish arts funding since the initial establishment of an arts infrastructure in Ireland. This includes a brief review of such concepts as market failure, merit goods, arms-length policy, and other ideas that have been fundamental to the logic of arts welfare not only in Ireland but also elsewhere around the world.

Irish Arts Funding, 1951-2008

Irish arts funding at the national level is provided principally by *An Comhairle Ealaíon* (The Arts Council) and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The former

institution was established in 1951, becoming the first national-level entity in Ireland to be charged exclusively with developing and promoting the Irish arts.¹² Since the institution's establishment, the Council has become the primary vehicle for state arts subsidization, providing both Irish arts institutions and individual artists direct support through its various grant programs. These include a range of grant schemes, such as programs that subsidize arts festivals, tours, training residencies, album recordings, and various projects.¹³ The Arts Council also provides regular funding, meaning that the Council lends recurring subsidies to various institutions requiring infrastructural, operational, and staffing support. For most regularly funded organizations, Council support constitutes the bulk of the organization's operational budget. This is partly due to the fact that the Arts Council has helped to establish many of the regularly-funded nonprofit and national arts organizations in Ireland (e.g., Irish Traditional Music Archive, Music Network, etc.).

Significantly, the Arts Council does not exist as a full state Ministry. Rather, the institution was established in a form specific to the British Isles known as a "quasi-autonomous, non-governmental agency," or "quango" for short. The Arts Council is regarded as "non-governmental" in the sense that the government has devolved authority to the Council to make its own decisions on how to approach the development of the Irish arts. This involves the Council's authority to design its own programs, make grant selections, and distribute its funds how it chooses. The Arts Council is also staffed by individuals who are not direct political agents. Arts Council personnel generally bring extensive experience working in the Irish arts sector to their work within the institution. At the same time, the Arts Council is only "quasi"

¹² Prior to the Council's establishment, national initiatives relating to the arts were made the responsibility of the Department of Education.

autonomous, given that the government ultimately decides how much funding (grant-in-aid) the Council receives on an annual basis. This is an important feature of the Council's framework.

Apart from the Arts Council, the other the other institution heavily involved in subsidizing Irish arts is the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. the Arts Council, the Department of Arts was instituted as a full governmental Ministry in 1993 to deepen the links between the state and Irish cultural development. This relationship was constructed in a few ways. First, like other Ministries, the Department of Arts gets to weigh in on the proposed policies of other Departments that would affect areas of its remit. The inverse is also true, that other Departments (e.g. Finance, Taoiseach, etc.) have the authority to support, challenge, or amend proposals submitted by the Department of Arts. Second, the Department is directly charged with ensuring that its activities conform to the specific governmental aims and projects. For instance, if the Taoiseach creates a ten-year goal to integrate foreign nationals within Irish society, then the Department will generally follow with programming that leverages arts and culture towards social inclusion and integration. Lastly, the Department of Arts is staffed directly by governmental personnel. The Department is chaired by the Minister of Arts, who is a politician, and by civil servants. These are bureaucrats who might lack direct experience working in the Irish arts prior to their work in the Department.

Notwithstanding their different exigencies, the Arts Council and the Department have historically supported the arts through a shared set of ideals. In the first instance, both the Council and the Department ascribe to the notion that the arts should be supported on the basis that they constitute "merit goods," which the government has defined as "product[s] or service[s] considered to be intrinsically desirable, uplifting, or socially valuable" (DAHG 2015, 18). These are representative of the carryover of romantic-era ideas regarding the cultivating or transcendent

capabilities of the arts. In addition to adopting the notion of merit goods, both the Arts Council and the Department have generally ascribed to the idea that the private market alone does not suffice in realizing the full social benefits of the arts. This belief is expressed in the concept of market failure, which is one of the fundamental rationalizations for the existence of welfare institutions across Europe and throughout the world. In short, market failure describes the free market's tendency to not supply, to under-supply, or otherwise diminish the quality of public goods that do not provide the requisite economic or other incentives for market production (18).

Together, the notions of merit goods and market failure have strongly informed the dominant model of national arts funding leading up to the Great Recession. The principal tendencies of this model have included (a) the pursuit of Irish artistic welfare through the *maximization of direct* governmental funding, (b) the ascription of a net-positive social value to arts institutions and artistic projects, and (c) the distancing of state institutions from the managerial decisions of arts institutions and individuals they support. The first of these tendencies has been especially consistent throughout Irish history, with Ireland's approach to arts welfare generally epitomizing the Keynesian welfare structures of the postwar period. This contrasts from the development of American-style arts subsidization, which views the private market as the chief patron of the arts and where public institutions often support the arts sector through indirect means (e.g., consultation, promotion, etc.).

Irish Traditional Music and State Funding, 1950s–2000s

Despite the importance of Irish traditional music to national identity, it has only been since the late 1980s that government subsidy has entered the landscape of traditional music as a *routine* or *primary* means of support. This is the result of several dynamics beginning with the

fact that much of the Arts Council's early funding was earmarked for institutions supporting the "fine" and professional arts (e.g. opera, classical music, theater, etc.). For instance, the bulk of regular arts funding provided by the Department of Education and the Arts Council up to the mid-1970s went to the "Big 5" institutions, comprised of the Abbey Theatre, the Gate Theatre, the Irish Theatre Company, the Irish Ballet Company, and the Dublin Theatre Festival (Kennedy 1998 [1990], n.p.). By the 2000s, Council funding in the "traditional arts" category continued to hover around 3% of total Council funding (The Arts Council 2004, 12). This was still a substantial amount for traditional artists, although Gay McKeon (uilleann piper) and several of my other collaborators noted that opera, classical music, and other "high" arts still receive higher state subsidies (Personal Interview with Gay McKeon 2015).

Early governmental support for traditional Irish music came largely from outside the Arts Council and especially from state departments involved in broadcasting, tourism, and language preservation. For instance, one of the earliest sources of state-funded support for traditional music came about with the launch of Ireland's first national radio station (2RN, 1926) under the aegis of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs. Both the station's founder, who was none other than President Douglas Hyde, and 2RN's first Director, Seamus Clandillon, were ardent enthusiasts for Irish folk music and occasionally featured live performances of traditional music on 2RN's broadcast schedule (Carolan 2005). The variety of traditional music programming on state-run media expanded in the 1950s and especially following the launch of Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ, 1961). Much like 2RN, national television broadcasts on RTÉ often featured traditional music performance. Many of these performances were compiled into a more recently published RTÉ archival series, called *Come West Along the Road* (1994). These programs have contemporary counterparts in RTÉ programs, *Hup!*, *Geantraí*, and *Fleadh TV*.

The introduction of regular funding for traditional music did not occur until the late 1960s when the government began providing funding to *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann* through its Irish language budget. This organization, typically abbreviated as CCÉ, was founded in 1991 with the aims of preserving traditional music and the Irish language. CCÉ initially pursued these goals through the establishment of a system of traditional festivals and competitions (*fleadheanna*), which culminated in the annual *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann* (Festival of Irish Music) described across previous chapters. Alongside these festivals, CCÉ established a headquarters in Dublin, numerous “branches” throughout Ireland, and eventually, a host of branches throughout the world. These functioned as regional music clubs where individuals could learn, play and perform traditional music. *Comhaltas*’ success in the “revival” of traditional music alongside its links to the Irish language initiative provided the impetus for the receipt of government funding by 1967 (Vallely 2011, 167). *Comhaltas* has received direct governmental funding year-to-year since this point through various governmental departments, with a dominant emphasis on aiding the transmission of traditional performance to Irish youths.

Traditional music saw additional funding increases throughout the 1960s to 1980s due to several culminating factors. Funding boosts during this period related to general growth in the Arts Council’s grant-in-aid; however, increased national support for traditional music was also a factor of the 1960s-1970s Irish folk music revival. Ciarán Ó Maonaigh, Gay McKeon, and a number of my other collaborators noted how the growth of interest in Irish folk music during this period helped both to reverse the notion that traditional music was “backward” and to popularize the music (Personal Interviews 2015, 2016). As this process unfolded, the opportunities for Irish traditional musicians to develop full-time, performance careers increased. The popularization of traditional music also informed the music’s growing embeddedness within the Irish tourist

sector, national tourism subsidies, and investment campaigns.

The greatest welfare gain for traditional music did not occur until the late 1980s to mid-2000s as part of general Celtic Tiger growth. The international “buzz” generated by the Celtic Tiger enhanced the government’s capacity to increase public subsidies in addition to the state’s interest in culture as an economic asset. The rise in cultural subsidization during this period spilled over into the traditional arts. For instance, growth in Council grant-in-aid enhanced the number of traditional music festivals and recordings that received support. This included the start of ongoing support for several well-known traditional music festivals, such as the Willie Clancy Summer School (Co. Clare) and Frankie Kennedy School (Co. Donegal). The Arts Council also began to provide recurring funding to the Irish Traditional Music Archive (established in 1987) and enhanced capital funding for *Na Píobairí Uilleann* (The Society of Uilleann Pipers).

Traditional music received further support by the early 2000s through several programs specifically targeting the traditional arts. This process began in 2003 with the state’s decision to establish a Special Committee on the Traditional Arts to determine if Arts Council support structures sufficiently addressed the specific needs of traditional musicians. The Committee’s subsequent report, entitled *Towards a Policy for the Traditional Arts* (2004), identified what has been stated earlier, that Council funding for the traditional arts has never been above 3% of the Council’s annual budget (The Arts Council 2004, 12). The Committee acknowledged that much of the national funding for traditional arts came from other government bodies, such as the Cultural Relations Committee, the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, and RTE, but concluded that “the Council should not dilute its responsibility to funding specific activities by passing funding to a third party” (14). This reflected a change in the relationship between the traditional music community and the Council.

One of the important outcomes of the new policy for traditional arts was the establishment of the Deis Traditional Arts Fund in 2005. This program made over €600,000 in annual funding available to traditional musicians over the 2006–2008 period, which was an exponential increase in the Council’s traditional arts funding from mid-1980s figures.³ It was noted earlier that annual Deis funding amounted to around 120 additional album bursaries at €5,000 or 30 additional music festival bursaries at €20,000. An additional result of the new traditional music policy has been the development of the Council’s “Small Arts Festivals Scheme,” which provides opportunities for some of Ireland’s smaller festivals to compete for Arts Council Funding. This scheme helped the traditional music scene significantly, especially for those events outside Irish cities. For instance, this grant program was what Martin Donohoe typically drew upon in supporting Cavan’s annual NYAH events.

Beyond Council support, traditional music also benefitted from increased subsidization on behalf of the Department of Arts, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Fáilte Ireland, and other governmental bodies that saw their budgets rise over the Celtic Tiger period. For instance, one important support avenue established by the Department of Arts was Culture Ireland. Since its founding in 2005, the international arts development agency has provided generous funding to performers of traditional music. This has included tour funding for several of the musicians I met during my fieldwork, including Caitlín Nic Gabhann (concertina) and Ted Kelly (banjo) (Personal Interviews with Caitlín Nic Gabhann and Ted Kelly 2016). Another funding source that emerged around the same time was Fáilte Ireland, which has been Ireland’s national tourism development agency since 2003. Much like the Arts Council, Fáilte Ireland lent support to traditional music through a range of sponsorship and grant programs. Fáilte Ireland

³ The annual Arts Council budget report from 1985 shows that £124,000 went to the traditional arts that year (9).

grant provision is aligned unilaterally with attracting tourism to the country but has nevertheless helped to support traditional music in its own right.

The above subsidy supports just described have become imperative to the development of both amateur and professional pursuits in the traditional music scene. This begins with the fact that the number of traditional musicians attempting to make professional careers from traditional music has exploded exponentially since the 1980s, while the types of industry supports enjoyed by earlier generations of Irish artists have become less accessible. Wages for professional traditional musicians are also unique in that the time and monetary investment (i.e., labor cost) required to render a live musical performance is somewhat fixed. There is a common saying among traditional musicians that it takes 21 years to be ready to perform the uilleann pipes, which is as true today as it was a century ago. This compares with the time and cost required to manufacture a computer, which has declined exponentially from what they once were. The result of these dynamics is that artists have to work harder to increase their pay through wage increases rather than cost savings. This relates to a theory called Baumol's Cost Disease (Baumol and Bowen 1966) that helps to provide an explanation why artists' wages increasingly lag behind the rise in living costs over time (see Chapter Four). Whatever the balance of factors may be, traditional music has become a strongly subsidy-dependent genre since the Celtic Tiger period.

STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT IN THE ARTS (2009–2016)

The onset of the Great Recession in 2008 signaled the end of the public subsidy growth seen over the Celtic Tiger period and the beginning implementation of cuts to Ireland's primary cultural funding bodies. The Arts Council, which had reached its highest grant-in-aid in Irish history by 2007 (€83 million), began to see decreases in its grant-in-aid from 2009 onward. The

Council's annual budget in 2009 was set at €73.4 million, representing a 12% cut from the prior two years. Ireland's entry into the bailout agreement over the following year deepened the retrenchment further. The Council's budget was reduced by 5.5% in 2010, by 5.7% in 2011, and by 3% in 2012, reaching its lowest point at just under €60 million in 2013. Taken together, the Council's grant-in-aid was reduced by over 30% between 2007-2013 (*Journal of Music* 2015b). These cuts were reflective of expenditure conservatism on behalf of the Department of Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht, which curbed spending by 42% between 2007 and 2011 as part of Irish austerity agreements (Slaby 2011, 79).

An anticipation of the pressures the above cuts would place on both public and private art institutions led Irish officials to question the extent to which national cultural institutions could continue to support the arts sector in the manner they had in the past. The Department of Arts and the Arts Council had historically developed the arts through the maximization of direct artist subsidization, which was dependent upon a healthy economy. The recession made this strategy seem unviable in both the short and long terms. In other words, the recession came to be seen as a sign that there was a systemic rather than temporal issue with the national funding model.

The above considerations led officials in multiple government departments to the conclusion that fundamental changes were needed in the national arts subsidy model. The primary result of this determination was the choice to develop a mixed cultural funding model combining direct arts subsidies with new programs and incentives designed to encourage artists to diversify funding streams. In this mixed model, which the Minister of Arts described as a combination of "the best US-style philanthropic support [and] the best of European-style state support," the government would increasingly use governmental arts funding to leverage private contributions to the arts in the form of philanthropy, corporate sponsorship, and crowdfunding

(MerrionStreet.ie 2012). This strategy was pursued through several means, including the development of new programs that trained artists in the business and managerial aspects of private fundraising. The government also made adjustments to charitable giving laws.

The above dynamics indicated an overall shift away from Keynesian style of arts support and toward one based upon neoliberal ideologies. This process involved structural shifts that made it almost inevitable that musicians would need to deepen their engagement with private sponsors in order to fulfill their aspirations. This meant that artists' search for funding would increasingly be negotiated on the basis of private market contingencies. State officials presented this form of *de facto* privatization as necessary to the long-term stability of the arts through a gradual inversion of the market failure principle; rather than arts subsidy being promoted as a security against the instability and failure of the private market, the recession was increasingly explicated as evidence to the notion that private funding was a security against the instability and failure of welfare. The virtues of self-sufficiency and self-responsibility were also increasingly extolled as part of the new *status quo*, with state officials frequently glossing over artists' differential capacities to mitigate risk.

Transformation of the National Arts Infrastructure

Changes to the Irish arts funding model involved input from multiple governmental entities but was most centrally directed by the Minister of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan. The Minister was the head of the Department of Arts from the onset of the recession, having a chief responsibility to ensure the stability arts sector throughout the initial part of the economic downturn and that cultural funding conformed with higher-order mandates of the Irish austerity agreements. Thus, he has had a tremendous hand in shaping the

nature of arts subsidy. His interventions were also adopted by Minister Heather Humphreys, who took over the role of Minister of Arts in 2014.

Minister Deenihan's efforts to change the nature of Irish arts funding began as early as 2011 through his participation in the Global Irish Economic Forum. This was a government-organized event that brought Irish and American state officials together with heads of multinational organizations towards the development of a plan for Irish economic growth and recovery. In his address to the assembly, Deenihan revealed that the Department would be seeing budgetary cuts of 15% and that he planned to make up for the loss in funding largely through recourse to the private market, particularly in the form of corporate philanthropy (McGreevy 2010). As later discussions will make clear, Ireland has not historically had a strong culture of coordinated private philanthropy, with the nation being home to only around thirty philanthropic foundations. According to one member of the Irish Fine-Gael Party, this number would be closer to eight hundred if Ireland were comparable to other European nations (Crosbie 2013). This informed Deenihan's frequent attempts to encourage the corporate sector to consider the benefits of making increased funds available to artists.

Deenihan and the Department's efforts to reform the structure of Irish arts funding were consolidated the following year with the launch of a new governmental program that became known as the Philanthropy Leverage Initiative. The Minister personally announced the Initiative on May 15, 2012 and provided a description of the pilot program of which it constituted. The program, which was to be run directly by the Department, would set aside €230,000 in funds to be allocated in the form of small grants to Irish arts organizations that managed to raise two and a half times the funding amount in the form of private support. This program, which took the name of the broader Initiative, was a variation on the types of state matching schemes that have

historically been used in the United States. The program was to play a central part in the Department's overall strategy to build a strong culture of arts philanthropy, an area Deenihan suggested was "underdeveloped in Ireland compared to other sectors and other countries particularly the United States" (DAHG 2012a).

Minister Deenihan provided further commentary on the Philanthropy Leverage Initiative during a conference on Philanthropy and the Arts organized for October 18th, 2018 at the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin. At the event, he noted how the government considered the development of a mixed arts funding structure to be desirable in both the short and long-term. This was reflected in his opening address:

Our new focus on philanthropy is not...simply about helping organisations to function through the downturn. I firmly believe that philanthropy should grow to be a mainstay of arts and culture funding for the years and decades ahead...Our aim, therefore, is not to simply replace public funding with private support for a year or two—our aim is to develop a culture of philanthropy that allows private support to complement public funding, and for that to be the accepted model that all organisations strive for. (MerrionStreet.ie 2012)

Deenihan followed these remarks with the suggestion that funding diversification would help ensure the future vitality of the arts sector in addition to yielding long-term positive impacts for business and corporate interests. The Minister has since reiterated these viewpoints in several publications for the *Irish Times*, where he has commented on the increasing need for Irish artists to seek alternatives to public funding (Deenihan 2014).

Deenihan and the Department did not implement changes in the arts unilaterally but worked through the Arts Council and other national institutions to realize their aims. For instance, the Minister reached out to the Council in 2012 to offer the institution a small boost to its grant-in-aid as part of the Philanthropy Capacity Building Initiative. The funding was provided to the Arts Council with the stipulation that the organization would use the additional

support to create a program paralleling the Department's own Initiative. The Council, which was already experiencing issues delivering its core services for lack of funding, accepted the Department's offer. This led to the development of a program by the name of RAISE, which the Council launched the same year as the Philanthropy Leverage Initiative.

RAISE described a program in which the Council awarded funding packages to select arts institutions anticipated to earn at least €100,000 from private sources over the course of several years. Recipients of RAISE grants would be limited in their use of the funding to costs associated with hiring permanent fundraising staff, undergoing private market skills training, and developing plans for private funding drives. RAISE participants were typically partnered with representatives from 2into3, an independent organization that specializes in training non-profits how to fundraise, scale, and build effective donor networks. The general thrust of the RAISE program was to gradually upskill the fundraising capacities of large Irish arts institutions through a prescribed training regimen. It was envisioned that RAISE had the potential to generate €10,000,000 in private investment in the arts over a period of five years.

By the time the Council developed the RAISE program, leadership within The Arts Council had already begun to entertain its own considerations of whether its long-term strategy for maximizing direct arts subsidies remained viable. This was signaled in the Council's annual *Strategy Statement* in 2013:

As our decisions of recent years demonstrate, we cannot guarantee the continuation of funding, even if long-standing. Nor can we maintain the funding at existing levels, or perhaps at all, to many artists and organisations doing excellent work. This is because, in addition to supporting excellence, we must also attend to viability and sustainability; to balance between and within arts areas; to spatial considerations; to 'value for money' (measured appropriately); and to the need to invest in new work, new practices and new actions. (The Arts Council 2013, 3)

The address marked a turning point in the Council's thinking on its support of the arts sector.

From 2013 onward, the Council increasingly began to research private fundraising, reassess its criteria for grant provision, and encourage artists to diversify funding streams.

Beyond the shifts described above, the Council also increasingly sought to organize itself as a *development agency* rather than merely as a *funding agency*. This idea was explored following an internal review the Council conducted over the 2013-2014 period alongside a diverse Steering Group. The Steering Group's findings were published in the document *Inspiring Prospects* (2014), which noted several ways in the organization could move in a more development-oriented direction. For instance, one of the Steering Group's primary recommendations was that the Council should begin to focus on ways to support the arts other than through subsidy maximization. It was envisioned that the Council could begin to enhance its advisory role within the arts sector, increase its branding and marketing functions, enhance its research and development functions, and implement other changes that assisted artists through indirect means (The Arts Council 2014, 7). This would also require that the Council fundamentally reallocate its grant-in-aid, as the Council was using less than 10% of its funding on its own staffing and over 90% to grants.

The Council was somewhat limited in realizing several of the above aims until 2015 given the moratorium on hiring. By that time, however, the Council had significantly increased investments in its private arts fundraising research. The Council also began to openly champion the necessity and merits of private fundraising among its regularly funded institutions. The discourse of funding diversification was increasingly adopted by the media and other large Irish arts institutions in parallel with the Council's decisions given the significant extent to which the arts sector looked to the Council for support and guidance.

