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# Traditional Folk Music in a Polarizing Europe | An Expedient to Cultural Sovereignty?

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# Abstract

"Folk" or "traditional" music is commonly used by governments, political movements, and NGOs to bolster cultural identities and to promote cultural heritage. On the one hand, folk music is implemented to assert difference by signifying the particularity of cultures. On the other hand, this particularity undergirds humanitarian music projects where diversity of musical traditions is meant to signify universal values. The efficacy of music in human rights practices has only recently received critical attention, and scholarship on traditional genres in this context is scarce. A critical discussion of contemporary folk music instrumentalization is becoming increasingly urgent, as cultural debates in Europe and beyond are polarizing and nativist populist movements are drawing traditional music into exclusionist, xenophobic, and racist frames of cultural protectionism.

I argue that in times of polarization, music NGOs, governments, and political movements use musical heritage as an expedient to assert or maintain cultural sovereignty. To conceptualize folk music as a resource for humanitarian and political cultural sovereignty claims, I draw on George Yúdice's concept of cultural expediency, Simon Bornschier's "new cultural divide," sovereignty discourse, and (ethno)musicological scholarship. I focus on the humanitarian perspective in a case study of the NGO Jeunesses Musicales International (JMI) and its folk music program Ethno World. Through an analysis of primary sources and JMI's organizational structure, I pose that while adhering to the humanitarian understanding of cultural sovereignty, JMI's network relies on public funding and national policies, placing the network in the domain of cultural sovereignty of the state. Using Ethno Sweden, the first ever Ethno program, as a case study, I examine the gathering in relation to Swedish cultural policy and speculate how it may be affected by the national government's recent shift towards the right. I compare opposing claims of cultural sovereignty where Swedish folk music serves as an expedient and address practical limitations of Ethno Sweden's humanitarianism through twenty-four semi-structured interviews with Ethno participants, folk music activists, and representatives of youth music organizations. Finally, I suggest folk music's expediency to cultural sovereignty leads to a diffusion of political and humanitarian objectives in the cultural heritage arena, a persisting romanticization of traditional folk music genres, and an ineffective reliance on music as a universal language in humanitarian music projects.

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Hanin, participant Ethno Sweden 2021

Ilona, participant Ethno Sweden 2021

Ina Åberg, initiator of Songlines

Jesse, participant Ethno Sweden 2021

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Mary Bergman, former board member FMR GBG

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Rasmus Andersson, former FMF core group member

Rebecca Carter, initiator of FMF core group

Serge Arpin, FMR GBG board member

Simone, participant Ethno Sweden 2021

Theodor Jönsson, Folk You board member

[1] All names are anonymized, save Erik Rask, Gustaf Bäckström Elmelid, Matt Clark, and Peter Ahlbom.

# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AfS | Alternativ för Sverige (“Alternative for Sweden”) |
| AISBL | Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif (“International non-profit association”) |
| BELSPO | Belgian Federal Science Policy Office |
| CAE | Culture Action Europe |
| EC | European Commission |
| EP | European Parliament |
| EU | European Union |
| FIJM | Sécrétariat de Fédération Internationale des Jeunesses Musicales (“Secretariat of the International Federation of Jeunesses Musicales”) |
| FMF | Folkmusiker mot Främlingsfientlighet (“Folk Musicians Against Xenophobia”) |
| FMR GBG | Folkmusiker mot Rasism Göteborg (“Folk Musicians Against Racism Gothenburg”) |
| ICCM | International Centre for Community Music |
| IGO | Intergovernmental Organization |
| JM | Jeunesses Musicales |
| JMI | Jeunesses Musicales International |
| KMH | Kungliga Musikhögskolan (“Royal College of Music”) |
| MACP | Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies |
| MAIS | Musikarrangörer i Samverkan (“Music Organizers in Collaboration”) |
| MUCF | Myndigheten för ungdoms- och Civilsamhällesfrågor (“Agency for Youth and Civil Society Affairs”) |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organization |
| RfoD | Riksförbundet för Folkmusic och Dans (“Swedish Folk Music and Dance Association”) |
| RMS | Regional Musik i Sverige (“Regional Music in Sweden”) |
| SD | Sverigedemokraterna (“The Sweden Democrats”) |
| SSR | Sveriges Spelmäns Riksförbund (“National Organization of Swedish *Spelmän*) |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNOV | United Nations Office at Vienna |
| WYO | World Youth Orchestra |
| YAM | Young Audiences Music |