INFLUENCE OF ADJUSTMENT ON TRADITIONAL MUSICIANS

The implementation of changes across Ireland's national arts infrastructure led to two prominent concerns among my collaborators in Ireland. First, many of the traditional musicians with whom I spoke problematized the notion that private philanthropy could adequately make up for decreases in public funding. It was suggested, in particular, that Ireland did not have a strong enough culture of arts philanthropy in order to make an effective shift towards a privatized funding model. Second, musicians' experiences within the private funding arena suggested that the substitution of state supports for private ones could skew the nature of what or who gets funded. This concern was largely based upon the observed tendency of private entities to sponsor artists that align with popular musical tastes.

The remainder of this chapter serves to further highlight musicians' responses to recent shifts in the Irish arts infrastructure. This also serves to explicate the foundations of such shifts in neoliberal ideologies. Borrowing from the work of Michel Foucault, I argue that the character of national arts reform has created conditions in which an increasing number of music activities have been systemically aligned with free market dynamics. This has been achieved both institutionally, in the sense that the state drive towards philanthropy has left artists with little choice other than to rely upon the market, and ideologically, in the sense that musicians are increasingly inculcated with the notion that market liberalization is the most viable means to success. Foucault's historical account of neoliberal ideology is especially useful in identifying how recent reforms have transferred a greater burden of responsibility upon artists to act entrepreneurially. This has coincided with growing treatment of artist's successes and failures as a measure of their willingness to invest in their fundraising capacities, a process that has glossed over structural conditions that place limits on individual agency.

Musicians' positionalities *vis-à-vis* the new funding regime also lend support to Naomi Klein's suggestion that neoliberal reform is often accompanied by "shocks" to the body politic. Klein observes, in particular, that neoliberal reconstructionism in crisis-stricken countries has tended to be delivered at a scale and speed that defies the capacity of citizens to resist or react. She argues that this type of shock has been leveraged by policymakers to smooth the way for policies that would be impossible to effect under any terms than a crisis (2007, 174). The musicians and other artists whom I met in Ireland experienced such a shock in terms of the speed with which they were forced to adapt to a more privatized funding model. To place this in perspective, musicians found themselves suddenly encouraged to take recourse in philanthropy in an environment where only 0.16% of private giving was channeled into the arts, where many arts institutions were receiving half of their support from the state, where most organizations could not afford to hire a full-time fundraiser, and where many musicians lacked formal training in fundraising. It is hard to imagine any conditions in which it would be more shocking for artists to take up the banner of the free market, yet it was under these conditions that it occurred.

Philanthropy and Traditional Music

By the time my 2015-2016 fieldwork commenced, the Department of Arts and the Arts Council had already put in place a number of programs and funding incentives to encourage artists to rely more heavily on private philanthropy. This was widely acknowledged by my collaborators in Ireland, many of whom had begun to seek ways to adapt to the new funding environment. Not surprisingly, the musicians involved in this research brought forth a range of commentary on the shift towards an Americanized arts support model during interviews and conversations. Responses spanned cautious acceptance of recent reforms to complete rejection.

Notwithstanding differential perspectives, there was broad consensus among my collaborators that the Irish government was vastly overestimating both the rate and extent to which state programs designed to spur philanthropic giving could overcome losses in public subsidy. This concern centered around observation of Ireland's weak culture of arts giving.

Philanthropic giving in Ireland has for the greater part of the nation's history been characterized by small, uncoordinated contributions at the individual level rather than unified efforts between large trusts. In fact, 80% of all philanthropic giving in Ireland is represented by private donations, with the remaining 20% stemming from a combination of corporate and nonprofit entities (Philanthropy Ireland 2011, 4). This is due to the significantly low number of Irish trusts, foundations, and endowments when compared with America and other countries where philanthropic support is more established (O'Toole 2012). The uncoordinated nature of private giving has also skewed the types of industries that commonly receive private giving. For instance, the total share of all philanthropic giving that went to the arts in 2012 stood at only one-sixth of 1% (DAHG 2012b). By comparison, the arts receive around 5% of the overall share of philanthropic funding in the USA and 6% in the UK, or eight to ten times more funding, respectively (McBride 2012).

The challenge of raising philanthropic funding has been cited throughout my fieldwork largely by individuals involved in traditional music at the administrative level. This includes Gay McKeon, a well-known *uilleann* piper and full-time CEO of Na Píobairí Uilleann (NPU), a Dublin-based nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Irish *uilleann* (i.e., "elbow) pipes. Gay's insights are important to this study for several reasons, beginning with his extensive experience in both private and public fundraising. His familiarity with various funding sources stems largely from his work at NPU, which is notable for being one

of only two traditional music organizations that receive regular funding from the Arts Council. Gay also brings special insight on the issue of philanthropic funding development as the CEO of one of the eight original organizations to participate in the Arts Council’s RAISE program, which was an ongoing part of his work.

Gay emphasized the importance of state support to Na Píobairí Uilleann from the onset of our conversations. He informed me that while NPU had been successful in the past at attaining private funding, public subsidies were responsible for over 60% of the organization’s funding (Personal Interview with Gay McKeon 2015). The high percentage of state funding received by NPU speaks to the breadth of supports the institution has provided to the traditional music community, which includes uilleann pipe performance, instrument acquisition support, pipemaking apprenticeships, and uilleann pipe repair. It also informed Gay’s suggestion that “we [NPU] could not do the work we do if it were not for the Arts Council” (McKeon 2015). His testimony to the importance of government funding served as a preface to our ensuing conversation regarding state reforms, which was somewhat telling in of itself.



Figure 2.1: Gay McKeon with a set of uilleann pipes (Photograph Courtesy of Gay McKeon).

In discussing the growing drive for funding diversification, Gay drew attention to what he saw as some of the barriers to seeking a greater percentage-share of private giving. As part of this conversation, he acknowledged that the state was encouraging artists and arts institutions to leverage philanthropic sources. His commentary on this matter spoke to some of the broad concerns regarding philanthropic growth cited earlier. Gay explained:

One thing the government has been trying to do over the last three to four years is to try to get arts organizations to fundraise, and we were one of I think eight or nine organizations that were selected to take part in the RAISE initiative... We're doing quite well, but it's very tough. A lot of organizations will find it very tough. I think there was a feeling in central government that somehow in Ireland people would give more money to the arts than previously, but it's very tough going, and it's very hard to raise money from philanthropic sources, and the tax breaks aren't that great for individuals in Ireland compared to the United States. (Personal Interview with Gay McKeon 2016)

The comparison Gay makes between the Irish and American systems for private giving is no doubt informed by the fact that many of NPU's alternatives to Irish philanthropic funding exist in the form of American institutions. NPU has conducted several fundraising tours in America in addition to having attained contributions from *An Claidheamh Soluis*, a nonprofit Celtic arts center based in New York, The American Ireland Fund, a joint American-Irish trust for supporting Irish cultural development, and several city-level committees (e.g., Boston, New York, and Chicago).

I found it to be a generally routine strategy Irish arts institutions to seek philanthropy from American institutions. This tendency is informed by the strong ties many Irish arts institutions have with American counterparts. This strategy also provides a means to circumvent some of the barriers to raising philanthropic funds domestically. These dynamics helped to inform Gay's characterization of the American infrastructure for philanthropic giving as a "well-oiled machine" during our conversation (McKeon 2016). This reminded me of similar remarks

that were made at one of the national cultural policy meetings I attended during my fieldwork. During the event in question, the Director of the Butler Gallery (Co. Kilkenny) made a comparison in her keynote address between her experiences fundraising in both New York and in Ireland before an assembly from the Department of Arts and the nonprofit sector. She remarked that “there is as much schmoozing, provision of information, selling, cajoling, and follow up in trying to raise €1,500 in the nonprofit sector here in Ireland as there was for me selling a \$150,000 painting in the art world in New York (O’Sullivan 2015). Anna provided this commentary as part of the effort to ensure that the government understood challenges of adopting an American arts funding model (O’Sullivan 2015).

Notwithstanding the above critiques, the Irish government has not been wholly unaware of some of the challenges involved in developing a more philanthropic funding model. The Minister of Arts, Jimmy Deenihan, spoke broadly on this issue as part of the announcements foregrounding the launches of the Philanthropy Leverage Initiative and RAISE in 2012. This involved acknowledgment of the wide gap that exists between philanthropy in the arts and in other economic sectors. During a philanthropy forum in 2012, he explained that “whilst philanthropy in general is reasonably developed in Ireland, this is not the case in the arts and culture sector. Philanthropy for arts and culture is underdeveloped in Ireland compared to other sectors and other countries” (MerrionStreet.ie 2012). He also reiterated commitments on behalf of himself and the Department of Arts to remedy the lack of arts philanthropy through the Philanthropy Leverage Initiative and the RAISE program. Deenihan noted further plans being developed through the Revenue Commissioners to address issues related to charitable tax relief, given that Ireland has few legal facilitations or tax incentives to encourage private giving.

Deenihan’s solution for enhancing private giving to the arts called for the facilitation of

training to increase artists' capacities to fundraise. Both the Department of Arts and several nongovernmental partner organizations (e.g., Philanthropy Ireland, Business to Arts, etc.) had recognized that few Irish arts institutions had personnel with any training in fundraising planning, which would hinder efforts to increase artists' recourse to private funds (Philanthropy Ireland 2012, 18; Deloitte 2008). The Department of Arts sought to resolve this issue by requesting that The Arts Council develop an appropriate plan to build institutional fundraising capacities. This charge is what sparked the development of RAISE, which was the principal feature of the Fundraising Capacity Initiative. Institutions participating in the RAISE program received fundraising consultation from 2into3 and Diaspora Matters, two private entities that specialize in training nonprofits how to effectively build donor networks and create fundraising plans. RAISE also provided funds so that select arts institutions could hire a fundraising intern to be trained by specialists from 2into3.

The call for artists to improve professional fundraising capacities also received responses from numerous nonprofit and for-profit entities with strong ties to the government. This includes an organization called Business to Arts, a charitable organization committed to building business-arts partnerships.¹⁴ Business to Arts created two interlinked programs for upskilling arts fundraising capacities during the recession. These were called New Stream (2009) and the DeVos Ireland Programme. The former program was developed through a partnership between Business to Arts, Dublin City Council, and Bank of America Merrill Lynch. In specific terms, New Stream provided funding for leadership at Irish arts institutions to hire full-time fundraising staff in addition to placing arts leaders on a two-year Fellowship Fundraising track.

New Stream has partnered with the DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the

¹⁴ Business to Arts is patronized by none other than the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins.

University of Maryland, following a \$22.5 million donation to the institution from Betsy (Education Secretary, U.S.) and Dick DeVos. The DeVos Ireland Programme, which received a financial contribution from the Department of Arts, consists of an eighteen-month training course in which arts leaders attend the DeVos Institute to develop professional fundraising skills. The DeVos brochure recognized the recession's simultaneous influence on arts funding sources in Detroit and Ireland following the economic crisis, urging the need for arts institutions to "take a leap of faith" in transitioning to a new funding model (Devos Institute 2016). Recommended actions for institutions in both contexts called for "aggressive marketing" in order to compete for audiences' (i.e., ticket-buyers, donors, stakeholders, etc.) loyalties and attention. The DeVos Ireland Programme also reinforced the need for Irish arts institutions to diversify their funding networks. In the process, the DeVos Institute treated the culture of public arts giving in Ireland as a "challenge" for developing "meaningful private investment" (2016, 10).

One limitation in the types of plans laid out by the Department of Arts and Arts Council was that they dealt with only a small number of the difficulties that artists frequently encounter when attempting to leverage philanthropic funding. For instance, fundraising of any variety requires a certain amount of financial reserve in order to initiate a funding drive in the first place. Both the RAISE program and New Stream exclusively lent support to large and medium-sized arts institutions. This did not contribute to the capacity of the volunteer arts organizations (e.g. NYAH) that do not have the requisite resources to hire fundraising staff, enroll in training courses, or spend time on fundraising. I found this to be an especially prevalent issue for traditional music organizations. Most of these organizations are comprised of volunteers, who have multiple jobs and little professional training in fundraising. The vast majority of Irish traditional musicians are also self-taught, lacking the formal professional training that

accompanies enrollment in a conservatory or university setting.⁴

Gay McKeon noted other barriers that made it challenging for traditional musicians to compete for philanthropic support. His experiences with fundraising indicated that it was especially difficult to establish a basis of “need” for private funding of traditional music. The process of building long-term relationships with potential philanthropic organizations heavily relies upon an ability to convey the importance of one’s work relative to other entities competing for the same resources. Gay’s experiences suggested that establishing such a basis could be difficult for traditional music due to a broad public perception that traditional musicians were somehow less in need of receiving external support than other cultural goods. In his words:

Traditional music, no matter what we say, is a kind of—a lot of people enjoy it, but everybody just thinks it’s always been with us, and they’ll play the reels and jigs anyway, so we don’t have to give them any money, whereas we have to give money to ballet, opera, and putting stage drama on, and books and stuff like that. And somehow, I think the corporate world feels that way, and particularly for sport, but not so much for traditional arts. (Personal Interview with Gay McKeon 2016)

Gay’s commentary was to suggest that traditional music’s strong place within Irish cultural history and contemporary practice could help reinforce the sense that it was an immutable part of Irish society and did not require support. In short, traditional music might not compete for private funding as readily as other arts no matter how “aggressive” one’s marketing.

The suggestion that traditional music might be weakly positioned to draw private support was highly prevalent in my conversations with traditional musicians. Commentaries along these lines typically focused on (a) the survival of traditional music without much funding, (b) the sheer number of traditional musicians, or (c) the existence of “free” music in Irish pubs. The commonality between these observations is their mutual implication that the private market is

⁴ The exception is the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, which provides comprehensive training to those seeking professional careers in traditional music.

not an arena in which traditional music is particularly poised for success. The frequency with which such commentary was offered is suggestive of more than mere conjecture, as demonstrated in the following remarks:

I think that's been said for years like what—that goes back to the festival and people paying fifteen Euros going to the gig. Oh, because they could see them two nights ago down in the pub. Like, not necessarily, but that's the sort of attitude. I think that it turns up in Irish people as a whole and in traditional music. It's still completely undervalued and under-regarded, because yeah, it has been available for free. (Personal Interview with Ciara O'Grady 2015)

The thing about Irish traditional music, it's rooted. It has really strong roots. It's got foundations that are so strong. If everything disappeared in the morning, the music would be grand. If all the organizations, all the agents, bands the whole thing disappeared in the morning, The music would be as strong as it ever was. (Personal Interview with Ciarán Ó Maonaigh 2016)

I would meet a lot of people who are very frustrated by the lack of recognition and particularly in terms of money for their skills, and you're talking about people who have spent hours, years of their lives practicing and refining their art. And they are, I mean, some of them are just amazing. You know, they really are, but there's no shortage, and therefore, there's no shortage of musicians. They're not all on the same caliber, but because of that, the price is never, the price is always going to go down. That's the problem, really, you know? (Personal Interview with Gary Ó Brien 2015)

In addition to concerns that traditional music might not compete well for private funds, there was also fear that the shift to philanthropy might eventually become a substitute for public funding. This concern was discussed in conversation with Gay McKeon and others. Gay explained this dilemma while making reference to NPU's own participation in RAISE:

I think some people were suspicious of it, that it was a ploy to try to cut funding—to say the organization “go out and raise money” and we'll cut your funding, core funding, you know?... We're very happy to do it, but a lot of organizations didn't want to get involved with the RAISE initiative, because they say “Well if we're successful, they'll just cut us,” which would have been a shame. But, there is this idea out there from central government that people and arts institutions should raise the money from the public and their members or their audiences and become self-sufficient and not be bothering themselves with government, which would be a shame because it's not as cut and dry as that you know? (Personal Interview with Gay McKeon 2015)

Gay did not ultimately believe that the discourse over funding diversification was a ploy to substitute national funding. This was, however, common enough of a concern among Irish artists that the Department of Arts and the Arts Council have addressed it on several occasions. For instance, Minister Deenihan made repeated assurances that the new emphases on philanthropy and funding diversification were only about providing *additional* funding to the arts. He affirmed, however, that philanthropy leverage programs did not represent a temporary solution to an economic setback. Rather, they would continue to be a part of government efforts to strengthen the arts sector “even when state funding to arts and culture begins to increase again at some point in the future” (MerrionStreet.ie 2012).

Neoliberalism and Philanthropy

As touched upon by Gay, the commonality between RAISE, New Stream, and the DeVos Ireland Programme was their fundamental emphasis on increasing the self-sufficiency of Irish artists and arts institutions. The state’s dual focus on funding diversification and fundraising had the effect of treating artists’ success or failure in securing support as a matter of their own entrepreneurial behavior. This represented a distancing from the ideological premise of arts welfare (i.e., Keynesianism) and tended to gloss over the socioeconomic conditions that limited artists’ differential capacities to navigate the private funding arena. These included many of the factors just identified, such as the relative inability of many arts institutions to afford fundraising staff, the disproportionate number of volunteer-based organizations, and the existence of potential societal misunderstandings regarding the needs of arts institutions.

The growing emphasis on entrepreneurship is indicative of one of the more commonly-cited symptoms of neoliberal reform. Indeed, scholars from social sciences fields have identified

the enhanced promotion of entrepreneurship as a key mechanism behind welfare retrenchment in neoliberal states. This includes the French sociologist, Michel Foucault (2008 [2004]), whose series of lectures from the Collège de France (1978-1979) remains one of the most thorough analyses of neoliberalism's historical underpinnings. Foucault's deconstruction of late capitalist ideals is useful in the context of the present work in that it helps to explain why recent funding reforms have transferred a greater burden of financial responsibility upon Irish artists. Foucault's writings simultaneously help to elucidate the general tendency of reform policies to exchange social welfare supports for private ones.

Foucault's analysis of the links between neoliberalism and entrepreneurship begins with a fundamental dilemma for neoliberal adherents. This being—how does a society maximize the positive tendencies of market competition without imposing direct, “regulatory” market interventions? The answer for both the founders of German *Ordoliberalism* (e.g., Walter Eucken 1952; Wilhelm Röpke 1950) and for later Chicago School economists (e.g., Milton Friedman 1962, Friedrich; Hayek 1944) was to seek ways to increase the *quantity of market enterprises*. This would, in turn, create more sites at which the dynamics of capitalism could be articulated. This task was not to be achieved through Keynesian “regulatory” actions, such as “price control, support for a particular sector of the market, systematic job creation, or public investment” (Foucault 2008 [2004], 139). Rather, the instrument of reform increasingly needed to become what Walter Eucken (1952) referred as *actions ordonnatrices* or “organizing actions” (Foucault 2008 [2004], 138). Foucault defines these mechanisms as “actions with the function of intervening on the conditions of the market, but on more fundamental, structural and general conditions of the market” (138). This is far clearer when placed in the context of an empirical example, which Foucault provides by drawing upon Walter Eucken's writing.

Foucault continues to explain how protective customs (i.e., regulatory actions) in Germany had long prevented the agricultural industry from becoming “fully, and exhaustively integrated within the market economy” (Foucault 2008 [2004], 140). For Eucken, the measures protecting the agricultural industry were undesirable given that they prevented agriculture from functioning appropriately as a free market. The “problem” for Eucken, then, was how to manipulate the conditions of agriculture so that it could properly exist as a market. Rather than acting on price controls or other direct market mechanisms, Eucken proposed that what must be acted upon are (a) the population size involved in agriculture, (b) the education and training of farmers, (c) the legal frameworks facilitating agricultural work, (d) and the factors relating to the availability of land (Foucault 2008 [2004], 141). Foucault observed that these elements did not affect market mechanisms directly but did help build the general conditions for market dynamics to take place. Therefore, organizing actions represent modifications of the “technical, scientific, legal, geographic, let’s say, broadly, social factors” that help inform the absorption, transformation, or catalysis of human activity into market form and dynamics (141).

Eucken’s commentary on organizing actions found an analogous voice several decades later in the concept of “human capital,” a term popularized by the Chicago School economist Gary Becker (1993). For Chicago School economists, the concept of human capital was used as a means for theorizing the types of investments that could be made in human productive capacities akin to the types of investments that capitalists had for a long time made in physical capital (e.g. equipment, raw materials, etc.). The “investments” or capital were exactly those features of individual productive capacity that had yet to be fully colonized by market logic. This included one’s upbringing, education, training, experiences, and any other factor of one’s personhood affecting her attitudes towards, and behavior within, market structures. The concept of human

capital was the *crème de la crème* of an organizing action in that it expanded the possibilities for maximizing market dynamics at the most atomic level (i.e., the individual) without any need for direct intervention on market mechanisms.

The discovery of human capital in the mid to late 1900s was important to the development of neoliberal thought in a few identifiable ways. First, the notion of human capital provided a way of reinterpreting human behavior and productive capacity as merely the product of investments made at the individual level. This allowed economists to conceptualize the individual *as a site of enterprise*, leading to Foucault's famous caricature of the neoliberal self as an "entrepreneur of himself" (2008 [2004], 226). Second, if the individual could be rationalized as merely the site of personal investments, then so too was it possible to rationalize success or failure as a matter of personal responsibility rather than of external factors. If one fails or succeeds, it is only due to the investments that have (or have not) been made to succeed in a market environment. Third, if individuals are nothing more than sites of investments or enterprises, it becomes possible to conceive of the appropriate political, economic, technological, and most importantly, ideological organizing actions that would lead individuals to engage more thoroughly with the market. This leads to Foucault's remark that "to the same extent that governmental intervention must be light at the level of economic processes themselves, so must it be heavy when it is a matter of...technical, scientific, legal, geographic, let's say, broadly, social factors which now increasingly become the object of government intervention" (226).

Foucault's observations on the development of neoliberal policy construction have a remarkable level of explanatory power when placed in conversation with recent Irish arts policy reforms. This is the case in that governmental strategies for supporting artists throughout the recession focused largely organizing actions rather than direct market interventions. The

Philanthropy Leverage Initiative, the RAISE program, and other state reforms relevant to the arts all approach artist support from the standpoint of altering the “general conditions of the market.” This involved attempts to increase the number of Irish philanthropic organizations, change the legal frameworks around charitable giving, and establish public funding structures that deepen market relations. These have in common the avoidance of Keynesian approaches to regulation.

Recessionary arts reforms additionally tended to interpret the challenges artists were facing as ones relating to a lack of appropriate human capital investments. For instance, the focal points of RAISE, New Stream, and other programs disproportionately sought to educate artists about the merits of diversification, risk-taking, and entrepreneurship. This was to also to educate artists in the art of personal responsibility. The issue with this type of thinking was not the mere suggestion that artists should be proactive in seeking funds and building skills, but rather the false assumptions that (a) artists had failed to act entrepreneurially in the past, and (b) that training was the principal barrier against greater funding diversification. As Gay noted, the concept of seeking philanthropic funding was in no way foreign to him (Personal Interview with Gay McKeon 2015). The barriers that he identified as preventing more thorough engagement with philanthropic funding sources were pervasive despite the fact that he had been developing fundraising skills within NPU for over two decades. The broader point is that traditional musicians cannot through human-capital investments alone “diversify” or “entrepreneur” their way out of systemic institutional, financial, and cultural constraints.

The shift from a publicly funded arts arena to a mixed model is further indicative of neoliberalism in that this transition originally developed out of an attempt to capitalize upon wealth rather than scarcity. The drive to encourage greater reliance upon philanthropy began in 2006 at the height of the Celtic Tiger. It was in this year that the Irish government established the

Forum on Philanthropy. The onset of the financial crisis two years later disrupted the Forum's progress; however, in 2011, the government had renewed its focus on philanthropic development. By this time, the financial crisis had been fully incorporated into the overall plans for philanthropic development, with the crisis increasingly being viewed as proof for the need for philanthropy rather than as a deterrent.

The growth of interest in private funding during the mid-2000s was informed by the tremendous rise of the economy during the Celtic Tiger years. Economic growth helped to create the type of socioeconomic environment in which philanthropy presented the greatest potential. Figures from the Bank of Ireland, which have been used as a basis for government-commissioned reports on Irish wealth, reported that overall wealth creation in Ireland had increased by 19% between 2005 and the end of 2006 (O'Sullivan 2007, 1). A significant percentage of this growth was represented by gains among the 1%, which saw their assets rise by €86 billion, or an increase of 16% (1). The most-widely discussed takeaway from the report was the fact that the number of millionaires in the country had increased to 33,000 individuals. This included a 10% growth in the number of Irish millionaires in 2006 alone (1). The number of millionaires also continued to grow throughout the recession. For instance, it was reported in 2016 that the number of Irish millionaires stood at around 110,000 individuals (TheJournal.ie 2016). This represents a staggering 330% growth since 2008.

The relevance of wealth increases among top-earners to philanthropy was indicated in governmental and nonprofit reports from this period, which largely treated private wealth-creation as an opportunity to solve pressing social issues through private means. Discussion around this idea has been organized and disseminated by Philanthropy Ireland, a nonprofit that worked closely with the government in building a research base for increasing Irish philanthropy.

For instance, economic growth was cited as a foundation for the transfer of private wealth to charitable organizations in a 2009 report commissioned by Philanthropy Ireland (FGS Consulting 2009). Likewise, the government's 2012 report on philanthropy made several recommendations for leveraging the private market towards economic recovery and public cost reductions. For instance, a recommendation was made to create a National Giving Campaign to encourage corporate entities and high net-worth individuals to contribute to social needs (Philanthropy Ireland 2012, 12). It was mentioned previously that the government also developed a Social Innovation Fund to alleviate socioeconomic issues through private enterprise and "social entrepreneurs." According to the report, this could also help "reduce government expenditure on social service solutions in the future" (Philanthropy Ireland 2012, 20).

Given both the government's overall timeline for encouraging philanthropy and direct commentary in national reports, it is clear that Irish wealth creation between 2006 and 2016 has helped to inform the notion that philanthropic growth can fill voids in public subsidy. The irony with such thinking was that the socioeconomic issues officials sought to address through private means were themselves a consequence of private market tendencies. Ireland's part in the economic collapse was driven by an inflated property market and poor credit behaviors on part of private banks. While this created a wealth of millionaires in the country, it also set in motion the dynamics that engendered societal debt, severe inequality, and economic crisis. The fact that the government should place faith in private philanthropy to solve social and communal problems glossed over the private sector's role in fomenting many of the same issues.

The state's consistent interest in a privately funding arts institutions suggests that it was in the government's purview to enhance the market under any conditions. The collapse that followed in 2008 simply required a different narrative for framing the need to shift to a private

funding environment; whereas philanthropic giving was championed as a basis for diminishing pressures on state social services during a period of abundance, it was supported on the basis of a scarcity of economic resources during the recession. This affected the arts by pushing many arts activities out of a publicly subsidized environment and into the private sphere. This served to maximize the terrain of market competition in the manner described by Foucault. This becomes even further apparent when considering how the drive towards philanthropy placed traditional musicians in the position of relying more heavily on corporate sponsorships rather than charity.

Commercial Sponsorship and Traditional Music

Musicians' concerns over funding reforms were not limited to fears that philanthropic funding would fail to fill the vacuum left by the withdrawal of the state. There were also numerous suggestions that a shift to an American arts funding model would fundamentally skew the types of musical activities and institutions that receive support. This issue was the featured subject of an *Irish Times* article published in the aptly-titled "Culture Shock" column. In the article, Fintan O'Toole (2012) draws attention to the fact that fundraising support from Irish trusts, foundations, endowments and other noncommercial entities would have to increase by a sevenfold factor to make up for recent losses in public subsidy. The unlikelihood of this happening expediently would inevitably push artists to seek out sponsorships from multinational corporations and other commercial entities. According to O'Toole, the problem posed by this scenario was that commercial funding would be distributed to a much more limited set of entities than those supported by public or philanthropic institutions. He concluded that even if it were the case that private funding could adequately make up for public voids, it could also "skew the nature of how arts organizations work and what they do" (O'Toole 2012).

Discussions with traditional musicians suggest that there are two areas where artist's work is especially vulnerable to a reliance upon commercial sponsorship. First, funding statistics and musicians' experiences with commercial sponsors simultaneously indicate that there are strong preferences for private businesses to sponsor high-profile events with significant publicity. Conversely, private businesses do not as readily sponsor activities with limited remit. Second, commercial businesses have a tendency of being more risk-averse than public institutions in that they less often support art appreciated by niche audiences. There is no mandate for commercial entities to ensure aesthetic diversity as there is for public funding bodies. This is why several European scholars have suggested that austerity is likely to skew arts production towards popular programming (e.g. Fabiani 2014, 219; Bonet and Donato 2011, 7).

The first consideration noted above is made clearer when looking at the demographics of private funding recipients in Ireland. For instance, research commissioned by The Arts Council suggest that funding from commercial entities is overwhelmingly granted to festivals, film, and other types of projects with wide public reach. The findings of the *Irish Arts Sector Private Investment Report* (2015) revealed that around 40% (€2,800,000 of €6,315,000) of the total private investment in the Irish arts went to categories for "festivals" and "film" (13). These two areas reflected higher funding than the combined categories for "artists support," "arts participation," "venues," and "YPCE" (13).⁵ Research by Business to Arts and Deloitte (2008) similarly suggested that 55% of private funding in the arts went to festivals/events (36%) and arts venues (19%) (6).

The tendency for business sponsorship to be restrictive is also reflected in traditional music funding. For instance, a quick look through the "sponsorship" section of any major

⁵ "YPCE" represents arts funding for Young People, Children, and Education

traditional music festival (e.g., *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann*, Dublin Tradfest, etc.) will show funding from large commercial entities, such as Guinness, Shell Oil, and Liberty Insurance. Funding for less commercially oriented projects, events outside urban hubs, or permanent programs infrequently draw interest from such commercial sponsors. Public funding institutions far more readily furnish support to projects that might not create a big media buzz but that significantly assist traditional musicians. This includes public subsidization of the Music Capital Scheme (Music Network), which places instruments in the hands of both amateur and professional artists, and of the Deis program (Arts Council), which provides targeted recording funds to traditional musicians.

The dominance of state funding in select areas was noted by Gay McKeon, who was engaged in a project to develop an Uilleann Piping Centre during my fieldwork. His long-term goal was to establish a facility that would serve jointly as an uilleann pipe museum, a theatre uniquely adapted for uilleann pipe acoustics, a pipe-making training center, and a visitor area. The possibility for creating such a facility was related to NPU's receipt of what is known as "capital" funding from various governmental bodies. This included the Arts Council, Dublin City Council, and the Heritage Council, and the Department of Arts. Capital funding indicates support that is earmarked for infrastructural development, including building, restoration, and equipment purchase. It is also one of the funding categories that is far more commonly sourced from public or philanthropic organizations than it is from commercial businesses. Gay indicated how fortunate NPU was to receive this type of funding, noting "you [couldn't] name many organizations in the traditional world that have had capital funding." The three largest traditional music organizations in the country, CCÉ, NPU, and the Irish Traditional Music Archive, have all received their primary capital funding from the government.

The second differentiation that has been suggested between private and public arts support is that corporate funding is far less likely to ensure current levels of aesthetic diversity in traditional music. This consideration arose from discussion about the types of musical aesthetics that most readily compete for audiences and sponsorship. My attention to this area was initially piqued during a conversation with two Meath-based traditional musicians Ciara O’Grady (flute) and Joe Carroll (accordion). Ciara, in particular, noted extent to which contemporary traditional music performance is characterized by older musical aesthetics as well as a more contemporary subgenres, fusions, and innovations. She explained:

We have a very young scene and a very developing scene, and it’s constantly moving and changing, moving with the times... Y’know, becoming something more modern and contemporary. That’s only one strand of it, but there are also subgenres in Irish traditional music today. There are young people carrying on something that’s very old... And, there are obviously people who are fusing these with other genres, like jazz, and hip-hop, and all this stuff that’s going on but still based in traditional music. And, then there are the older musicians who are still playing and are still respected. (Personal Interview with Ciara O’Grady 2015)

Ciara added to her commentary the important caveat that the only way such diversity could be sustained “[was] by actually pumping money into it, so that people can do it full-time.” In short, her suggestion was that traditional music could only continue to develop in a variety of iterations if artists themselves were provided with the financial means to devote themselves to the music.

Importantly, neither of the two musicians felt that the market provided the requisite support for artists to develop their music on a full-time basis without making significant artistic compromises or having to spend a tremendous amount of time performing music outside the country.¹⁵ Both musicians suggested that this was partly due to traditional music’s strong ties with the domestic tourist industry. These links had cultivated an environment in which it has become extremely difficult for musicians to find receptive performance outlets for music that is

¹⁵ Both musicians maintained careers outside traditional music performance.

not cliché, gimmicky, or that does not fit readily into commercial molds. These observations were highlighted by both Ciara and Joe:

Ciara: I mean, when people think of coming here unfortunately, it's not always the Irish music we like. Sometimes, it's a more commercialized form of it, but there's music in certain areas of every city that attract the tourists, and they love it, and they leave talking about the great music and the sessions and everything in Ireland.

Joe: Unfortunately, I suppose listening to classical, maybe jazz forms, are more high-brow, it's well dressed, and people come and it's well-dressed, whereas the selling point for Irish music is a bit of craic in the pubs I think, where maybe we should start wearing tuxes playing (laughs)... If I did the cliché end of it, it would probably shoot us in the foot, but that's what sells it.

Ciara: No, but the irony of it all is, that cliché seems only to exist in Ireland, because for years now, musicians like the Chieftains, and Altan, and Dervish have been playing in places like Carnegie Hall, know what I mean? They've been performing in amazing, the biggest concert halls all over the world, like Shepherd's Bush in London, or all these amazing theaters all over the world; Sydney Opera House, the Gloaming were just there. Do you know what I mean? There seems to be a place for Irish traditional music in other countries on their big stage, you know? But unfortunately, those very same musicians are not treated enough when they come back to Ireland. It's very ironic. (Personal Interviews with Ciara O'Grady and Joe Carroll 2015)

The suggestion that traditional music needed to emulate commercial staging and aesthetics to be domestically viable arose with astonishing frequency among my collaborators. Commentaries along these lines suggested a vulnerability of older musical aesthetics in the commercial marketplace. This includes solo performance, (Fairbairn 1994), conservative dynamics (Breathnach 1971), moderate tune tempi (Keegan 2010), and other aesthetic features linked to the music's roots in 18th to 19th century rural pastimes. Conversely, forms of traditional music that were heavily staged, produced, accompanied, hybridized, or otherwise oriented for popular consumption were cited as being particularly desirable in the market:

People just want duets, ensembles with lots of accompaniment, and you know, high-octane kind of stuff rather than solo singers or musicians, you know?...It's just a pity. It's dying out, you know? I mean, when I was growing up, people

loved to hear, you know, solo players and singers. Even if you look back at the radio programs and watch TV programs in traditional music back in the 80s, that was the norm. Now it's the exception. (Personal Interview with Gay McKeon 2015)

There are definitely not as many agents happy to push pure traditional music. They want the Riverdance package. They want the band package. The brand, they're looking for a brand to push, and that brand doesn't necessarily need to have a good solid rooted Irish music in it. It needs to have the bells and whistles. It needs to have the singer, the bodhrán, the banjo, the stereo tech. Yes, it's exciting. But as a musical or as an artistic thing, it's done. I don't think it's exploring new ground. (Personal Interview with Ciarán Ó Maonaigh 2016)

I think the programming and the presentation of Irish traditional music have really deteriorated badly. It's not that the musicians aren't there, but they're being pressured into, you know, like for want of a better word, window dressings instead of substance, the substance of you know, as an art form. (Personal Interview with Gay McKeon 2015)

A lot of the festivals that make big money tend to get the same acts is my point. Because, they're charging big money, they pull the big touristy crowds and every kind of thing...but the arty type bands and smaller type bands...they couldn't be bothered, and they won't pull enough crowd. You know? (Personal Interview with Joe Carroll 2015)

Further commentary suggested that part of the reason why it was difficult for non-commercial traditional music to compete in the market was the genre's links to "free" traditional music played almost everywhere in Irish pubs. Many of my collaborators suggested, in particular, that the public might not adequately appreciate the differences between the quality of music played in Irish pubs with the nuance that traditional musicians invest when performing professionally. This challenge was explained by the accordionist, Luke Deaton, who provided a visual metaphor of subtlety in traditional music:

A good portion of the people that appreciate traditional music are people that play it...I won't try to insult any of our audiences that don't play, but on the surface of it...the tunes are a number of 8 bar parts that have almost just one note value and the odd long note as well. So that's as opposed to being a swimming pool; it's a well on the surface. There's only so much water in a well [gestures a horizontal plane]...but I think there are infinite ways to do it within this really narrow thing, or this narrow structure...I wouldn't have even picked up on it until I played it a

lot. My ear developed more, and I knew where it was coming from, where it was going, and I could hear more subtlety, and I could appreciate why people were doing things. You know, so I just think that really builds appreciation. (Personal Interview with Luke Deaton 2016)

Luke's characterization of traditional music as a "well" is indicative of the subtle techniques (e.g. ornamentation, phrasing, melodic variation, etc.) that traditional musicians acknowledge when listening to a tune. These techniques take a markedly attuned ear to identify or direct training in traditional music to appreciate. This contrasts with the types of features that are foregrounded in the commercially oriented traditional music styles described earlier. For instance, it takes exponentially less experience for general audiences to note sudden time signature changes, dramatic dynamics, frenetic accompaniment, or any other high-energy musical features common in commercially oriented music.

These observations suggest that not all forms of traditional music will compete for the same for corporate sponsorship. This is less a premonitory statement and more so a commentary on what is already observable within the traditional music scene. For instance, Ciara and Joe's remarks on the link between funding and aesthetic diversity followed on the tail end of a discussion concerning the compromises the musicians had to make to secure funding for a festival in Co. Meath. For instance, both musicians noted a need for including more popular traditional music programming in the festival to draw adequate support from sponsoring organizations (Personal Interviews with Joe and Ciara 2015). A festival comprising performances appealing only to "purist" aesthetics would not draw the same level of attention nor financial interest. Similarly, the *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann* would not have pulled Liberty Insurance, Guinness, and other corporate sponsors if the event were oriented exclusively to practitioners of traditional music. This is not to say whether the *Fleadh* is better or worse given corporate sponsorship, but rather, to indicate that sponsorship is not as broadly inclusive of

musical variety as public subsidy.

Another unexpected consequence of structural adjustment is that it has frequently intensified competition for public arts grants rather than leading musicians universally towards the private market. The use of increasingly aggressive grant strategies by traditional musicians has shifted the types of music and projects that appear in Ireland much in the same way as private funding recourse. For instance, I was informed by several musicians involved in this research that they had attempted to be more competitive for public grants by striving for novelty in the types of proposals they submitted to grant competitions. This included proposal submissions for albums featuring “never before” seen pairings of traditional instruments, “hidden gems” from unexplored repertoires, or other musical innovations that might help a musician’s chance in securing increasingly limited grant funding. I was also informed by several musicians that they had purposefully aligned themselves with individuals who were previously successful in attaining national grants. This occurred under the assumption that the Arts Council would be more likely to provide funding to a duet or band featuring an artist whose work was already deemed to be desirable.

The most commonly utilized strategy for acquiring grants was the intentional alignment of one’s music with certain themes important to the government at particular moments. Irish scholar Martin Dowling (2007) has gone as far as to suggest that Ulster-Scots music and identity might have been “invented” partially to aid Protestant communities in gaining access to culture grants offered by entities in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and the broader EU (Dowling 2007:53). I cannot support this suggestion based upon the personal conversations that I have had with individuals identifying as Ulster-Scots during my early fieldwork; however, it is apparent that musicians occasionally skew the nature of their projects if it will aid their ability to

fund what truly interests them in the future. I witnessed this during my 2012 fieldwork, where musicians drew up projects that fit within the scope of EU grants oriented towards peacemaking despite expressing uncertainty regarding music's ability to develop peace between Catholics and Protestants. The fact that music is often considered to be an aid to urban crime reduction, communal cohesiveness, youth education, and a number of other areas means that there are ample opportunities for musicians to tap into funding from diverse public funding bodies.

The dynamics presented above are for me strongly, if not oddly, resonant with a 1940s essay on the mass culture market and aesthetic mediation that has become canonical in ethnomusicological literature. This is, of course, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's famous critique of the "culture industry" in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. The thrust of this work is the assertion that the capitalist mass-market (i.e., the culture industry) has caused the gradual homogenization of cultural production in addition to the loss of art as a form of social critique. For Horkheimer and Adorno, this process has occurred against the growing popularization of "light" (i.e., popular) music, which is seen to have regressed the social capacity to identify refined music. The writers cite the frequency of what they present as gimmicky technique in mass-produced music in supporting their arguments. They note, for instance, how "the development of the culture industry has led to the predominance of the effect, the obvious touch, and the technical detail over the work itself" (125). They describe, moreover, how the commonality of such devices has led to the "negation of style," or the inability for consumers to see past the uniformity of what the culture industry offers (129-30).

Horkheimer and Adorno's essay is now one of the older works on the art-commerce relationship and has been subject to a significant amount of critique for the generalizations it makes. The work, however, does an excellent job of establishing a general point about the

market that is reflective of the commentary I received on traditional music. This is the suggestion that the culture industry, cultural industries (pl.), or “creative industries” tend to develop the arts along skewed trajectories. There are “monopolies” or strong preferences for the development of cultural products with certain features or aesthetics as there are for other types of commodities. I am thinking especially how musicians’ experiences suggest that a world of opportunity is open to artists who produce music that fits into commercial molds. In short, the diversity or quality seen in traditional music is vulnerable to market dynamics without some form of external protection in the form of subsidy.

The above considerations draw attention back to one of the foundational pillars of governmental arts subsidy throughout the world, which is the concept of market failure. A significant reason why European countries created arts funding institutions was to account for the market’s “failure” to adequately ensure the quality and diversity of historically, culturally, or socially valuable cultural products. Growing exhortations for artists to engage more deeply with commercial funding sources suggest either that government officials no longer cling as strongly to market failure, that they do not understand what might be lost in a transition to a more mixed funding model, or that aesthetic diversity is not a current priority. This leads full-circle to Fintan O’Toole’s suggestion that recent funding shifts pose the potential to skew what artists and arts organizations “do.” There is also the possibility that traditional musicians will continue to do exactly what they have always done but simply find it more challenging.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have suggested that recent Irish cultural policy reforms are founded in a characteristically neoliberal mold and tend to perpetuate the same faith in market forces that

initially led to the recession. Attention to traditional musician's experiences in the fundraising environment suggests that the state's new support model falls short of being a one-size-fits-all solution for the arts sector given associated costs, market tendencies, and skill capacities. The sophistication of state programs is likely to improve in the coming years as artists provide their feedback; however, there is a clear call among traditional musicians for the government to maintain or improve longstanding welfare programs that have directly aided Irish artists for the greater part of six decades. The following chapter builds upon these observations through analysis of how arts funding has become overwhelmingly economically rationalized.