# Introduction

The historiography of "traditional" or "folk" music from European states is marked by political instrumentalization. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century, the revival, construction, framing, and dissemination of musical heritages has proven a means to sociopolitical ends: to counter anticipated cultural degradation caused by modernization, to strengthen national identities in the face of international labor unionization, and to demarcate rigid ethnic boundaries in support of fascist ideologies. After World War II, the ways in which policymakers instrumentalized "traditional" music in the European political arena shifted. Multilateral agreements on humanitarian values, political stability, and economic integration—designed to maintain the hard-won peace on the European continent—gave rise to both UNESCO (1945) and youth music movement Jeunesses Musicales International (JMI, 1945). Since JMI's incorporation of the folk music program Ethno World in 1990, both organizations and their affiliated NGOs have promoted the increasingly common conviction that preserving musical heritage and keeping musical traditions alive is an effective way to promote peace, tolerance, and respect in Europe and beyond. In the past decades, however, exclusionary ideologies are resurfacing in Europe through neo-nationalist, nativist, and populist campaigns. In increasingly polarizing debates, these campaigns contest the EU's current immigration policy, which allegedly threatens national culture and security. Once again, "traditional" music is drawn into a radical right-wing rhetoric of protectionist national heritage preservation as extension of anti-immigration politics. Meanwhile, the Russian invasion of Ukraine may symbolize the definitive end of the Pax Europaea.

The alleged ability of music to support peacebuilding has only recently started to receive critical attention in scholarship on music and human rights. Though scholars have begun to question underlying universalist claims and the efficacy of humanitarian music projects, critical examination of "folk" or "traditional" music implemented in this context is scarce. Moreover, the asserted humanitarian value of musical heritage preservation has yet to be compared to contemporary xenophobic framing of cultural heritage preservation by the radical right. Such an investigation is called for because musical practices with a traditional or folkloric connotation play a double role: they emphasize variety and diversity of different cultural identities on the one hand (i.e., drawing boundaries), while signifying a deep sense of shared humanity based on the alleged universality of music on the other. A similar discussion in globalization studies may serve as a guideline, where the opposition between the particularity

and universality of culture has gained much attention and, according to Arjun Appadurai, is retraceable to the "twin Enlightenment ideas of the triumphantly universal and the resiliently particular."[1]

This thesis takes this seeming paradox as a starting point to investigate contemporary implementations of musical traditions in Europe. My hypothesis is that *music NGOs, governments, and political movements in a polarizing Europe use musical heritage as an expedient to cultural sovereignty.* I argue that traditional folk music, including associated practices assigned to it by various actors (e.g., cultural groups, politicians, and non-profit organizations), can—at times simultaneously—support the philosophical concepts of both universalism and particularism.[2] In turn, these concepts underpin motives to use folk music to affect social and/or political change. I conceptualize this change as an aspired restoration or safeguarding of cultural sovereignty. The concept of cultural sovereignty plays a leading role in this thesis, precisely because of its contested nature. More than other descriptors such as agency, autonomy, or other indications of self-determination and ownership, cultural sovereignty invokes a discourse of nationhood, cultural policy, and legitimacy that lies at the heart of folk music historiography as well as the current polarization of the European political landscape. Moreover, I believe the concept emphasizes a common tendency to use "folk" music to connect cultural boundaries to territorail ones. Beneath the aim of this thesis—to understand how different actors use traditional folk music as an expedient to cultural sovereignty—thus lies the additional objective to map out how various stakeholders interpret and give meaning to the concept of folk music in the first place.

Whether the implementation of folk music is considered utilitarian, instrumental, or even malignant depends on subjective moral judgements, which I wish to refrain from as much as possible. I therefore conceptualize folk and traditional music as a cultural expedient, following George Yúdice's concept of cultural expediency and culture-as-resource.[3] This perspective helps to explain how folk music can be used as a resource by actors with drastically opposing aims, such as of populist nativists on the one side, and globalists and federalists on the other. Furthermore, Yúdice's concept of expediency helps me to uncover what political, legal, and

[1] As quoted in Roger Mantie and Laura Risk, "Framing Ethno-World: Intercultural Music Exchange, Tradition, and Globalization," White Paper (York, UK: Ethno Research, 2020), 11, https://www.ethnoresearch.org/publication/framing-ethno-world-full-report/. See also Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, vol. 1, Public Worlds (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 27–47.

[2] I use the word "actors" merely as a shorthand for NGOs, governments, and political movements. Though it might yield interesting results, I do not include actor-network theory in the theoretical framework of this thesis.

[3] George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), Kindle.

financial systems support such implementations, to what extent they are limited, and how different stakeholders maneuver through the same systems to cater to their interests and needs.

There is, of course, much to say about the epistemology of "folk" or "traditional" music or culture in general, its constructed or "invented" nature, its allusions to "authenticity," and its connection to conceptions of ethnicity (e.g., religion, language, social norms and values, place of origin, nation, and inherently problematic conceptions of race). Such inquiries are extensively covered in scholarship on folklore, music revival, ethnomusicology, and cultural history.[4] For the purpose of this thesis, however, I adopt an elementary understanding of folk music as the musical practices of a particular cultural group with a shared history, linked to a certain geographical area. I focus on music that is tied to specific cultural or national identities and is often assumed to have premodern and rural roots, unlike commercial folk genres which acquired a "folk" label mainly due to stylistic characteristics or instrumentation. While bearing in mind their constructed nature, I use "folk," "traditional music," and "musical heritage" as somewhat interchangeable qualifiers (guided by the protagonists of the case study), since my interest lies in the different motivations for using musical traditions to affect (social) change rather than whether genres are correctly labeled.

Considering the vast amount of scholarship on music and populism, I direct most of my attention to humanitarian, international, or "globalist" usages of traditional folk music and their connection to cultural sovereignty.[5] JMI and the Ethno World program make a suitable case study in this regard, considering the association's history as post-conflict NGO, its ties to human rights organizations, and its global outreach. Future expansion of this thesis may well include

[4] See, for example, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, Canto edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Philip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Folkloristics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988); Tamara E. Livingston, "Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory," *Ethnomusicology* 43, no. 1 (1999): 66–85; Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[5] On the history of folk and country music and populism, see for example Rhoda Dullea, "Populism and Folklorism in Central European Music Pedagogy of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of the Society for Musicology in Ireland* 4 (2008): 35–53; Matthew Gelbart, "Romanticism, the Folk, and Musical Nationalisms," in *The Cambridge Companion to Music and Romanticism*, ed. Benedict Taylor, 1st ed., Cambridge Companions to Music (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 74–91; Jock Mackay, "Populist Ideology and Country Music," in *All That Glitters: Country Music in America*, ed. George H. Lewis, Popular Music Series (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993), 285–316. For more contemporary accounts of pop music and (nativist) populism, see Lyndon C.S. Way, "Protest Music, Populism, Politics and Authenticity: The Limits and Potential of Popular Music's Articulation of Subversive Politics," *Journal of Language and Politics* 15, no. 4 (2016): 422–45; Justin Patch, "Notes on Deconstructing the Populism: Music on the Campaign Trail, 2012 and 2016," *American Music* 34, no. 3 (2016): 365–401; Benjamin de Cleen, "Popular Music against Extreme Right Populism: The Vlaams Belang and the 0110 Concerts in Belgium," *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 12, no. 6 (November 1, 2009): 577–95; Maximilian Kreter, "'We Are the Streets and We Are the Law, the 4th Reich Is What We Are Fighting for.' Four Decades of White Power Music in Germany: A Historical-Sociological Reconstruction," in *Nationalism and Populism*, ed. Carsten Schapkow and Frank Jacob (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2022), 99–134.