CHAPTER THREE

ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

The first half of this dissertation explained how the economic crisis led to deepening economic austerity, involving significant cuts to Ireland's national infrastructure. With this knowledge alone, one might draw the conclusion that the arts had fallen from the list of governmental priorities or that it had become relegated to the status of "luxury." This is often the position to which the arts are relegated periods of economic uncertainty. Deeper investigation reveals that the recession had, in fact, convinced Irish government officials of the importance of the arts as driving factor of national economic growth. This was indicated across several strategy documents the government produced in an effort to place Ireland on a stable economic trajectory. For instance, the *Smart Economy* (2008) recovery strategy singled out the arts and cultural industries as "key and primary economic contributors...[and] differentiators of [Ireland] as a cultural and tourist destination" (Department of the Taoiseach 80). Three Global Irish Economic Fora held between 2009 and 2013 similarly concluded that "the arts [were] no longer a luxury or a charity, but a hugely important part of the Irish economy" (2009, 21).

Government testimony to the importance of arts and culture was not offered as a mere platitude but had important consequences for the shape of arts policy. First, growing state interest in the importance of arts to the recovery process led the government to develop three of the largest and most expensive Irish cultural programs ever produced. The three events, entitled *Imagine Ireland* (2011), *The Gathering* (2013), and *Ireland 2016*, cost the nation €65 million. These events represented a major component of state strategies utilized to make up losses in foreign investment. Second, government interest in the economic "spillover" of artistic activity led state departments to place greater pressure on national cultural institutions to orient their

work towards economic recovery. This involved growing encouragement for arts institutions to commodify artistic activities as part of “value-for-money” considerations.

The fact that government recovery plans involved heightened efforts to commodify arts and culture was a consequence of several factors, including Ireland’s historic reliance upon foreign investment. Since the 1950s, Ireland has developed a pattern of responding to economic crises by creating incentives for foreign entities (e.g. businesses, governments, etc.) to invest in Irish industry and employment. Successive Irish governments have found that this strategy was strongly aided by arts and culture, which served to attract investment from the Irish global diaspora. Recent incorporations of culture into national recovery efforts are also informed by the circulation of new ideas about economic competition. European policymakers have become especially interested in the growing belief that human creativity serves as a type of human-capital investment into innovative economic processes. This discovery has encouraged policymakers to make investments in arts and cultural practice under the assumption that doing so will result in a more innovative and marketable workforce.

The remainder of this chapter is broken into three parts. The first section explains how the Irish economy has become reliant upon foreign direct investment. This discussion focuses principally on the ways culture has been treated as a “selling point” for Ireland in the international marketplace. The second part of this chapter provides an explanation of how early 21st century ideas about creativity and economic competition have played a role in the increasing commodification of arts and culture. The final section weaves these discussions into an outline of Ireland’s comprehensive recovery strategy, which involved the rollout of several cultural programs intended to further economize Irish arts. This will provide as a necessary preface for Chapter Four, which presents artists’ criticisms of economic recovery strategies.

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT AND CULTURAL POLICY

Irish governmental plans for pulling Ireland out of the Great Recession consisted of two strands. The first strand focused on building a domestic financial infrastructure oriented towards savings and economic growth. Many of the strategies through which the government has attempted to build such an infrastructure have relied upon public subsidy cuts and financial sector recapitalization. These components of the recovery process were discussed across previous chapters. The second part of Ireland's recovery plan and the focus of the present chapter involves the ways Ireland has attempted to improve the amount of foreign money entering the country. This has included strategies designed to attract tourism and what is known as foreign direct investment (FDI). This refers to any instance in which a company, individual, or government invests in the business interests of another nation. For instance, FDI can involve the purchase of foreign stock shares or entire companies.

The fact that the Irish recovery strategy should include plans for improving foreign direct investment is not surprising when one considers the extent to which FDI factors into Irish gross domestic product (GDP). Since the turn of the 21st century, foreign direct investment has regularly accounted for 20% of Ireland's gross domestic product per annum, with the country becoming the most FDI-intensive country in Europe by the mid-2000s (Barry 2007, 263). The injection of foreign capital has been important not only to GDP but also domestic employment. For instance, foreign-owned firms accounted for 49% of all manufacturing jobs in Ireland by 2004 and continue to represent a major proportion of employment in other industries (263). This is especially true regarding the technology sector; Google, Microsoft, Dell, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Dropbox, Yelp, Uber, Yahoo, and other corporations have all established European headquarters in Ireland over the last few decades.

Ireland's success at attaining high levels of foreign direct investment has depended upon a range of factors, including Ireland's young, educated workforce, highly "open" economy, and low corporate tax rate. Ireland has additionally developed sophisticated strategies for attracting FDI that ultimately rely upon the dissemination of compelling narratives about Irish culture. These include suggestions that Irish culture (a) adds monetary value to export products, (b) serves as a proxy for a uniquely innovative "Irish mind," and (c) creates natural affinities for partnerships within the Irish global diaspora. In short, Ireland leverages culture toward the suggestion that foreign entities will reap higher returns from their investments in Ireland than from placing equivalent investments elsewhere. This is what economists and policymakers generally refer to as a "comparative economic advantage" in policy planning.

Foreign Direct Investment and Cultural Policy (1922-1980s)

The development of an explicit strategy for utilizing Irish culture in economic growth strategy has a long history and can be dated to the 1950s. Leading up to this period, the Irish government had become embroiled in attempts to deliver solutions to several pressing economic challenges the nation inherited as part of the transition to independence (1922). Chief among the government's concerns was the fact that Ireland had emerged as an independent nation with a disproportionate dependence upon agriculture. In fact, over half of Ireland's workforce was employed in the agricultural industry when Ireland achieved independence. Much of this figure was represented by subsistence farms outside the productive economy (Breathnach 1998, 306). The Fianna Fáil government that came into power in the early 1930s directed its primary efforts to the expansion of Irish industry beyond agriculture, which the party pursued through a comprehensive policy of economic isolationism and industrial protectionism (Girvin 1997, 59).

By the early 1950s, the Irish government became increasingly aware that protectionist policies had not adequately served to expand Irish industry nor to depress unemployment rates. This led government officials to seek an alternative approach to industry expansion, which resulted in a complete reversal of Ireland's economic trajectory. From the 1950s onward, the government stripped away many of the barriers that had been erected against foreign trade and implemented policies designed to facilitate foreign investment. Irish efforts to attract FDI included the passage of the Export Profits Tax Relief Scheme (1956), which waived taxes for exporting manufacturing firms based in Ireland, and the Industrial Grants Act (1963), which extended governmental subsidies to industrial undertakings. The Irish government paired such initiatives with several waves of educational reforms (1960s-1980s) intended to improve the attractiveness of the Irish workforce to potential foreign investors. Ireland has focused especially on educational development in high-growth industries, such as engineering, pharmaceuticals, and computing, representing an astonishing percentage of the world's exports in these areas.

State efforts to expand the manufacturing industries affected not only trade and education policy but also the state's orientation towards national artistic development. For instance, it was during Ireland's turn to an open, investment-intensive economy that the government began to consider how arts could help to attract foreign investment in the context of domestic manufacturing. This prospect was so compelling, in fact, that it emerged as one of the predominant factors that mobilized political support for the development of a national arts infrastructure. The potential of linking "art to industry" was mentioned no less than ten times during the second Dáil Éireann debate leading to the establishment of The Arts Council. This included commentary from the then Prime Minister of Ireland, who spoke in support of the Fine Arts Bill on the Dáil floor in 1951. Minister Costello noted that unless Ireland found a "ways and

means of encouraging people themselves to acquire a knowledge and appreciation of art...we [Ireland] will never achieve anything either in the way of our spiritual betterment or the development of craftsmanship or design in industry which will bring material benefit to our industrial activity in this country” (Houses of the Oireachtas 2017 [1951]).

Support for the development of a national arts infrastructure was offered not only on the basis that it could improve industrial production but also tourism. This possibility was suggested by Patrick Little, the former Minister of Posts and Telegraphs, who remarked on the failure of the government to appropriately capitalize on Irish culture in an international context:

Then there is the important question of tourism.... There are immense possibilities there. The American experts who have come to this country take the point of view that Ireland has scenery but so have other countries, that Ireland also has some things common to other countries, but that what we have in particular are our traditions and our cultural assets, which are not exploited enough. (Houses of the Oireachtas 2017 [1951])

Little left with the conclusion that state officials could “easily regard the development of [Ireland’s] cultural activities as possibly ultimately the biggest dollar earning asset that we have” (House of the Oireachtas 2017 [1951]). Irish Teachta Dála (Parliamentary) member, Seán Collins, and Minister of Lands, Thomas Derrig, lent additional support to Little’s commentary elsewhere in the debate.

The suggestion that a national arts infrastructure could ultimately serve to improve manufacturing design and tourism did not serve a mere rhetorical purpose but had a direct influence on governmental dealings with the Arts Council. The government asserted its ambitions for culture upon the Council largely through control over the Council’s budget. Arts Council leadership learned that the best potential for gaining political and economic support from the government was to assist in the development of manufacturing and tourism. This led the Arts Council to host three “Art in Industry” exhibitions during the institution’s first five years

since being established (Kennedy 1998 [1990], n.p.). The Arts Council also sought to fulfill the government's desire to enhance tourism, which had by the early 1950s emerged as the second most important industry behind agriculture (Zuelow 2009, 58). This led the Arts Council to collaborate with the Ministry for Industry and Commerce in the hosting of an international cultural festival known as An Tóstal (The Pageant, 1953). The initiative was intended to generate tourist revenue and to further expose Ireland to the global market.

One hope for An Tóstal was the possibility that the festival could serve as a platform for strengthening bonds between Ireland and the Irish-American diaspora. Underlying this consideration was the fact that the U.S. had become home to an especially large contingency of the Irish diaspora since the time of the Great Famine. The government saw An Tóstal principally as a means to exploit the “sentimental attachment of Irish Americans” to Irish culture in ways that would encourage multinational partnerships (Kennedy 1998 [1990], n.p.). This led much of the festival funding to be used to attract Irish-American audiences. Ironically, more money was spent on marketing than was generated in revenues. While this pattern eventually led to the discontinuation of An Tóstal, the Irish government would continue to develop the strategy of tapping into the Irish global diaspora through shared cultural sentiment.

Notwithstanding An Tóstal's discontinuation, Irish efforts to boost tourism began to pay off in significant fashion by the early 1960s to mid-1970s when the number of international tourists to Ireland from America tripled (Kaul 2009, 48). The tourism boom was partially aided by Ireland's participation in the mid-century folk revival, which helped to popularize Irish cultural “exports” internationally. This was especially true for Irish music. For instance, the 1960s to 1970s period saw the rise of dozens of Irish folk and traditional bands to international acclaim, including The Chieftains, The Clancy Brothers, Clannad, The Dubliners, The Wolfe

Tones, The Fureys, and The Bothy Band. These groups conducted extensive tours not only in Ireland but also in Europe and North America. In doing so, they helped to build a positive reputation for Irish musical output as W.B. Yeats, Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, Seán Keating, and others had previously done for Irish literature and the visual arts.

Not coincidentally, the growing popularization of Irish music and other cultural exports internationally reinforced state aims to capitalize on culture throughout the 1990s-2000s. For instance, it was during this period that the government began to throw enhanced support behind the nation's tourism development agency, Bord Fáilte, which was heavily involved in cultural outreach. Fáilte Ireland would thereafter become a primary sponsor of Irish festivals as part of the institution's overall tourism strategy. The same could be said for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), which frequently collaborated with foreign Irish Embassies around the planning of Irish festivities. This has included efforts to fund and organize St. Patrick's Day festivals in American cities where there is a strong diasporic presence (DFAT 2017).

Government entities had observed how such events made noticeable contributions to the economy in terms of both tourism and exports. This mirrored strategies already being utilized by the private drinks and hospitality industries, which increasingly utilized Irish cultural symbols as marketing material from the 1980s onwards (Motherway 2013, 9).

Cultural Policy and Creative Industries Convergence, 1990-2008

Government efforts to incorporate culture in national economic growth policy had largely targeted the Irish manufacturing and tourism industries up to the 1980s. By the 1990s, however, Irish state officials increasingly began to integrate cultural policy into a more generalized foreign direct investment strategy. This convergence was driven largely by the dissemination of new

ideas about international competitiveness. For much of the 20th century, European nations had approached international economic competition in a way that emphasized incremental improvements to industrial manufacturing goods. This began to change by the turn of the 21st century, as policymakers throughout the West increasingly began to see competitive advantage as a factor of innovation and “immaterial” production (Howkins 2001, 117; Finlayson 2000, 191). This shift in thinking was informed by the rise of the service and finance industries in addition to the observation that greater economic benefits could be reaped by monopolizing markets on newly innovated products or services than through manufacturing. These ideas had predecessors in Joseph Schumpeter’s (1939) “long wave theory” in addition to Daniel Bell’s (1973) writings on post-industrialist capitalism. It was not until the last decade of the twentieth century, however, that such concepts began to have broad effects on national growth strategies.

One consequence of the growing belief that ideas and innovation had become the linchpin of economic development was the placement of a new premium on the concept of “creativity.” The ideological link between innovation and creativity is associated especially with Richard Florida (2002), an American urban studies theorist whose work became foundational for cultural policy reform throughout Europe in the 2000s. Florida’s principal contribution to discussions about innovation stemmed largely from his reframing of scholarship pertaining to the “information age” or “knowledge age.” The thrust of these concepts was the notion that economic competition depended upon the national capacity to access, collect, and control information. Florida reframed these discussions based upon his observation that raw data was only useful insofar as it could be brought into innovative combinations, a feat he argued could ultimately be reduced to individual creativity (31). In other words, what was important in international competition was neither knowledge or innovation per se, but rather, the deeper

creative processes that translated knowledge into useful forms of innovation.

By no coincidence, Richard Florida's theory on creativity as a factor of national growth was published around the same time as scholars in the fields of economics and cultural studies were becoming increasingly interested in what has become known as the "creative industries." Use of the term was first popularized in the early 2000s following its use in cultural policy documents circulated by the U.K. New Labour Party. At the time, it was common practice for policymakers to refer to the commercial sectors comprising film, music, entertainment, television, and radio as the "cultural industries" rather than the creative industries. New Labour, however, sought to recontextualize the cultural industries in a more expansive sector that could be defined according to mutual creative processes and intellectual property rights (Garnham 2005). This informed the joining of the traditionally defined cultural industries with software, marketing, and other fields to what is now called the "creative industries."

Underlying both Florida's theory of creativity and policymakers' use of "creative industries" was the mutual realization that a small number of industries were driving economic growth and employment. Florida estimated in the early 2000s that the creative class came to represent about a third of the US workforce. The European Union similarly began to recognize the importance of the creative industries by the late 2000s, with EU research suggesting that the creative sector accounted for a higher percentage of European GDP in 2012 (2.6%) than real estate (2.1%), food, beverage, and tobacco manufacturing (1.9%), textiles (0.5%), and chemical, rubber, and plastic industries (2.3%) (European Union 2012, 6). It was also estimated that the nominal rate of economic growth in the European Union (1999 to 2003) was outpaced by growth in the cultural and creative sector by 12.3%, suggesting that the creative industries represented a "vital driver for development in Europe" (6).

Growing recognition of the cultural and creative industries led many economists to model creative sector's role in national economies during the early 2000s. One of the more influential models to emerge during this period was the so-called "concentric rings" paradigm, developed by British economist David Throsby. Throsby's model unfolds as a series of four concentric circles defining the cultural industries, including (a) an innermost ring, representing the "core creative arts" (e.g. music, literature, performing arts, and visual arts), (b) a second ring comprising secondary cultural industries (e.g. film, photography, etc.), (c) a third ring consisting of television, radio, computer software, heritage services, etc., and (d) an outermost ring, which represents broader commercial sectors (e.g. advertising, architecture, design, etc.). The broad implication of this model is that the economic output of the creative industries derives from the diffusion of ideas and influences ultimately stemming from artistic (as distinct from scientific) creativity (Throsby 2008, 149).

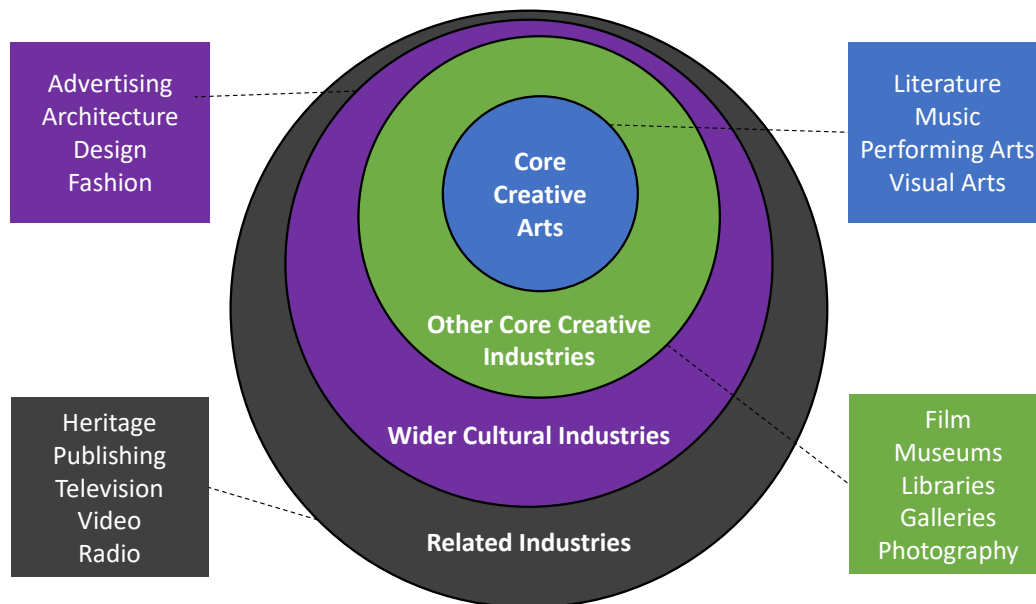


Figure 3.1: Throsby's Concentric Rings Model of the Creative and Cultural Industries (Illustrated by Kevin Levine).

Models similar to Throsby's have appeared in several places during my fieldwork. This

includes a model presented by The Arts Council during a cultural policy meeting I attended in late 2015. In this iteration of the concentric rings model, the Council was placed as the centermost ring, with the core creative arts appearing in the second ring. Cavan County Council (2018) also utilized the Arts Council's model three years later as part of its regional arts strategy. Despite clear differences from Throsby's paradigm, the Council's model demonstrated the same "spillover" between arts and the "economic environment" as Throsby's. This hints to the influence of Throsby's work within a European context.

Expanded Role of Culture in Irish FDI Strategies, 1990s-2000s

The ideas about international competitiveness and creativity espoused by Richard Florida and David Throsby began to have several noticeable influences on cultural funding and policy throughout Europe during the 21st century. First, growing attention to the creative industries had the effect of heightening funding for cultural activities. Funding increases were indicative of the growing belief that arts and culture served as inputs into broader economic processes than previously realized. Second, growing consensus on the economic contribution of the arts and culture to society have made it increasingly possible for policymakers to invite the language of business managerialism into the dialogue about art. For instance, it has become common for publications to refer to culture in terms of "value added," "spillover effects," and other concepts widely used in business practice. Lastly, the placement of a premium upon "creativity" has led European nations to have a vested interest in marketing the creativity of their people. Countries that successfully promote their creativity tend to earn greater foreign direct investment.

The above processes were especially evident in Ireland following the onset of the Celtic Tiger. Ireland had by this time already built a reputation for itself as a prolific exporter of arts

and creative talent globally. The dissemination of new ideas about creativity, innovation, and the creative industries only served to reinforce the sense among Irish government officials that Irish arts and culture represented key strengths for attracting foreign investment. From the 1990s onwards, the Irish government increasingly sought to utilize Irish arts and culture as a commentary on Ireland's capacity for delivering innovation. Capitalizing upon this link would ultimately help Ireland attract the interest of foreign governments and large multinational corporations. This process also encouraged Irish government officials to prioritize cultural development strategies that maximized Ireland's international "brand" and the types of economic spillover effects outlined by Throsby.

National efforts to attract foreign direct investment have been coordinated across several state institutions, but most especially by the Industrial Development Authority (IDA). The IDA was established in 1949 and has since become the primary agency for developing foreign investment in Ireland. The organization's activities revolve around diverse incentives designed to attract foreign investment. This includes the promotion of Irish businesses, the dissemination of information about Irish tax policy, the provision of relocation services, and other functions. The IDA also helps to build a broader narrative about the unique qualities of the Irish people. For instance, the IDA promotes the number of Irish graduates in high-tech, high-growth industries, the disproportionately young Irish workforce, and the nation's ranking on the Global Innovation Index.¹ Promotion of these areas is intended to demonstrate the potential benefits of investing in the country and employing Irish nationals.