investigations of folk music connotations in contemporary populism and how they relate to earlier (romantic) nationalist constructions of folk culture. To keep in view the issue of political polarization, I include a study of JMI's activities on a local scale: Ethno Sweden. Because the Swedish political landscape has recently shifted towards the right, and folk music has specifically been operationalized by populist campaigns, this study yields insight into how different understandings of cultural sovereignty may collide while opposing actors draw from the common resource of musical heritage.

By choosing JMI, Ethno World, Ethno Sweden, and Swedish cultural politics as subjects of study in relation to the expediency of traditional folk music, I position this thesis alongside two specific bodies of work: Ethno Research and scholarship on current folk music practices in Sweden. The first, Ethno Research, refers to publications by a dedicated research group located at the International Centre for Community Music at York St John University (ICCM).[6] Ethno Research was commissioned by the JMI secretariat in 2019, following a grant awarded to Ethno World by the Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies foundation. Although this thesis draws from materials resulting from an internship at ICCM in 2021, it distinguishes itself from Ethno Research in that it is not commissioned by JMI. As Ethno Research was shaped in consultation with JMI, it lacks certain critical perspectives on the NGO's own operational framework. In this thesis I aim to complement the otherwise thoroughly and meticulously conducted Ethno Research with such a perspective.

The second body of work is carried out by ethnomusicologists such as David Kaminsky and Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, alongside scholars publishing in Swedish such as Dan Lundberg and Gunnar Ternhag, who address contemporary constructions of Swedish cultural identity in relationship to Swedish folk music.[7] Both Kaminsky and Teitelbaum present ethnographies of Swedish folk music enthusiasts, respectively representing communities of practitioners and right-wing conservatives, while unravelling the various connotations of "tradition" and "folk" attributed to specific repertoire. Though this thesis is not designed as a full-fleshed ethnographic study, it may partly be seen as a contribution to Kaminsky's work by granting more attention to Swedish folk music activists who have been active in the past decade. In general, however,

[6] See, for example, Sarah-Jane Gibson, Lee Higgins, and Ryan Humphrey, "30 Years of Ethno: The History of Ethno Research" (York, UK: International Centre for Community Music, 2021).

[7] David Kaminsky, "Keeping Sweden Swedish: Folk Music, Right-Wing Nationalism, and the Immigration Debate," *Journal of Folklore Research* 49, no. 1 (2012): 73–96; David Kaminsky, *Swedish Folk Music in the Twenty-First Century: On the Nature of Tradition in a Folkless Nation* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2012); Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, *Lions of the North: Sounds of the New Nordic Radical Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Dan Lundberg and Gunnar Ternhag, *Folkmusik i Sverige* [Folk Music in Sweden] (Smedjebacken: Gidlunds, 1996).

my thesis departs from Teitelbaum and Kaminsky's approaches because it uses the Swedish context as a case study rather than a central topic, and it focuses on humanitarianism and the expediency of folk music on a European scale rather than on the meaning of Swedish "folk" or "tradition" itself.

The chapters of this thesis approach the hypothesis using various methods, including a review of existing literature, the historical analysis of primary sources, qualitative interviews, textual analysis, and the analysis of cultural funding channels (the "follow the money" approach). Chapter One synthesizes international relations and human rights scholarship with (ethno)musicological research, connecting theoretical notions of (cultural) sovereignty to folk, national, and nationalist music. It suggests three different definitions of cultural sovereignty from an indigenous, politico-legal, and humanitarian perspective. Together with a short discussion of philosophical concepts of utilitarianism and instrumentalism, this theoretical framework forms the basis to test the hypothesis stated in this introduction.