IDA efforts to create a positive international reputation for Ireland through the promotion

¹ This can be seen in the IDA's *Facts about Ireland* (2016) document, one of the many packets the development authority has disseminated over the years to outline the primary benefits foreign companies will enjoy if they relocate to Ireland.

of Irish culture have increased alongside the emergence of the creative economy discourse. This can be seen in a variety of campaigns run by the IDA including a 2003 branding strategy that ran with the slogan, “Ireland, knowledge is in our nature.” The campaign, which was intended to “promote the added-value multinationals could draw from an Irish workforce,” was accompanied by a publication that urged foreign nationals to focus on “the innate creative imagination of Irish people” (IDA quoted in McCaffrey 2003). Promotional materials for the new initiative also included a widely-circulated video intended to make suggestive links between Irish culture and creativity. The video is a short spot in which lines from a well-known poem by Arthur O’Shaughnessy appear one by one and gradually transform into the shape of a fingerprint with a Celtic knot at the center. In the background, one can hear the poem narration in addition to the sounds of a fiddle and flute arranged in a style likely inspired by the popular *Riverdance* showcase. The text itself reads:

“We are the music makers, and we are the dreamers of dreams.
Yet we are the movers and shakers of the world forever, it seems;”
“Ireland, knowledge is in our nature.
Learn how the Irish mind can work for your business.” (IDA 2009)²

In a matter of only thirty seconds, the IDA leverages Ireland’s reputation for poetry, music, visual arts, and theatre as part of an audiovisual commentary on Irish creativity. The image of the fingerprint helped to summarize the “innateness” of this quality to the Irish people.

Similar strategies for branding Irish creativity have been utilized by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which at the time of this writing, has a dedicated webpage describing the link between Irish culture and business opportunity. In the section of the page entitled “Our Culture,” the Department lays out culture’s role in an international context:

Ireland’s culture is a unique national strength, which defines us on the world stage. The global impact of Irish culture is one of our greatest competitive

² The video was made available in 2009 on the official YouTube page for the IDA.

advantages, acting as a ‘door opener’ that helps to secure jobs, trade, investment and tourism. It’s also our most effective way of connecting with the global Irish diaspora and the cultural sector is a dynamic and growing part of our economy. (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2017)

This understanding of culture has made it common practice for the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of the Taoiseach to include Irish artists in foreign trade proceedings. Such was the case in 2007 when the Department of Taoiseach and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade enlisted the popular traditional music group, Dervish, to accompany the Prime Minister on a trade mission to China. Dervish also accompanied President Mary McAleese on missions in Latvia and Lithuania to represent Irish culture to various business delegations (Irish Music Rights Organization 2016).

The inclusion of traditional musicians and other artists in foreign trade delegations was initially brought to my attention by Helen Carey, the director of a Dublin-based arts nonprofit organization. She described the reasons why this strategy has become common a practice among state officials, making reference to the traditional musician, Martin Hayes. She explained:

Before every trade mission, Culture Ireland goes ahead with artists; you also have a cultural program that goes alongside presidential visits, which are often allied with trade agreements, either actual or hoped for. The thinking is that you need to front up a trade mission to, say, China, with something that says ‘we’re great craic, we’re really nice people and we’re really brilliant at what we do’ and this is said through brilliant artists such as Martin Hayes. (Personal Interview with Helen Carey 2015)

Helen continued to explain how the inclusion of artistic performances during political missions was used as a way to exploit the parallels between artistic creativity and national character. In her words, staging artists for international delegations served to provide a sort of “evidence-based indicator for how brilliant we are.” It also helped foreign audiences recognize some intrinsic aspect of the Irish character without necessarily having to speak the same language.

Helen felt that this type of cultural posturing was problematic given that the government

was not always been involved in supporting the artists whose image state officials sought to leverage. For instance, she noted how the government stood to profit from association with Martin Hayes' musical virtuosity without the government necessarily playing a part in producing a "Martin Hayes." In her words:

They haven't particularly funded his development...I don't think there's the kind of academy that would have helped produce Martin Hayes. He has absorbed the informal school of the west coast of Ireland. (Personal Interview with Helen Carey 2015)

Helen referred to this strategy as a "very conscious instrumentalization of culture." This also informed her sense that art "was not an object in itself but was seen as a slipstream activity that...you draw into the mainstream to prop up some kind of image thing, and then...let fall back again into that slipstream" (Carey 2015).

As Helen alluded, Culture Ireland has helped to deploy the strategy described above. The Department of Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht established Culture Ireland in 2005 to serve as the chief promoter of Irish culture and arts in an international context. As such, the organization has something of a dual role. On the one hand, Culture Ireland provides grant funding to Irish artists so that they have opportunities to tour internationally. On the other hand, Culture Ireland helps advance the government's interest in building a reputation around Irish creativity by presenting high-profile Irish artists in key international markets. This aim is reflected in Culture Ireland's advisory committee, which includes broad representation from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and the IDA. Culture Ireland also organizes a specific "showcase programme" that creates opportunities for Irish artists and companies to promote their work internationally (Culture Ireland 2017). This program is focused largely on "building awareness of new and emerging Irish artists and enhancing Ireland's reputation abroad as a leader in creative and cultural practice," as the whole

of Culture Ireland's activities (Culture Ireland 2017).

Traditional musicians are also well aware of the extent to which the state has relied upon culture for revenue development, particularly with regard to tourism. For instance, Ciara O'Grady noted how "there's music in certain areas of every city that attract the tourists, and they love it, and they leave talking about the great music and the sessions and everything in Ireland. I think it's a huge, unique selling point that we have for our tourism" (Personal Interview with Ciara O'Grady 2015). Ted Kelly of the band Moxie also drew attention to the Ireland 2016 cultural program, noting how projections for tourism amid the 1916 centenary were "through the roof" (Personal Interview with Ted Kelly 2015). Gay McKeon placed traditional music's links to tourism in the context of national revenue more explicitly, urging one to look at the "amount of funding for traditional arts in Ireland for the return on it" (Personal Interview with Gay McKeon 2105). This was to indicate the disproportionality between the amount invested in traditional music by the state and its return on investment (ROI).

To summarize the points made thus far, Ireland has a well-established tendency of leveraging culture to boost foreign direct investment. The formalization of this economic strategy was significantly marked during the Celtic Tiger period. This was underpinned by several factors, including the surge in multinational migration to Ireland during the 1990s, the placement of a new premium on creativity in the early 2000s, and the rediscovery of the cultural or creative industries as a major economic contributor around the same time. The interweaving of these processes has led Irish national organizations to see culture increasingly as an instrument for tapping into new business prospects, which explains the growing appearance of Irish artistic performance across foreign governmental campaigns (see Chapter Four). This trajectory was only intensified following the onset of the economic collapse, as will be explained throughout

the remainder of this chapter.

CULTURAL POLICY REFORM AND THE RECESSION (2008-2017)

The onset of the economic crisis in 2008 led Irish government officials to become concerned about the potential damage that might be incurred to Ireland's hard-earned reputation as an excellent place for foreign investment. Indeed, the initial years of the Great Recession showed several signs that international interest in Ireland as a tourism or investment site had wavered. Fáilte Ireland observed in 2010 that tourism rates had fallen by over 10% within the first year of the economic collapse (Fáilte Ireland 2010, 1). Meanwhile, the announcement that Dell would be moving two thousand jobs from its plant in Limerick and bringing them to Poland caused a wide panic that Ireland would see a wave of multinationals pulling out of the country. These setbacks led the government to conclude that any comprehensive plan for economic recovery would have to involve intensified efforts to maintain confidence in the Irish market.

Among its other effects, efforts to maintain Ireland's reputation as a prime business destination led state officials to place added weight on the importance of culture as a national identifier. Culture began to receive frequent mention in state policy documents as a "key strength" or as a "comparative advantage," starting with the first official recovery plan released by the government in response to the crisis. The document, which was entitled *Building Ireland's Smart Economy* (2008), included several references to the importance of arts, culture, and the creative industries as part of a comprehensive plan for economic growth. This appeared in a special section of the strategy document entitled "Leveraging the Arts, Culture and Creative Industries," which identified arts and culture as "key and primary economic contributors" (Department of the Taoiseach 2008, 80). Further excerpts from the *Smart Economy* plan

reaffirmed the supposed links between culture and innovation, suggesting several explicit goals for cultural policy reforms in the coming years:

- We will codify the economic impact of the cultural industries and establish benchmarks to promote jobs, business development, and export expansion;
- Niche cultural tourism markets will be developed with globally-recognized branding;
- Access to finance, credit and business support services for emerging and export-ready firms and artists will be improved;
- We will seek to expand, embed and develop the linkages between the cultural industries, the tourism sector, and the wider economy;
- The human resource capabilities of the cultural sector will be upgraded through training in the arts, as well as training in arts administration, management, and cultural entrepreneurship;
- Investment in key arts culture and creativity industry infrastructure will continue. (Department of the Taoiseach 2008, 80-81)

The importance of culture to the economic recovery was further highlighted during a series of economic fora that took place in Dublin between 2009-2015. The Global Irish Economic Fora consisted of several conferences organized by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to allow Ireland's international partners to provide input into Irish recovery plans. These events stemmed from the observation that Ireland would need to directly consult its global stakeholders regarding any potential policy changes. Great thought was also devoted to the notion that Ireland's worldwide diaspora represented the best point of leverage for enhancing foreign investment. This would be especially true of Irish-American diaspora, which helped Ireland become the biggest recipient of U.S. FDI in Europe by the late 2000s (Taylor 2015).

The Global Irish Economic Fora built upon the recommendations of the *Smart Economy* document in providing even further support for leveraging Irish culture towards national economic renewal. For instance, a panel involving the Minister of Arts (Ireland) and several representatives from large American businesses agreed during the 2009 Forum that "the arts [were] no longer a luxury or a charity, but a hugely important part of the economy" (Department

of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2009, 21). They attested similarly to the notion that arts and culture had a key role to play in serving as a “unique brand identifier” and “selling point for Ireland abroad” (21). The Second (2011) and Third (2013) Global Economic Fora made further mention of the importance of culture, which was “widely acknowledged...[as] Ireland’s global calling card” (DFAT 2011, 29). It was advised that Ireland should seek to extend the marketing programs already underway in the United States to Britain, Asia, France, and Germany as part of the effort to counter negative stories about Ireland in the media (29).

FESTIVAL PROGRAMMING AND THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY (2011–2016)

The joint recommendations of the *Smart Economy* strategy and the Global Irish Economic Fora had several real effects on national cultural policy and funding over the course of the recession. Chief among them was the government’s decision to develop three of the most expensive cultural programs in Irish history. The three events, entitled Imagine Ireland (2011), The Gathering (2013), and Ireland 2016, presented thousands of Irish artistic performances internationally throughout the 2011-2016 period as part of the aim to achieve high levels of foreign direct investment. The following discussion provides an outline of these events and their role in governmental recovery plans. This information is necessary to understand how ideas about creativity have influenced cultural policy.

Imagine Ireland

The first of the three major arts and cultural programs the Irish government devised to assist Ireland’s economic recovery was an event entitled Imagine Ireland. This program consisted of a series of Irish cultural programs hosted in cities throughout the United States

between January 2011 and January 2012. Imagine Ireland was at the time the largest overseas cultural program in Irish history, involving upwards of 1,000 Irish and Irish-American artists, who performed in over four hundred cultural demonstrations spanning forty US states and over two hundred cities (Marlowe 2011). This involved participation by individuals from across the arts spectrum, including traditional musicians. Trad music performers made comprised over half of Imagine Ireland's 76 musical performances. The program overall cost the Department of Arts and Culture Ireland around four million Euros.

The initial proposal to create Imagine Ireland arose in 2009 as part of the recommendations made by a government strategy document known as *Ireland and America: Challenges and Opportunities in a New Context* (Embassy of Ireland Washington, D.C. 2009). Leading up to the document's publication, Irish officials had become increasingly interested in developing a means through which Ireland could reaffirm and strengthen its socioeconomic ties to the United States. Underlying this aim was not only the fact that the United States was home to a community of some 40 million individuals of Irish descent but also some of Ireland's most important business partners. It had been noted around the time that US-based firms had invested more than \$277 billion dollars into the Irish economy since the 1990s, which has made Ireland the largest benefactor of American foreign direct investment in Europe (Kelpie 2015). The United States also represents one of Ireland's largest enduring markets for Irish export products (e.g. alcoholic beverages, pharmaceuticals, etc.) and tourism. These factors led Irish state officials and representation from the Irish Embassy to collaborate on the formation of a comprehensive strategy for strengthening Irish-American interests.

The recommendations made by Irish state officials and their American counterparts as part of the *Ireland and America* strategy document can be roughly organized into two categories.

The first category included a range of provisions for facilitating increased movement between Ireland and the United States. This involved plans for instituting an Irish-American visa program, an expanded internship program for US students in Ireland, and a fast-track naturalization process for American individuals with Irish grandparents.¹⁶ The other set of recommendations had as its overarching theme measures intended to build cultural affinities between Irish and American citizens. For instance, the document included suggestions for extending Irish genealogical records to Americans, providing a new certificate of Irish-American heritage, and investing in Irish-American cultural infrastructure in the United States. The document also proposed “a series of high-profile Irish cultural events” to take place in 2011. This is what eventually developed into the Imagine Ireland program (Department of the Taoiseach 2009).

The suggestions included in the *Ireland and America* strategy document were more broadly intended to provide American and Irish citizens with the legal frameworks to facilitate and encourage continued US foreign direct investment. The strategy’s provisions were also intended to leverage shared cultural practices in an attempt to generate enthusiasm for Irish-American business partnerships. The evidence for such suggestions is not difficult to produce, given the fact that Irish state officials celebrated their efforts to leverage Irish arts and culture towards national recovery. This was seen at the launch of Imagine Ireland in January 2011 when the Minister for arts explained that “Government has invested in this initiative because the arts and culture are vital to Ireland’s recovery” (DAHG 2011). She also reiterated the point that culture was the primary means by which most Americans encounter Ireland. These remarks followed out of the conclusions of the Global Irish Economic Forum of 2009, which noted that

¹⁶ My ability to stay in Ireland for an eight-month period was directly facilitated by the new Irish-America visa program.

culture should be harnessed as “a selling point for Ireland abroad” (21).³

The Gathering

The second mass-scale cultural program launched as an aid to recessionary recovery efforts was an event known as The Gathering. The program stems from a proposal submitted by Ireland’s national tourism body in 2011 regarding the possibility of making up lost tourism revenue since the onset of the global credit crunch. Annual data maintained by Fáilte Ireland showed that between 2007 and 2010, the number of annual visitors to Ireland had fallen from 7.7 to 5.9 million (about 23%) while tourism revenue fell from €6.5 to €5.8 billion (about 11%) (2010, 2). To place these figures into perspective, tourism is one of Ireland’s largest native industries, employing around 322,000 Irish residents or about 7% of the country (Fáilte Ireland 2007, 1). The drop in foreign tourism represented a further area of loss when accounting for the relationship between tourism and other industries, such as hospitality, transportation, and drinks.

Fáilte Ireland’s solution for making up the gap in tourism revenue was to produce a year-long series of Irish cultural events, drawing its inspiration from both the ongoing success of Imagine Ireland and that of Scotland’s 2009 “Homecoming” program. Similar to its Scottish counterpart, The Gathering was built upon the idea of calling members of the diaspora to “come home” to Ireland and connect with their ancestral roots through participation in Irish cultural “gatherings.” The gatherings would involve programming like that of Imagine Ireland, such as theatrical performances, concerts, and historical lectures as well as other expressions of Irish

³ The updated (2014) version of the *Ireland and America* document was significantly more direct than the 2009 document, noting that Irish culture “is one of our best calling cards here - an important part of our tourism offering and reinforcing the image of creativity which is a key part of our FDI appeal” (Embassy of Ireland Washington, D.C. 12).

cultural life, including craft demonstrations, sporting competitions, and nature excursions. Fáilte Ireland also proposed that programming for the event would primarily be organized at the grassroots level (Fáilte Ireland 2013, 16). In other words, the proposal was for a program in which Irish citizens would be called to do the bulk of the work in creating events that would attract business counterparts, family relations, and other individuals living overseas.

Fáilte Ireland presented its proposal for The Gathering to the central government in 2011, attaining strong support from the Department of Transport, Tourism, and Sport. The Department's Minister, Leo Varadkar, brought the idea to the Second Global Irish Economic Forum in 2011. He suggested that it could encourage as many as three hundred thousand additional foreign nationals to visit Ireland in 2013 (2011, 11). It was anticipated that the tourism bump would bring an additional €168 million in Exchequer revenue while helping to “promote pride in Ireland and...raise the profile and standing of the country internationally” (Fáilte Ireland 2013, 9). This paved the way for eventual uptake of Fáilte Ireland's proposal, which received €13 million Euros in support from the Irish government. The Gathering thus became the most expansive and expensive tourism initiative in Irish to date.

The Gathering did not take place until two years following Fáilte Ireland's initial proposal to the Department of Tourism, which provided ample opportunity for the government to advertise the event and for Irish citizens to plan events. By the time 2013 arrived, this process had resulted in the development of over 5,000 cultural exhibits. This program included tremendous participation by traditional Irish musicians, who organized hundreds of sessions, concerts, workshops, and other programs under The Gathering banner. Much of this activity was coordinated by *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann*, which sponsored the state initiative and consulted with the government on the showcasing of traditional music. As part of its sponsorship,

Comhaltas committed to using the 2012 *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann* in Co. Cavan Ireland as a “flagship promotional event” for The Gathering (*Comhaltas* 2012). This is how I came to learn of The Gathering, given my attendance at the *Fleadh* in Cavan that year.

The funding required to support the range of events described above originated partly out of small state grants. By and large, however, festival funding did not go directly to grassroots-organized events. Only 3.7 million Euros or 28% of the budget was used to fund artistic activities. The bulk of the funding went to advertising (*Fáilte Ireland* 2013, 47). Around 8.7 million Euros, or 67% of the total budget, was used to market The Gathering to foreign and domestic audiences (47). This attested to the event’s principal purpose, which was to sell Ireland abroad to tourists and to make up a loss in foreign revenue. The achievement of these aims helped to build momentum for the following national program.

Ireland 2016

The last year-long cultural event held during the recession was unique among the three cultural programs in that it revolved around a historical event rather than a discretionary theme. By way of background, the year 2016 marked the centenary of an important event in Irish history called the “Easter Rising,” or the “Rising.” This is the name given to an Irish rebellion that occurred on Easter Monday (April 24th) 1916. On this day, a group of Irish Republicans rose against British authorities as part of the effort to overthrow British rule. The Irish forces were defeated following six days of warfare; however, the rising played a pivotal role in leading to Irish independence (1922). The Easter Rising has since been celebrated as a national holiday with parades, military demonstrations, and other commemorative activities.

The government made the decision several years prior to 2016 that the centenary of the

1916 Rising would be celebrated with a year-long program known simply as Ireland 2016. Planning for the event began in 2012 but was not publicly announced until November 12, 2014 at a cross-departmental meeting held at the General Post Office (Dublin). This is one of the important sites associated with the Easter Rising. By this time, Taoiseach Enda Kenny, Táinaiste Joan Burton, and other Irish leaders had officially charged the Department of Arts with the program's development. The government earmarked around €48 million Euros to the program, which was nearly triple what had been set aside for Imagine Ireland and The Gathering (McGreevy 2015). The bulk of the funding was mobilized through the Department of Arts, followed by Culture Ireland, The Arts Council, the National Library, and the National Museum.

The Department of Arts worked in conjunction with various national and local organizations between 2014 and 2015 to create a robust program of cultural performances for the 1916 centenary. These were divided along five themes, including remembrance, reconciliation, imagination, present life, and celebration (DAHG 2017). The themes were then realized across seven program "strands:" state ceremonial, historical reflection, the living language, youth and imagination, cultural expression, community participation, and the global and diaspora program. Finally, each strand was furnished with a variety of parades, concerts, workshops film debuts and other cultural events. This was accompanied by the development of a new cultural center.

As the prior year-long programs, the development of Ireland 2016 was approached with an eye towards economic recovery. This underpinned the government's decision to devote one of the seven program strands to what was entitled the "Global and Diaspora Programme." This strand was instituted for the stated purpose of coordinating the development of 1916 themed events throughout Ireland's global network, and especially those areas where the Irish diaspora was strongest (e.g., United States, Australia, etc.). The Global and Diaspora strand was also

created, however, in pursuit of Ireland's economic interests. This was evident due to the inclusion of several economic symposiums throughout Ireland's international commemorative programs (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2016a). Cultural performances were also intentionally staged to draw interest among Ireland's largest business partners. These elements were meant to generate enthusiasm over a partnership with Ireland, building upon what had been achieved through Imagine Ireland and The Gathering previously.

“Value-for-Money”

The formal incorporation of culture in economic recovery plans led not only to the development of new cultural programs but also to growing pressures for financial accountability on behalf Ireland's national cultural institutions. In line with this aim, the government conducted growing audits of national cultural institutions. The state also helped to disseminate discourse about “value-for-money,” which became a mantra among media personnel, politicians, and cultural administrators. The phrase “value-for-money” has two meanings in this context. In its first iteration, the term is a shorthand reference for the Value for Money and Policy Review Initiative, which set forth a protocol for procedural audits of governmental departments in 2006. In its second iteration, value-for-money serves simply as a colloquialism for discussing the extent to which public funding is being used efficiently in accordance with governmental or public (i.e., taxpayer) goals.

The state's interest in ensuring that cultural programs aligned with national goals for recovery could be viewed as part of 2013-2015 Value for Money Review (VFMR) of the Arts Council. The VFMR was led by a joint Steering Committee representing multiple government departments and provided an assessment of how the Arts Council's activities could better aid in

the economic recovery process. As part of its recommendations, the VFMR urged the Council to establish more concrete “indicators” for assessing the value of its programs (DAHG 2015a). These indicators consisted of standard bookkeeping elements, such as “size, distribution, and constitution of the arts sector,” in addition to creative economy indices, such as “enhanced creativity” (97). The VFMR also discussed how Ireland’s arts infrastructure could help enhance Ireland’s “reputational value.” This led to one of the audit’s conclusions, which was the suggestion that arts subsidy should not be seen “simply in terms of public good...but rather [would] be considered an input in terms of more general economic policy” (19).

The pursuit of a value-for-money ethos in national spending led the government to reconsider several policies pertaining to the arts. This included a review of the Artist Tax-relief Scheme, a policy introduced in 1969 that provided tax relief to composers, writers, and other artists. The policy was originally introduced to assist “struggling” artists but came under fire from the Department of Finance in 2015 on the basis that the benefit was being abused by wealthy public icons for works that did not have artistic merit (O’Regan 2015). The Department of Revenue also weighed in on the review, suggesting that it “[was] fair to say that a sizeable number of the claimants would have produced their work regardless of whether the exemption was available or not” (O’Regan 2016). The underlying message was that the scheme should only support artists struggling at a threshold where making art would be impossible otherwise. This would do little to support the growing number of Irish artists who were living at the deprivation rate, which is discussed further in Chapter Four.

Another important program that was placed under review during the recession was a scheme known as Aosdána (People of the Arts). Aosdána is an organization managed by the Arts Council that supports individuals who have made significant artistic contributions to Irish

society. Artists inducted into Aosdána can draw upon a grant that allows them to devote their full time working on artistic projects. This feature of the Aosdána program became the focal point of controversy in April of 2017 amid proposals that such grants should be available only to “working artists engaged in productive practice” as opposed to “full-time practicing artists” (Linehan 2017). The change eligibility would help to tighten expenditure on the basis of the value-for-money principle but appeared to gloss over the intermittent nature of creative inspiration. Martin Donohoe shared an article concerning the proposed changes, which were canceled by late 2017 given criticism from Aosdána members and other artists.

National audits also appeared to effect shifts in the emphasis of national grant competitions. This was brought to my attention by Martin Donohoe, who informed me that traditional musicians circulated a list of “buzzwords” they felt would aid them in securing Arts Council grants. He brought up the list from a correspondence he accessed from his phone, noting that successful grant applications tended to be associated with the words “sustainable, partnership, social capital, empowered, opportunity, transparent, social and community activation, high-impact, outreach, capacity, legacy, value-for-money, and accountable” (Personal Interview with Martin Donohoe 2016). Significantly, a number of these terms mirrored the aims and the recommendations of the Arts Council VFMR. This included the VFMR’s suggestions for distributing funds to financially sustainable arts institutions, developing public-private partnerships, and considering audience size in selecting recipients (i.e., “high-impact,” “outreach,” etc.).

Both Martin and Gay McKeon noted seeing a greater emphasis on financial planning and performance within Council grants over the past few years (Personal Interviews with Martin Donohoe and Gay McKeon 2015, 2016). For instance, Martin indicated that it had become

routine for grant applications to ask for more in-depth budget proposals than what was required in the past. Gay McKeon also suggested that there was an increased focus on audience factors as part of grant reporting requirements, noting “I think you can get overly carried away with metrics of footfall and audience development and all of that.... There has to be value in the core, you know? Making of art, playing the music” (McKeon 2016). He reiterated that these areas had not caused compromises in NPU’s work but that it was possible other organizations “[felt] they [had] to compromise in their core activities...and the value of what they do” (McKeon 2016).

The growing complexity of national funding competitions posed challenges for several of the musicians I met in Ireland. Joe Carroll suggested that you “nearly need to study how do a proposal to get funding these days,” while Gary O’Brien (*uilleann* piper) had abandoned the prospect of applying for state grants due to their requirements (Personal Interview with Gary O’Brien 2016). Martin Donohoe also indicated that many traditional musicians would have little experience in grant-funding proposals given the self-taught nature of most traditional music arts organizations. In his own view, the grants were “not accessible to everybody.” He added that “if you didn’t have some of those buzzwords and weren’t transparent and weren’t community-led, there’s certainly no way I’d believe you would get any grants to which you can apply” (Personal Interview with Martin Donohoe 2016). This is all to drive the point that the value-for-money discourse has had real effects upon musicians’ prospects.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has been to explain how the Great Recession and the creative economy discourse have influenced the character of Irish cultural policy. The following chapter shifts from a discussion about general cultural policy changes and towards musician’s direct

commentaries regarding arts funding reform. This conversation focuses on the fact that government attempts to capitalize on the arts have left musicians with the sense that the arts have become “downgraded” in national policymaking. I introduce some foundational concepts on value from Karl Marx and Marcel Mauss, whose writings on value help to frame differences in the ways that the government and musicians understand the meaning of arts participation.

CHAPTER FOUR

A RISING TIDE LIFTS ALL BOATS?

The previous chapter described the ways the Irish government sought to incorporate arts and culture into the economic recovery process, which simultaneously reduced costs in core arts funding and increased expenditure on one-off events. It has been demonstrated as part of this discussion that successive Irish governments have long utilized arts and culture to enhance profits from manufacturing and foreign investment. Artists have largely treated such forms of commodification as necessary, albeit polemical features of cultural governance. This is due to the fact that state efforts to commodify arts have often worked to the benefit of the arts community. Leveraging the evocative power of arts international has created employment opportunities, increased international familiarization with Irish arts, and mobilized political support for increased arts subsidy. During the recession, however, the historical balance between state support of music as a commodity and as a meaningful area of Irish life was strongly skewed towards the former. Musicians' time and creativity were also being solicited at the same time as employment opportunities were diminishing (Chapter One), when core grant funding was actively being cut (Chapter Two), and when artists were under heightened pressure to rely upon private funding. To state the problem plainly, it appeared as though the desire to make revenue gains had superseded investment in musicians' livelihoods.

The dynamics described above go a significant way in explaining why Irish journalists, nonprofit arts organizations, arts advocacy groups and my collaborators viewed the recession as devaluing artists' work. This notion followed along two general trajectories. First, the dissymmetry that developed between core and one-off arts funding led to the belief that the government valued the arts only insofar as they could be commodified. Conversely, the nature of

funding reforms provided little indication that state officials were invested in the types of intrinsic and societal aspects of arts participation valued by traditional musicians. Second, the fact that the government continued to exploit artists' labor at a time when artists were struggling financially led to claims that the state did not place real value in artists' livelihoods. Artists supported this notion by making reference to the limited funding and social service supports that were made available to Irish artists.

The remainder of the chapter is broken into three components. The first section provides a brief introduction to Karl Marx and Marcel Mauss's writings on value, which help to contrast the ways government officials and Irish musicians tend to ascribe value and meaning to music. This is followed by an analysis of musicians' commentaries regarding *Imagine Ireland*, *The Gathering*, and *Ireland 2016*. These events were seen by my collaborators as advancing a strictly economic agenda rather than one that spoke to the broader merits of arts participation. The final part of the chapter outlines musicians' claims that government officials placed value on the products of artists' labors but not in their livelihoods. This conversation focuses especially upon musicians' remarks regarding Irish social services and urban living costs. I explain, in particular, how artists viewed their financial challenges as consequence of the government's disinterest in developing comprehensive welfare supports for the arts.

VALUE IN TRADITIONAL MUSIC PERFORMANCE

The analysis of "value" in anthropological literature has a lineage that is most frequently placed in the opposition between Karl Marx's (1990 [1867]) labor theory of value and Marcel Mauss's (2002 [1925]) conceptualization of the "gift." For the former theorist, the value of cultural goods is informed by the mode of production in which they are manufactured,

consumed, and exchanged. Consequently, Marx's analysis of value begins with a deconstruction of the "commodity," one of the central features of capitalist production. This develops into a description of the commodity's dual nature, which consists of both "use-value" and "exchange-value." Marx utilizes the term "use-value" to indicate that commodities derive a facet of their value from their fulfillment of human needs. Thus, a commodity's use-value is determined simply on the basis of whatever need or use it happens to fulfill (1990 [1867], 126). Conversely, a commodity's exchange-value can only be measured in terms of the proportion in which it can be exchanged for use-values of another kind (126). This manner of ascribing value does not regard an object's intrinsic qualities, only its potential for acquiring something external to itself.

Having defined the dual nature of the commodity, Marx continues to describe in greater detail how the magnitude of commodity value is determined within capitalist systems. He notes on this subject that what determines the value of commodities is "the amount of labour socially necessary, or the labour-time socially necessary for its production" (29). This is to say that value in capitalist systems is based simply on the amount of time it takes to produce that object. For instance, if a coat takes the same time to produce as a pair of pants, then the commodities would be said to have equivalent value. This manner of ascribing value is inherently alienating of the individuals who produce commodities, as it speaks neither to their personhood nor the social relationships in which they are embedded. The abstraction of commodities from their social relations is what enables their value to be consecrated in reference to money and what allows for the conflation of value *with* money.

Marcel Mauss's portrayal of value in the form of the "gift" is similarly critical of capitalist modes of exchange. Mauss seeks, in particular, to implicate capitalist production by emphasizing the highly personal nature of cultural exchange found in non-capitalist society. He

achieves this through an analysis of gift exchange during the potlatch, a Polynesian indigenous ceremony at which individuals exchange or destroy personal objects in the process of reaffirming or negotiating social relationships. The key point Mauss makes on gift-giving is that value of the gifts is inextricably linked with the personhood of those exchanging and receiving them. Mauss explains that “[making] a gift of something to someone is to make a present of some part of oneself” (2002 [1925], 16). Likewise, to accept an item from someone is to “accept some part of his spiritual essence, of his soul” (16). The gift is further differentiated from the commodity in that gifts are inscribed by the overall contexts in which the gift was previously given, utilized, and interpreted. This describes a social context in which an item’s value is determined in accordance with its “meaning” and social attachments rather than depersonalized factors.

The two manners of framing value just described have strong relevance to how my Irish collaborators interpreted the value of musical participation. On the one hand, the artists I met acknowledged contexts in which music’s value was largely defined in terms of commodity exchange. For instance, the previous chapter indicated the extent to which traditional artists recognize music’s contributions to the economy in the context of the tourism industry. There would also be few prospects for Martin Donohoe or others professional musicians to devote their livelihoods to traditional music if not for their participation in treating music as a commodity. On the other hand, my collaborators equally acknowledged music’s value in the terms described by Mauss. This is to say they valued music as being both personally meaningful and as deeply embedded in social history. In fact, many of my collaborators made the explicit decision to not perform traditional music on a full-time basis. Antóin Mac Gabhann, Ciara O’Grady, Joe Carroll, Gay McKeon all chose to pursue music part-time alongside other occupations. This would allow them to develop their musicality without their artistic life becoming totalized by commodity

exchange relationships. For instance, Joe had noted that he did not want traditional music “to be my job, because I love it too much” (Personal Interview with Joe Carroll 2015).

The foregrounding of traditional music performance *à la* Maussian gift exchange was most pronounced during my conversations with the renowned Irish fiddle player from Co. Cavan, Antóin “Tony” Mac Gabhann. Tony and I met on in a Dublin café on one occasion, during which he characterized the older but still vibrant noncommercial “ethos” of traditional music performance. Tony initiated this conversation with a description of how individuals commonly came to learn traditional music performance during his childhood. He noted that the concepts of paying for classes and of traditional music as a commercial product were not pronounced at that time. Rather, he described participation in traditional music as a “sharing,” akin to the way Mauss described gift-giving:

It was just a sharing. I mean, I never paid anything to him [Tony’s teacher]...People then had a totally different view of the music. The music wasn’t that popular then, [and] they were trying to hold onto it. I mean, music was something to be shared, and they wouldn’t try to make money out of teaching it...People just taught one of their neighbors, fiddle or tin whistle, or whatever it might be. They didn’t think in terms of charging at that time. (Personal Interview with Antóin Mac Gabhann 2016)

He then continued to explain how the commercial facet of traditional did not enter into the picture largely until the 1960s-1970s. From that point, the folk revival had begun to popularize the music, and musicians were able to make some money from its performance. Tony noted, however, that the “old kind of ethos remained with that generation—that when they got paid for playing somewhere, that was a bonus.”

Tony also discussed how he personally connected with traditional music, emphasizing how he invested himself invested in his performance. His description of this relationship once again paralleled Mauss’ characterization of gift exchange. He explained:

I don't think you think very much about the meaning of it. I think unconsciously, it fulfills part of your Irishness. I think that would be something that would be in your consciousness, that it was part of your Irishness and part of something that you wanted to be part of. Of course, as you move through life...you play side by side with an awful lot of musicians over a lifetime. I think you begin to realize that it's really part of your life and part of your being. It becomes, it becomes part of you, so it's not something that you're ever separate from once you get into it. (Personal Interview with Antóin Mac Gabhann 2016)



Figure 4.1: Antóin Mac Gabhann playing music outside during the Cavan Fleadh Cheoil (Photograph Courtesy of Antóin Mac Gabhann).

Tony's commentary had a striking similarity to Mauss's description of how gifts tend not to become separated from individuals even in the process of letting go. For instance, he writes "even when it [the gift] has been abandoned by the giver, it still possesses something of him" (2002 [1925], 15). Tony explained furthermore how he felt this type of personal investment was maintained even among those performers who had chosen to make their living from traditional music performance:

I think the vast bulk of musicians are in the music and are playing the music for their own enjoyment, and they don't compromise it for any commercial reasons. Even people in the commercial sector don't want to compromise the music. What they want to do is try and make a living out of the music that they want to play, which is a bit different. (Personal Interview with Antóin Mac Gabhann 2016)

I found Tony's suggestion affirmed by none other than his daughter, Caitlín Nic Gabhann, who unlike Tony, had opted to pursue a full-time professional career in traditional music performance. Caitlín described her relationship with traditional music in similar terms as her father, explaining:

It's such a huge part of who I am and how I've grown up...I'd be a completely different person if it wasn't in my life, just because it's like another member of the family kind of...It's just life. It's not like a thing I choose to do. I love it. (Personal Interview with Caitlín Nic Gabhann 2016)

It was also telling that when I asked Caitlín directly about what the value of the music was for her, her response foregrounded the same ethos of communal sharing conveyed by Tony:

I love being able to be, to be a person who can bring this, bring Ireland around the world and represent Ireland around the world. We do an awful lot of traveling...[and] the people I meet when I'm away, and the respect that the people who come to our concerts, the idea they have of Ireland. I love being that special...just to be that connection with this thing that people have grown to love that they have discovered somehow in their community. (Personal Interview with Caitlín Nic Gabhann 2016)

All of this was to cast the value of traditional music in a capacity—whether one calls it a “gift” or not—that framed music's meaningfulness as something other than its economic exchangeability. It was not that the economic component of the music was ignored, simply that it was projected as the type of “bonus” described by Tony for a life spent doing what one loves and enjoys.

Tony and Caitlín's commentaries foreground the last principal issue to discuss regarding the impact of structural adjustment on Irish arts. Enhanced efforts to generate revenue from artistic activities following the recession has shifted national structures further in line with commodity production while tending to de-emphasize music's esoteric, noncommercial

meanings. This is seen especially with regard to the state’s decision to drastically cut core arts funding while simultaneously expending €60 million on three cultural festivals with the purpose of revenue generation. This has projected the value of art in terms of its economic exchangeability rather than the more gift-like qualities of musical participation celebrated by Antóin, Caitlín, and other traditional musicians.



Figure 4.2: Caitlín Nic Gabhann. (Photo Courtesy of Caitlín Nic Gabhann)

The dynamics described above help to explain why the majority of my collaborators interpreted the recession’s overall effect as a “downgrade” or devaluation of arts at the national level. The musicians whom I met in Ireland saw the growing dissymmetry between core artist supports and commercially oriented programming as principal testimony to the state’s limited valuation of the arts. Musicians expressed such views through reference to contradictions between government rhetoric on the importance arts and actual policymaking. The fact that Irish

officials exploited artists' labors when many musicians were experiencing financial challenge also led towards a growing consensus that the state placed value in art commodities but not in artists' livelihoods. This sentiment was apparent in artists' commentary during national cultural policy meetings, where individuals identified gaps in Irish social service provision for artists. Several musicians also directed attention to the fact that national efforts to sell Irish creativity were gentrifying artists' living conditions in so-called "creative hubs" or "art cities." The government's apparent failure in creating an economy that supported low-income earners served only to heighten musicians' sense that the state was not truly invested in their livelihoods.

"LIP-SERVICE AND NEGLECT"

Critical discussion regarding the devaluation of arts was primarily instigated by the state's decision to utilize Irish culture as a marketing tool in the context of Imagine Ireland, The Gathering, and Ireland 2016. This conversation began in the least likely of places—by one of the chief architects of the state cultural programs. Ten months prior to the launch of Imagine Ireland, Prime Minister Cowen announced the creation of a new state position for Irish Cultural Ambassador. The position was created out of recommendations made during the first Global Irish Economic Forum regarding the potential to tap into Ireland's foreign business interests. Or, as suggested by Minister Cowen, it was a role "rooted in the connection between culture and the economy" (Marlowe 2010). The Minister announced the Cultural Ambassador position on St. Patrick's Day 2010 alongside its appointee, Irish actor Gabriel Byrne. Minister Cowen also tasked Byrne with his first responsibilities as Cultural Ambassador, which included the design of an overseas cultural program slated for 2011.

Over the next ten months, Byrne devoted his efforts to the development of programming

for the “ambitious season of arts” taking place the following year, eventually settling on the name and theme “Imagine Ireland.” The inspiration for this concept was his perception that American audiences had a “very limited view of Irish arts” founded upon such figures as Yeats, Brian Friel, and U2, with far less knowledge of the broader range of cultural activity occurring in Ireland (Marlowe 2010). Byrne proposed the name as an opportunity for both American and Irish audiences to reflect on the way they understood Irish arts in the 21st century. This aim was evident at the program’s launch on January of 2011, where Byrne urged “Americans of all generations to imagine Ireland for themselves” (*The Irish Times* 2011).

Despite his initial hopefulness for the national cultural undertaking, Byrne’s experiences working on Imagine Ireland and The Gathering caused a major shift in his outlook. This was made known to the public two months prior to the launch of The Gathering when Byrne participated in an interview on Today FM (New York). During the interview, he criticized Imagine Ireland and The Gathering on several bases, referring to the latter as a “scam” and questioning the veracity of the government’s commitment to culture (*The Irish Times* 2012). His views stemmed partially from the fact that state officials had decided not to maintain many of the frameworks and resources that had been developed for Imagine Ireland on a permanent basis. He also drew attention to the fact that The Gathering called upon economically disenfranchised emigrants to “come home” and provide economic relief to their home government.

Byrne levied further criticism against the Irish government during another radio interview in January 2014, at which point he suggested that the government only “[paid] lip-service to the arts” (Quoted in Holland 2014). He added that he did not feel that the government really cared about the arts given that “they [didn’t] really put anything in place that indicate[d] they [were] serious about it” (Holland 2014). Compared to how much state officials speak to the importance

of the arts, he felt that “culture and the arts [were] just a second-class portfolio” within the political hierarchy. Byrne concluded on the point that everyday people were “much more interested in hearing about the cultural life of Ireland...than they were about the economics as a way of talking to people about the kind of people...we are” (Holland 2014). This commentary was intended to implicate the state’s growing focus on revenue within program and funding decision-making.

Byrne’s remarks on the dissymmetry between state rhetoric on the arts and national policymaking foregrounded similar sentiments that were voiced during the Ireland 2016 program two years later. This was especially true regarding an event known as “Ireland 100,” a three-week cultural festival in Washington D.C. at which Prime Minister Enda Kenny spoke on the merits of artistry to American delegations. The event, which was held at the Kennedy Center between May 17th and June 5th, 2016, brought together over 500 Irish and Irish-American artists to perform before some of Ireland’s most important governmental and corporate interests in America. Among those participating in the Ireland 100 festivities were the Vice President of the United States, Joe Biden, members of the US Congress, and executives from several of Ireland’s American business partners.

The Ireland 100 program was, as other overseas events, presented to the American delegation as a celebration of shared Irish-American cultural history as expressed through mutual participation in Irish arts. Despite this framing, Ireland 100 received a tremendous amount of criticism from artists at home on the basis of Minister Kenny’s remarks at the event’s opening gala. The first commentary that drew a strong response was the Minister’s suggestion that Ireland was eager to establish arts and culture, “not as an elegant add-on to what the marketers would call our ‘national offering,’ ...but to “represent us, as the essence of who we are as a still-

young Republic and ancient people” (Department of the Taoiseach 2016). Ironically, this commentary appeared after the Minister had reaffirmed the need for leveraging international cultural affinities to the success of the Irish economy. The more controversial aspect of Minister Kenny’s speech was his recitation of a quote from President John F. Kennedy. The Minister echoed Kennedy’s words: “I see little of more importance of the future of our country and our civilisation than full recognition of the artist” (Department of the Taoiseach 2016).

The Minister’s comments might not have appeared polemical save for the fact that Minister Kenny had just announced plans for what many artists considered a “downgrade” of arts within governmental politics. More specifically, the re-elected Fine Gael government had announced earlier that month that the “Department of Arts, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht” would be reconstituted as the “Department of Regional Development, Rural Affairs, Arts and the Gaeltacht.” The new title was to reflect an expanded remit that would include a project to establish broadband internet across the nation, a three-year plan to support enterprise in rural towns, and a five-year plan to reinvigorate the Irish postal system (DAHG 2017a). The re-imagining of the Department caused wide concern among the Irish arts community, which interpreted the change as evidence that Irish government officials did not place real value in the arts. These notions were fueled by the fact that the planned changes appeared to prioritize expenditure only on new capital development rather than the restoration of funding for arts and heritage. There was also a fear that the new “Frankenstein Department” would spread the Minister’s attention too thinly over a range of seemingly incoherent policy areas such that the arts would slip from being a focal point of the agenda (O’Halloran 2016).

The apparent dissymmetry between Minister Kenny’s commentary on the importance of Irish arts abroad and the “downgrade” of arts at home elicited a tremendous blowback from the

media and the Irish arts community. In the weeks following Ireland 100, a range of Irish periodicals featured articles lambasting the Fine Gael government for commodifying culture and instituting a policy of “lip-service and neglect” (Devlin 2016). This was joined by criticism from some of Ireland’s largest arts advocacy groups, including the National Campaign for the Arts (NCFA). The organization and its members responded to the departmental changes and to Minister Kenny’s remarks with an online petition requesting that Fine Gael “give arts, culture, and heritage the respect it deserves” (O’Brien 2016). An accompanying statement by NCFA noted the fact that state officials had “chosen the Centenary of the Rising to push the arts further into a corner (O’Brien 2016). This was ironic given that many of the Rising’s leaders were themselves poets, musicians, language preservationists, and other advocates for culture.

Growing discontent with the disparity between state rhetoric and actual policy intervention was also communicated by several of my Irish collaborators. Discussion on these issues occurred largely across Facebook, a forum that many musicians had been using throughout the recession to discuss ongoing changes in Irish cultural governance. One of the individuals who commented on the departmental shuffle was Harry Bradley, a well-known Irish traditional flute player and administer of The United Artists’ Union of Ireland Facebook group. Bradley posted to the group’s page the day after the opening gala for Ireland 100, providing the following commentary:

It appears that Kenny and his government, rather, is trying to further ghettoize arts and Irish artists by downgrading the arts’ representation at ministerial level while claiming arts/artists’ successes when it suits him, even if said artists have had to flee overseas to work and survive, as the state has so often facilitated before.
(Bradley 2016a)

Bradley’s remarks were intended to draw attention to what Gabriel Byrne had noted previously—this being, that the same regime that had forced many Irish artists to seek employment outside of

Ireland now sought to benefit from projecting the image of a vibrant, supported arts scene. This was also to explicate the state's tendency to draw upon the arts when it suited a specific agenda.

Martin Donohoe also weighed in on what he viewed as the frequently misleading celebration of arts by state officials during the Ireland 2016 proceedings. For instance, a month prior to the launch of Ireland 100, he sent a message over Facebook to identify the fact that the arts performances on the centenary of the Easter Rising were not open to the public. Rather, the large display of parades, concerts, and other performances were produced on an invitational basis for Irish politicians and their guests. Martin also supported the notion that the arts had been "downgraded" that year, despite the broad posturing of arts during Ireland 2016 (Personal Interview with Martin Donohoe 2016). The news that the Department of Arts was being restructured served only to deepen his sense that the artist's social not benefitted from the national program agenda.

Irish Arts and the Social Safety Net

The frustrations Irish artists cited regarding lip-service to the arts constituted a reaction to far more than the state's three year-long cultural festivals. Rather, the individuals who contributed to this research also criticized what they saw as the state's longer-term failure to support Irish artists through social service programs. This involved artists' observations of gaps in social housing supports and service eligibility requirements. Artists also drew attention to the dissymmetry between social service provision in Ireland and in other European countries. These gaps existed well before the onset of the recession; however, the economic collapse increased artists' encounters with such areas of the national welfare infrastructure to a much greater degree. These factors deepened artists' sense that neglect and undervaluation of arts were

systemic in government rather than merely the casual results of a recession.

I was first made aware of the above issues through my participation in a series of cultural policy meetings that were hosted in Ireland almost immediately upon my arrival to the country on September 12th, 2015. Two months prior to this date, the Minister of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht announced that the Department would be leading an initiative to develop the first national cultural policy in Irish history. Ireland has, of course, had cultural policies since national independence; however, there has never been a unified strategy for culture at the national level. Minister Humphreys and the Department sought to fill this void beginning in July 2015 through the appointment of a Steering Committee. The Committee's main task was to draft a discussion document for identifying the areas to be incorporated into a national cultural policy. Both the resulting policy document and the broader initiative were given the title of Culture 2025 to indicate the initiative's ten-year span.

While the development of Culture 2025 was initially restricted to the Steering Committee, it was announced shortly before the onset of my fieldwork that the Department would be holding a series of townhall meetings to allow for public feedback. It was in following this announcement that I wrote to the Department and attained permission from Fergal Ó Coighligh (Department Secretary) to attend the six Culture 2025 policy events, which occurred on September 15th (Cavan), September 25th (Cork), October 2nd (Galway), October 8th (Limerick), October 13th (Kilkenny), and October 19th (Dublin).¹ Access to the policy meetings provided me an opportunity to gain insight into the government's relationship with the arts sector. Each meeting drew 50-200 participants from Ireland's cultural sector, including nonprofit arts administrators, full-time professional performers, university art students and "built" heritage

¹ Due to illness, I was unable to attend the meeting in Limerick.

sector representatives.²

Officials from the Department of Arts guided the course of each Culture 2025 policy meeting, allowing for up to an hour of time for participants to lend feedback on the discussion document. Not surprisingly, the questions and commentaries artists offered during these segments revolved around the various challenges that they were facing under increasingly pressing economic circumstances. Many of the issues that were cited in these conversations have been highlighted previously. For instance, several artists remarked on the government's overconfidence in adopting a more philanthropic funding model for arts. Other attendees sought assurance that the state understood the challenges artists were facing in rural areas, often insisting that they had not seen any evidence of economic recovery. Yet still, others voiced the concern that Department personnel did not have the requisite experience or investment to make good on the commitments that were being discussed as part of Culture 2025.

Notwithstanding the above, the most enlightening aspect of the policy meetings was the fact that many of the participants did not view the types of issues they were citing as particularly "new." Many of the artists who elected to speak at the policy meetings sought to link their present challenges with a long-term pattern of marginalization and neglect. As evidence to this suggestion, several individuals brought forward various statistics, personal anecdotes, and other forms of testimony they had prepared to demonstrate that their economic conditions were founded upon longstanding systemic issues. This had the effect of challenging the state's ability to ascribe artists' present circumstances unilaterally to the recession, rather, urging them to treat the fallout as but a more exaggerated instance of what artists encounter on a regular basis. Their commentary also drew attention to the need for policymakers to treat "sustainability" as their

² "Built" heritage in Ireland refers to both natural landmarks and manmade historical structures that are protected by the Irish government. This can include castles, national parks, and other facilities.

target, rather than the restoration of the same pre-recessionary frameworks that were viewed as devaluing of artists' work in the first place.

Among the issues that were cited during the cultural policy meetings was the observation that most full-time professional artists were receiving incomes that bordered on the poverty line prior to the bailout. This issue was discussed at the policy meeting in Cork, where one individual informed the Department of Arts that the average income for artists before the collapse was around €15,000 (DAHG 2015b). The figure was likely drawn from a report published by the Arts Council (2010) and entitled *The Living and Working Conditions of Artists in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland*. The report estimated that artists' average incomes as of 2008 were €20,501 (male artists) and €9,789 (female artists), respectively (The Arts Council 2010). It was also found that 50% of individuals were earning €8,000 or less from their work as artists, which would place them well below the poverty threshold of €12,409 if receiving no other form of income (e.g. social welfare, pension, etc.).³ These figures dropped even further following Ireland's entry into austerity proceedings, with it being estimated that many artists were earning less than €10,000 annually (Siggins 2015).

The commentaries artists provided regarding their relatively low occupational earnings frequently segued into broader conversations regarding Irish social services. Several artists shared the fact that they had become increasingly reliant upon state unemployment benefits, social housing, and other external support due to a further decline in incomes. Their experiences in screening for such services, however, were characterized by negative encounters due to inadequacies in state classification systems. For instance, one artist from the Galway policy meeting noted how the social welfare system did not have an appropriate way to categorize the

³ Based on figures produced by the Central Statistics Office (2015).

type of work professional artists do and particularly their intermittent incomes (DAHG 2015c). This made it a significant challenge for her to receive state resources. Another individual from the Galway meeting noted that his experience with social service personnel had included being asked: “when [he] was going to give up [his] hobby and get a real job” (DAHG 2015c). He offered this experience largely as an example of how there were not only legal barriers preventing artists from utilizing state supports but also potential prejudices against artists.

Another issue that generated much conversation at the policy meetings was Ireland’s continually low level of arts investment relative to other European countries. The detail most frequently cited was that the Irish contribution to culture as a factor of GDP was only one-sixth the average of EU nations. This figure likely stemmed from the National Campaign for the Arts, which helped to disseminate research showing that arts and cultural subsidy represented 0.1% of Irish GDP compared to a 0.6% investment across the EU (Mangan 2016). Artists participating in the Culture 2025 proceedings also noted other areas where they felt that countries within the EU were more efficiently making use of resources for artists. For instance, it was noted on multiple occasions how France had provided enhanced funding to certain arts supports following the recession. Scotland’s cultural infrastructure was similarly offered as an example of how some European nations have managed reduced funding.

The commentaries offered during the Culture 2025 proceedings, including those just described, have in common the fact that they are relevant to the majority of Irish artists irrespective of their artistic idiom. Beyond such areas, however, the artists whom I met also cited several genre-specific issues. This was especially true of traditional musicians, whose experiences in many ways exemplify the fact that artists were living without comprehensive public supports well before the economic collapse. Some of the gaps in the support framework

have been previously, including the fact that the traditional arts have only recently begun to receive targeted support despite frequently featuring in national marketing campaigns. There are additional reasons why traditional musicians feel that the state has not adequately valued artists.

With respect to the above, one of the observations traditional musicians cited as reflecting national neglect of Irish music was the low level of airplay domestic recordings received on Irish broadcast radio. Indeed, the majority of traditional musicians whom I met felt that part of the reason why they struggled to make a living from their work was the infrequency with which their music appeared on both national and private radio stations. Martin Donohoe, Gay McKeon, and several other musicians drew marked attention to the fact that traditional music airplay tends to be restricted to periods of extremely low listenership, such as during weekend bloc segments or on weeknights after ten o'clock.⁴ Conversely, most music played during peak listenership is sourced from America, Canada, Australia, and other English-speaking countries. The influence of foreign music on Irish radio is so prevalent, in fact, that a growing number of Irish artists are now dropping their Irish accents for the purpose of emulating American musicians. Moreover, the definitions most radio stations use to determine what is "Irish music" are flexible to the point of treating music by Rhianna, Kylie Minogue, and One Direction as "Irish" simply for having been recorded in an Irish studio. This was communicated to me by the director of IASACA, Sinead Troy, and was featured in a recent *Irish Times* article (O'Halloran 2014).⁵

Since as early as the 1990s, Irish traditional musicians have petitioned the government to solve the domestic airplay issue by instating a 30% to 40% domestic quota. This petition is underpinned by the fact that most musicians do not see the lack of airplay as an issue for the

⁴ Martin Donohoe is himself a radio broadcaster, running an Irish music program on Northern Sound Radio every Saturday evening.

⁵ Personal Interview with Sinead Troy 2016.

private market, but rather, as part of the moral and cultural imperative of the state. Their reasoning is in many cases inspired by what happened in France in 1994 when a 40% domestic airplay quota was put in place to limit the encroachment of English-language songs on the radio. It has also been suggested that establishing a quota is economically expedient given the chain of events that is sparked when individuals consume music by native artists. The purchase of domestic music is of benefit not only to local artists but also to the entire industry surrounding music production (e.g., performance venues, marketing agencies, etc.).



Figure 4.3: Northern Sound Radio Station, Cavan, Ireland, 2013. Martin Donohoe took this photo one Saturday evening during a 2-hour traditional music program he broadcasts weekly (Photograph by Kevin Levine).

One of the many consequences of the economic recession is that musicians have in increasing number revisited and intensified earlier calls for the institution of a radio quota. This is not all that surprising, as the economic fallout has pushed more artists to investigate why life

seems to be increasingly challenging. The search for answers was apparent across the conversations I had with traditional musicians, who near universally cited the lack of radio quotas as a factor of state disregard for artists. Ciara O’Grady was one of several individuals who advocated for the promotion of Irish musicians on the radio, citing her especial frustration with the amount of American popular music played on Irish broadcasts:

We’re exposed to enough of it as it is. It’s on the television. It’s on the internet. We don’t need the amount of it that we have... There are obviously massive audiences for Rhianna and Beyoncé... I’m not saying to get rid of all that, but why not start creeping in a few Irish artists into the middle of those playlists and get people listening to them a bit more. I mean that’s how you get people on to it. (Personal Interview with Ciara O’Grady 2015)

Dublin-based guitarist, Shane Hennessy, was another individual who supported the idea of an Irish music quota, echoing a common sentiment among Irish musicians that there is a moral right for the state to ensure that the music can succeed domestically:

I’ve always supported the idea of a certain quota for Irish music because, at the end of the day, this is the home market. This is where you would think it would be most successful. Irish people, up and coming, doing gigs around—they should be played on the radio; They should be given as much exposure as possible. (Personal Interview with Shane Hennessy 2015)

Beyond voicing such commentaries, a number of traditional musicians have begun to take their call for a radio quota directly to government officials. This was especially the case around the time of my 2015-2016 fieldwork when many artists saw an opportunity to move the petition forward as part of the new election cycle. For instance, Irish traditional musicians John Sheahan (Dubliners) and Phil Coulter staged a musical sit-in outside the Houses of the Oireachtas in December of 2016 in support of a radio quota bill (Brennan 2016). I have also heard of many occasions where musicians have sent personal correspondences to the Department of Arts to request quota legislation. This includes the folk and traditional singer Daniel McCarthy, who had an opportunity to speak with Minister Heather Humphreys several years

previously about the potential for a quota (Personal Interview with Daniel McCarthy 2015). Neither the bill nor individual petitions have moved forward as of the time of this writing.

Apart from domestic airplay concerns, another common issue that was cited by my collaborators was the sheer lack of full-time employment opportunities for musicians. This involved three distinct claims. First, many individuals expressed disappointment that the government had not created many direct employment opportunities for musicians. Their basis of comparison included classical music and sport, which have a number of state-supported posts. Second, the Irish government has developed a tendency of contracting *Comhaltas Ceoiltoirí Éireann* whenever there is a need for traditional artists. Martin Donohoe explained that *Comhaltas* is known for paying artists lower than average rates for the types of activities it conducts at the behest of government officials. Consequently, many artists would prefer that the state pays for artists' services directly. Third, many traditional musicians view the lack of private sphere activities as indicative of governmental neglect much in the way they see the lack of airplay quotas as a national issue. The argument is that traditional musicians, as practitioners of a native art, should not find it overly challenging to find employment under the stewardship of a government that purportedly values native arts.

Traditional musicians expressed concerns over the lack of full-time job opportunities on a one-on-one basis throughout the duration of my fieldwork. It was not until a year following my return from Ireland, however, that this issue began to receive public attention. This occurred in the context of a state-sponsored arts festival held on Easter Monday 2017. As part of its contribution to the event, the national Irish language radio service, Raidió na Gaeltachta, broadcasted a public discussion on the relationship between traditional music and the state. The program participants included Tiarnán Ó Duinchinn (uilleann pipes) and Toner Quinn (fiddle),

who spent much of the hour segment discussing the lacking availability of public support. Toner Quinn posted what he believed to be his main takeaway from the discussion, noting:

On Monday, I took part in a discussion on traditional music and the state on RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta. My main point was that, in 2017, we need to judge the strength of state supports on basically one thing: how many permanent, full-time jobs are there in traditional music now? I reckon there's around 30... We need a new plan. (Quinn 2017b)

As a point of comparison, Quinn also drew attention to the fact that the government employs 120 musicians alone through the RTÉ national orchestras. This commentary was intended to shed light on what he saw as the government's failure to establish an appropriate institutional environment to support traditional music.

Toner's perception that the state had neglected the needs of the traditional music community was inexorably tied to growing state aims for commodifying traditional music. This was made clear in a short article Quinn (2017a) penned for the *Journal of Music* a month before his participation in the RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta broadcast. In the article, Quinn indicated that the forthcoming discussion would center on whether traditional music appears to be "taken seriously" by the state or if the genre seems to be exploited largely when there is a diplomatic visit. This was conveyed through the article's title, which inquired, "Is Traditional Music the state's 'Background Music?'" (Quinn 2017a). Also included in the program announcement was a photo of former Vice President Joe Biden sitting in front of a group of young traditional musicians during his visit to Co. Mayo, Ireland (June 2016). Vice President Biden's visit was announced two months earlier at the Ireland 100 festival. In this context, the inclusion of the photo was intended to provide an illustration of how purported celebrations of traditional music are often used as prop-staging for an economic agenda.

Rising Living Costs and Urban Gentrification

The growing sense among Irish artists that state officials placed value in the economy but not artists was also tied to their experience of urban gentrification, which was ironically linked to Irish cultural policy. The greatest concern for many Irish artists was undoubtedly the rapid rise of housing prices. During the period in which I was living in Ireland, rental prices were estimated to be around 10% higher than they were at the lowest point in 2008. This underpinned a national average rental cost of €1,131 per month or €13,572 per year, which set a record high for Ireland (Ó Fatharta 2017). This amount would exhaust the entire annual earnings of most Irish artists. The property market was no less challenging for those looking to purchase homes, with new Central Bank policies raising the typical amount required for a home deposit from 10% to 20% (Hancock 2014). Growth in mortgage and rental prices is especially evident in Ireland's larger urban cities, which saw increases of 3.7% (Dublin), 7.4% (Cork), 10.1% (Galway), and 6.9% (Limerick) in 2016 alone (Reddan 2017).

The disproportionality between artists' incomes, on the one hand, and rising living costs, on the other, have made it exceptionally challenging for traditional musicians. Most of the musicians whom I met between the ages of eighteen and thirty could not afford overall living costs without splitting rent with two to three other parties. The alternative choice for many was to live at home. Luke Deaton noted, however, that living with parents could make one ineligible for vital state unemployment and Jobseeker supports. This situation has led many young musicians to be trapped in a consistent state of deprivation. The musicians I met above the age of 30 also struggled with residential pricing. For instance, Ciarán Ó Maonaigh mentioned how the economy provided poor prospects for musicians interested in raising families. To do so would often require artists and their partners to negotiate or put aside their artistic ambitions.

The general rise in living costs might initially appear to be removed from a discussion of cultural commodification or value. The reality, however, is that the strategies government has been using to leverage arts towards economic growth are inextricably tied to the processes contributing to rising living costs. Over the last few decades, the Irish government has pursued economic strategies that encourages conglomerations of creative industry personnel (i.e., Florida's "creative class") and multinational businesses in major cities. This growth strategy informed by early twenty-first century ideas about "creative cities" or "creative clusters," which suggest that blends of high-growth industries and cultural will increase productivity and attract foreign investment. In the Irish case, the rapid conglomeration of multinational corporations in Dublin, Galway, Limerick, and other major cities has caused a significant spike in urban living costs. This has led to a rather ironic situation in which many Irish musicians can no longer afford to live in the same areas marketed abroad to foreign investors as creative or innovative "hubs."

The process described above, which amounts to one of gentrification, was initiated in the 1990s to 2000s. It was during this period that the Irish government began to place an increased emphasis on attracting foreign interest in high-growth technology and service industries. The state's strategy for selling Ireland to multinationals relied heavily upon the country's corporate-friendly tax environment, large youth demographic, large number of graduates in technology fields, and a rich cultural atmosphere. By the early 2000s, these factors had contributed to the influx of multinational tech companies into Irish cities. This included IBM (Dublin), Apple (Cork), Logitech (Cork), SAP (Dublin), Google (Dublin), Amazon (Dublin), Cisco (Galway), Facebook (Dublin), and Twitter (Dublin), and others. Ireland generally became the headquarters for much of the European technology sector, although for tax reasons, many of the companies established in Ireland do not offer services to the Irish consumer market.

With the onset of the economic crisis in 2008, many state officials became concerned that the investments just described would begin to lag or that companies would start to pull out of the Irish market. To prevent against either possibility, the Irish government doubled-down on its efforts to create an attractive environment for foreign investors. This interest was expressed in the government's *Smart Economy* document, which laid out plans for building a modernized Irish economy and a related marketing campaign known as "The Innovation Island." These concepts were joined in the following excerpt from the *Smart Economy* strategy report:

A key feature of the Smart Economy is building the innovation or 'ideas' component of the economy through investment in human capital and its ability and effectiveness in translating ideas into valuable processes, products and services. It has the objective of harnessing the ingenuity and creativity of people to drive research, innovation and commercialisation. It has, at its core, the creation of an exemplary research, innovation and commercialisation ecosystem so as to create 'The Innovation Island.' (Department of the Taoiseach 2008, 33)

In short, Ireland's strategy for maintaining high levels of foreign direct investment was to construct creative environments. This was to call for a strategy in which the value of creativity was to be framed exclusively on the basis of its exchange-value.

The strategy document laid out several recommendations for how Ireland could create such an innovation-led, creative environment, entailing both infrastructural and marketing strategies. For instance, one of the *Smart Economy* recommendations was to improve upon the national capital infrastructures pertaining to digital communications, "green" energy, transportation, tourism, and utilities. The range of proposed capital investments flowed partly out of the observation that "high-end, innovative, 'silicon-valley,' type businesses do not usually locate in poor quality environments" (Department of the Taoiseach 2008, 82). This type of thinking is what informed the reconstruction of the Department of Arts in 2016, a project that sought to expand business and innovation efforts to rural areas. The strategy document also

suggested that Ireland should work harder to assert itself “not only as an open enterprise economy...but also as an open entrepreneurial economy with significant comparative advantage” (37). This entailed further promotion of nation’s already strong creative “brand.”

In addition to the above, the recovery strategy also identified several ways the arts and creative industries directly fit into broader plans for creating a smart economy. The emphasis was placed especially upon the types of linkages that were seen to exist between creativity and broader forms of business innovation. For instance, the *Smart Economy* document celebrated the fact that arts and the creative industries were the sources of “high value added input” into such sectors as tourism, marketing, computing, e-commerce, and digital technologies. The suggested confluence between the creative sector (i.e., arts, culture, and the creative industries) and corporate sphere resonated especially with the concept of the “creative cluster.” This term is often used in policymaking to describe the aggregation of creative industries and commercial businesses in metropolitan areas. Creative clustering is encouraged from an urban planning standpoint as it is believed that linking businesses with creative industry personnel adds value to goods and services by catalyzing innovation. The creative cluster has become a major driving force in public planning in Ireland, underpinning the recommendation that arts and culture must “be based on engaging and attracting the business sector” (Department of the Taoiseach 80).

Government efforts to engender and market the smart economy have proven successful from the standpoint that Ireland has continued to draw foreign investment. The continuing influx of multinational tech companies into Ireland’s burgeoning “creative hubs,” however, has had the inevitable effect of raising the cost of living in Irish urban areas. Indeed, the cost of rent and mortgage prices is tied to the increasing concentration of large, multinational entities in Dublin, Galway, Cork, and other Irish urban areas. This is due largely to the high concentration of jobs in

Irish cities. It additionally linked to the fact that private development projects are increasingly geared towards wealthy clientele and an associated cosmopolitan lifestyle. “Development” in major Irish cities has been characterized especially by the erection of high-rise luxury apartments and upscale retail spaces. This is especially evident in the Docklands area of Dublin, which has transformed from a working-class neighborhood into to the heart of Ireland’s “Silicon Valley.”



Figure 3 Figure 4.4: Docklands area of Dublin, known informally as Dublin’s “Silicon Valley,” given that it is home to the European headquarters for numerous multinational organizations that have entered the city over the last decade (Photograph by Kevin Levine).

The conglomeration of affluent multinationals in major cities has made it more challenging for musicians and other individuals in relatively low-earning occupations to reside centrally in metropolitan areas, pay for studio space, or run organizations. This has led to a set of circumstances in which traditional musicians are finding it harder to live in the same areas most frequently sold abroad as “creative cities.” Hence, the irony of the government’s plans for engendering “creative clusters,” “innovation hubs,” and The Innovation Island is that they have contributed to the marginalization of the same communities upon which they have depended economically. This dynamic suggests that the integration of culture into governmental recovery

plans has involved not only lip-service and neglect but also direct contributions to the dynamics making life challenging for artists. The gentrified landscape of Irish art cities now serves as a visual indication of the decision to prioritize gross domestic product over low-income support.

Ciarán Ó Maonaigh and Martin Donohoe initially drew my attention to rising living costs in Irish cities. Save for brief remarks about rental and mortgage prices, however, the majority of the musicians that I met in Ireland did not draw direct connections between governmental recovery plans, the influx of multinationals, and rising living expenses. The exception was Harry Bradley, whose personal interactions with me began largely over Facebook. The commentary I have in mind was offered in the form of a post on the United Artists' Union of Ireland Facebook page regarding an article in *The Guardian*. The article focused on remarks made by the Minister for Digital and Culture (UK), who cited the observation that start-ups and entrepreneurs tend to “cluster around the creative industries that make up a city’s cultural quarter” (Hancock 2016). Stephen Pritchard (2016), the article’s author, weaved these remarks into the general observation neoliberal states increasingly view artists as the “embodiment of autonomous, small-scale capitalist expansion” (Pritchard 2016).

The thrust of Pritchard’s argument was that neoliberal governance encourages the movement of artists into cities, given that these groups make areas attractive to potential investors. In Pritchard’s words, artists serve as “the neoliberal state’s troops...[being] the first to move into post-industrial, post-welfare wastelands...and sow the seeds of cultural capital” (Pritchard 2016). The problem identified by Pritchard was that this dynamic tends to gentrify urban spaces, eventually displacing artists. This is not seen as an issue from the standpoint of the government, however, as artists move on, developing new sites for investment, and repeat the cycle of gentrification elsewhere (Pritchard 2016). Bradley’s contribution to this discussion was

the suggestion that the article was “of great relevance to the neoliberal ‘gentrification’ of traditional working-class areas of inner Dublin city” (Bradley 2016b).

While it might be the case that only Bradley directly commented upon links between state recovery agenda and urban gentrification, there is no doubt that such dynamics have contributed to musicians’ sense that the government has failed to account for artists and other disadvantaged groups in recovery planning. I found it to be the case that Irish musicians regularly suggested homologous relationships between how the government managed the arts and the way state officials managed the general economy. For instance, Fiach Moriarty, Ted Kelly, and several of my other collaborators noted the complications that arose in privatizing Irish water utilities as a parallel to poor decision-making in the construction of national arts policy (Personal Interviews with Fiach Moriarty and Ted Kelly 2015, 2016). Artists responded similarly to the growing number of permits state officials were issuing to hydraulic fracturing projects in Ireland, which resulted from governmental attempts to pay off Troika debt. In this case, musicians saw the threat to Ireland’s environment, built heritage, and rural communities as symbolic of the state’s broader disregard for Irish arts and culture. This informed the number of traditional musicians wearing “Love Farming, Hate Fracking” shirts during the protests against Shell Oil mentioned in Chapter Three. These and other observations ultimately contributed to the sense that the government had come to value music largely on an economic basis.

CONCLUSION

To summarize the points made in this chapter, artists’ experiences of the economic recession led to a relative consensus that the government did not place value in the arts beyond their economic import. At best, artists felt that state officials had neglected artists’ positionalities

within national recovery plans or had underestimated the need for frameworks to support their livelihoods. At worst, many individuals saw national recovery plans as overtly exploitative of musicians' labor and as part of a systemic pattern of neglect. State efforts to commoditize traditional music ultimately led Irish musicians to perceive a devaluation of arts in national policymaking. These issues serve as primary examples of disaster capitalism, with recessionary policy advancing finance capital ahead of musicians' livelihoods and those of other Irish citizens.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: IRELAND “AFTER” THE RECESSION

It has now been half a decade since the declaration of Ireland’s exit from the recession in 2013, and the country has begun to experience rapid economic growth. As of the time of this writing, Ireland is once again the fastest growing economy in the European Union and has maintained this title for the fifth year in a row (Hamilton 2018). This shift has been accompanied by a reduction the unemployment rate, which is anticipated to reach 5% by the end of 2018 (Burke-Kennedy 2017). The added security associated with these projections has also led to an increase in Irish consumer spending, which has grown by an average of 5% over the last few years. Overall economic growth has led to further increases in national welfare spending, albeit in disproportion with GDP growth. This includes a weekly increase of €5 to all categories of social welfare payments in 2017 (Holland 2016).

Notwithstanding the above, many of the systemic issues identified throughout this dissertation remain. The discussions furnished in Chapter One of this research regarding growing wealth inequality, privatization, and deregulation continue to be relevant. For instance, much of the GDP growth reflected in recent figures is representative of top earners and especially a rising cadre of Irish “property millionaires.” The number of individuals in Ireland earning over one million Euros has increased from around 20,000 in 2007 to a staggering 125,000 people by 2017 (Brennan 2017). Conversely, figures from the Central Statistics Office and Social Justice Ireland suggest that around 800,000 Irish citizens continue to live in poverty (Sherlock 2017). Much of the new wealth creation is also reflective of property inflation, which continues to present challenges for Irish musicians and other artists.

Chapter Two’s discussion regarding welfare retrenchment in the arts also continues to be

of importance, with Arts Council funding set for €68.2 million in 2018. This is still 18% less than peak subsidy in 2007, falling behind Prime Minister Leo Varadkar's campaign pledge to double arts funding by 2024. In the meantime, musicians and other artists continue to seek recourse in crowdfunding and limited charitable giving in order to sustain their careers. There are also concerns that much of the projected public subsidy growth will be utilized to further leverage foreign investment rather than to fill general gaps in social provision. For instance, the economic strategies described in Chapter Three continue to be reflected in the state's "Creative Ireland" campaign (2017). The program, which further reifies human creativity as the "ultimate economic resource," represents the government's flagship arts initiative and the likely vehicle through which much of the future arts funding will be channeled (DAHG 2017b).

It is more challenging to provide an update on Chapter Four's discussion about value following my return from the field. Continued survey of conversations among Irish musicians over Facebook suggest mixed reactions to what has occurred since the recession, particularly given the rapid pace of policy reform. This attests to the broad range of positions value can occupy between commodity and gift-exchange within capitalist societies. I think it is clear at the least that structural adjustment has left an enduring impression upon the landscape of Irish policy and certainly the relationship between musicians and the state.

Contributions to Ethnomusicology

The dissertation offers several potential contributions to the field of ethnomusicology that I would like to highlight as this project arrives at its conclusion. I discussed in the Introduction that one of the areas I believe this research deviates from many other ethnomusicological studies is its strong emphasis upon the non-performance aspects of musicians' careers. To elaborate on

this point, I have often felt when reading ethnomusicological literature that an element of musicians' "non-musical" life was often missing from the ethnography, thereby flattening the portrait of individual complexity. This has occurred to me most notably in the process of reading literature on the relationship between music, community, and identity. What I found through the ethnographic process is that many of the artists who are explicated in scholarly literature as exponents of Irish indigenous tradition equally identify with other roles they hold in society or other activities in which they participate (e.g. sports, dance, etc.). For instance, I know from my research that performance does not always constitute a musician's primary source of income, that many musicians spend more time in sports practice than playing in pubs, and that the themes of music festivals often have more to do with funding than musicians' personal convictions.

The above commentary is not to suggest that musicians cannot simultaneously value and identify with multiple aspects of their lives (they do), but rather it is to further attest to the need for ethnomusicologists to be purposeful in representing musician's lives in a holistic manner. Most ethnomusicologists are already doing this; however, there are several junctures between musicians' "musical" and "non-musical" lives the present research touches upon that I have not seen discussed as often in ethnomusicology. This includes my analysis of the intersections between music and taxation, medical insurance, property rates, educational expenses, and other "extra-musical" areas that significantly frame musicians' lives and opportunities *as musicians*. This research provides further testimony to the importance of understanding musicians' performance lives in the context of their other engagements.

Another contribution I hope that this dissertation offers to ethnomusicology is its balance between the use of quantitative data and qualitative ethnography. Throughout my tenure in ethnomusicology, qualitative ethnographic approaches to research has been repeatedly

emphasized as one of the relative strengths of the field and a key differentiator from other disciplines. This has been especially true in instances where ethnomusicology is seen to problematize the “economistic” or generally “non-ethnographic” approaches of other fields. In the process of conducting research in Ireland, however, I found that many musicians just as readily appealed to quantitative data and macroeconomic calculation in framing their sense of “meaning” as they did in the types of experiences that ethnomusicologists are trained to investigate. For instance, many of the statistics and economic patterns referenced in this dissertation were initially brought to my attention by traditional musicians themselves. This included figures regarding the percentage of arts funding to Irish GDP, of public funding relative to philanthropic funding, of taxation rates, of property costs, and so forth.

The point that I am attempting to make regarding the above commentary is that quantitative field methods and economic data are in no way antithetical to the qualitative ethnographic tradition that characterizes ethnomusicology. Neither must methodological approaches that take economic calculation into account be considered “top-down” relative to the “on-the-ground” experiences of musicians. In the case of the present research, it was necessary for me to conduct an ethnography of Irish economic history in order to elucidate the types of opinions traditional musicians were developing about music. In short, musicians’ “on-the-ground” experiences were filtered through their sense of “top-down” socioeconomic processes.

I felt somewhat ill-equipped at the initial part of my fieldwork in studying the above dynamics given both the strong bias in ethnomusicology towards qualitative ethnography and hesitancy with anything that hints at economic reductionism. I think it is telling that my training in ethnomusicological field methods did not incorporate discussion of quantitative analytical techniques that I learned as an undergraduate anthropology student. I do not mean to say that

ethnomusicology should stray from qualitative approaches, but rather, I mean to echo Tim Rice's (2017) observation that ethnomusicology "seems more oriented towards problems, questions, issues, and themes, which can have the effect of limiting data collection" to those particular areas (29). I am merely proposing that "methodology" or "methodological tradition" should accompany the list of potentially limiting factors in one's data collection.

In addition to giving rise to methodological considerations, I hope that this dissertation also makes contributions to topics of theoretical importance to ethnomusicology. This includes my discussion of how ideas about the "creative economy" have affected the environments in which musicians live in work. Chapter Three, in particular, described how changing perspectives on "creativity" have led European policymakers and economists to become increasingly interested in placing arts policy in line with tourism and foreign direct investment. Ireland is not unique in this regard, with growing interest in the economic import of creativity and the arts seeping into policymaking and urban planning across much of the globe. This has been true in the U.S., where many city arts agencies are adopting creative economy concepts (e.g., San Francisco, Santa Fe, New York City, etc.). There is also discussion of the creative economy in Australia, which is home to the Creative Industries Innovation Centre, and Britain, where the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport continuously publishes material on the importance of the creative industries.

The extent to which the creative economy discourse has penetrated both the language and construction of arts policy around the globe has had a significant influence upon the living and working conditions of musicians. In Ireland, creative economy ideals have made it more challenging for musicians to advocate on behalf of the arts without appealing to their economic "outputs." New interpretations of creativity have also led to the disappearance of notions that

artistry is any way incommensurable with the creative processes engaged in the corporate sector. This has helped to inform the entry of business concepts into the way that arts are managed while helping to erode the suggestion that arts are more prone to “market failure” than other social goods. Given these dynamics, it is of pivotal importance for ethnomusicologists to continue to study the creative economy’s effects on the lives of musicians.

Another area where this research might be valuable to future ethnomusicological study pertains to my analysis of neoliberal structural adjustment. Drawing upon the work of Naomi Klein, this research has served to highlight what economic recession can mean for musicians in an environment where late capitalism has become a “cultural dominant” (Jameson 1991). As Klein (2007) and others have suggested, economic crisis or other disasters pose the potential to dislodge politico-economic traditions in ways that cannot as readily occur in other contexts. This dissertation supports this conclusion given that the Great Recession aided the penetration of neoliberal economic ideals in Ireland that had been around since the late 1970s. In the context of the arts, this process led government officials to treat the recession as an opportunity to shift to a more privatized arts funding model. This placed a greater burden of responsibility upon Irish musicians in an environment with less institutional support.

Research into the effects of neoliberalism is in no way new to ethnomusicology. This research, however, represents a comprehensive ethnographic investigation of how neoliberal ideals interact with musician’s livelihoods amid a capitalism-induced recession. As such, this research joins a growing body of literature on the impact of major economic or environmental disasters upon the livelihoods of musicians. This includes Matt Sakakeeny’s (2013) research into the impact of Hurricane Katrina upon musicians in New Orleans, Ioannis Tsioulakis’s (2017) investigation of music audiences in post-2008 Greece, and a number of other studies. I suspect

that additional research along this vein will continue to appear in ethnomusicology particularly given the effects of global climate change and rising frequency of natural disasters worldwide. Increasing wealth stratification globally has also engendered the type of inequality and terrain in which the modalities of “disaster capitalism” thrive.

Areas for Continuing Research

Limitations in the scope of my fieldwork prevented my expansion upon a number of areas within this research that I believe are important for further discussion in ethnomusicology. This includes Chapter Four’s analysis of the impact of urban gentrification upon Irish musicians. The chapter described, in particular, how Irish governmental efforts to attract investment in so-called “art cities” had the ironic effect of contributing to the financial inaccessibility of urban living among Irish artists. I believe it is important for ethnomusicologists to take into consideration how concepts like the “creative city” help to inform the financial environments within which musicians live and work. At present, the bulk of the scholarly research pertaining to such links exists within the fields of anthropology, public management, and cultural policy. This includes publications by several researchers from Australia (Scott 2014; Lobato 2006; Gibson 2007), who have discussed how rising property rates in the country have threatened the ability of artists to secure affordable housing, in addition to several studies by Irish scholars (Guinan 2016; Sholette 2017), who have noted similar trends in Dublin and Galway. There are also several periodicals that have discussed the impact of creative economy planning upon artists, including a publication from my home city of Los Angeles that discusses how artists can no longer live in the L.A. “Arts District” (Miranda 2015).

Music scholars have also participated in discussions about music’s links to gentrification

(Novak 2017; Carr 2015), albeit to a lesser extent involving notions of the creative economy. This appears to be an area for expansion in the field given the broad extent to which notions about “creative cities” are driving contemporary arts policy and urban planning strategies in many parts of the globe. In fact, it occurred to me that musicians would in many cases have a greater long-term financial benefit from changes in housing policy than they would from direct increases to public arts subsidies. Discussions among my collaborators were largely focused upon incremental fluctuations in public funding, which might not be the most impactful variable in the spectrum of their finances. I think ethnomusicology would benefit from further analysis of these dynamics, which might assert ethnomusicological scholarship into the processes that lead to policy issues in the first place. It is telling that I did not come across a reference to ethnomusicological publications across the dozens of governmental documents I read in the analysis of the creative economy discourse. Scholars in the fields of economics, cultural studies, and public policy currently dominate this terrain.

Another area I believe would be fruitful for further ethnomusicological research relates to the growing attempts of arts funding institutions (e.g., NGOs, quangos, etc.) to insert themselves into discussions about creativity. This research has made apparent that leadership among Irish arts institutions have mixed feelings about the potential for good arts policies in the context of the creative economy discourse. On the one hand, the administrators with whom I spoke suggested that ideas about the economic import of arts have dangerously overshadowed the non-economic benefits of arts participation within policy development. On the other hand, many of the same individuals have seen opportunities to reify discussions about the economic byproducts of creativity with the understanding that this might be the only way to maintain state interest in arts investment. An indication of this tug-o-war is reflected in the growing number of research

publications Irish NGOs and state institutions are commissioning in order to testify to the economic benefits of arts investment. This includes no less than The Arts Council (2009), which published research on the economic benefits of the arts the year following the onset of the Great Recession. Such research was partially defensive in the sense that it offered a potential reprieve from deepening funding cuts.

I think it would be insightful for ethnomusicologists to investigate how such dynamics at the administrative level play out for musicians. For instance, it was clear in Ireland that efforts to bulk up testimony to the economic import of the arts informed aspects of grant provision. Several of my collaborators in Ireland (e.g. Gay McKeon, Martin Donohoe, etc.) felt especially that “outreach” had become an influential buzzword in grant applications as a way to suggest that a project would draw large audiences and provide “value-for-money.” Martin Donohoe also shared that Arts Council grants applications have enhanced requirements for statistical reporting of project budgets and financial outcomes. These dynamics pose a risk that the success of grant applications will be based increasingly upon one’s adeptness at writing and reporting than upon the projects themselves. Discourse on the economic benefits of arts participation has also trickled into the way that artists speak about their work, with several of my collaborators appealing to the fact that their projects help to “bring business” to various regions relatively devoid of tourism.

CONCLUSION

I can think of no more appropriate way to end this dissertation than to thank again the dozens of musicians, civil servants, nonprofit leaders, cultural policy researchers, and other individuals who contributed to this research. The insights spread throughout the last pages are a testimony to their life’s work, struggles, and achievements, with my role serving merely to

“translate” them into the language we call “ethnomusicology.” It might not bode well for this research, but I hope for their sake that many of the arguments presented in this dissertation become irrelevant and that the future holds less precariousness for a population that contributes so much to the imagination and spirit of society. Composing this conclusion reminds me most especially of my 2014 fieldwork in Sligo, where in the midst of the recession, a homeless individual walked up to two children performing traditional music on a street corner and threw all the coins in his pocket into the open fiddle case at their feet. It reminds me equally of my 2013 fieldwork in Derry, where in the late hours of a festival, I saw a company of musicians and festivalgoers holding hands with one another in a circle, sharing in the most profound vision of community and goodwill to one another. No scenes that I have ever witnessed better represents what music means to the spirit of a people nor the importance of “paying the piper” in an age of unfettered capitalism.



Figure 5.1: Musicians and festival participants joining hands outside of a pub one evening during the Derry *Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann* in 2013 (Photograph by Kevin Levine).

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