Taking the humanitarian perspective of cultural sovereignty as a starting point, Chapter Two approaches the hypothesis from a regional (i.e., European) perspective by analyzing the historical context and operational framework of JMI. JMI's self-published 50-year anniversary booklet serves as a primary reference, supported by textual analysis of related materials published by JMI online. The chapter traces how traditional folk music has acquired a central role in JMI's activities, and how musical heritage in this case may be conceptualized as an expedient to various ends. I address how humanitarian and politico-legal understandings of cultural sovereignty become entangled as JMI's franchise structure depends on local (national) cultural funding structures. Drawing from Ethno Research, I further connect the humanitarian objectives of JMI's Ethno World program to cultural sovereignty and highlight the paradox referred to above: the duality of sameness and difference bestowed upon notions of traditional folk music.

The third chapter zooms in on the local level of Swedish cultural politics and Ethno Sweden. It positions Ethno Sweden's history and current activities within the Swedish public funding infrastructure and explores the relationship between local organizations and the JMI network. I juxtapose Ethno Sweden's history with the work of Teitelbaum and others, describing the recent nativist populist interest in Swedish folk music and the resulting pushback coming from left-wing folk music practitioners. I explain how this pushback has led JMI representatives and Ethno organizers to believe or suspect that the program contributes to the resistance of xenophobia and racism through facilitating folk music exchange.

In the final chapter, I question this assumption by investigating the position of Ethno Sweden in the local folk community and Ethno Sweden's approach to JMI's humanitarian objectives. The chapter draws on semi-structured interviews conducted online with (former) activists and representatives of Swedish cultural institutions, and from in-person interviews at Ethno Sweden 2021 with organizers and participants. Additionally, it discusses Ethno Sweden's former performances at open air museum Skansen. Skansen exemplifies a resource used by both humanitarian and political actors with fundamentally different interpretations of cultural sovereignty to achieve social or political change. The example lays bare how the duality of difference and sameness imposed on folk music practices enables NGOs, activists, and political movements to assert and defend their respective conceptions of cultural sovereignty that—while fundamentally opposed—seem to coexist rather than directly challenge each other.

In the conclusion, I review the findings of the previous chapters and present three closing arguments regarding complications that may result from the usage of traditional folk music as expedient to cultural sovereignty. The arguments respectively address the diffusion of political and humanitarian objectives in the cultural heritage arena, the pervasive romanticization of traditional folk music genres, and the reliance on music as a universal language in humanitarian music projects.

# 1. Implementing Musical Traditions: Cultural Sovereignty and Expediency

The subject of this thesis is surrounded by several ambiguous and contested terms or concepts: polarization, heritage, tradition, folk, expediency, and most of all, cultural sovereignty. This chapter consists of three sections, addressing the theoretical definitions and implications of these concepts in relation to my hypothesis: *Music NGOs, governments, and political movements in a polarizing Europe use musical heritage as an expedient to cultural sovereignty*. The first section discusses definitions of cultural sovereignty, divided into three different perspectives: humanitarian, politico-legal (state), and indigenous. The categorization is somewhat arbitrary and intends to provide a basic structure rather than a comprehensive overview or any kind of typology of the theoretical concept. The second section addresses the relationship between cultural sovereignty and traditional folk music, loosely following the previous section's categorization. The final section accounts for my considerations of terminology regarding musical implementations (e.g., music as utility, instrument, or expedient) and then relates these concepts to the main hypothesis. In the remaining chapters, the humanitarian understanding will serve as the principal definition, which then is juxtaposed to the politico-legal understanding.

## 1.1 Cultural Sovereignty

Cultural groups that desire to shape their societies without the interference of overruling (foreign) forces generally appeal to principles of cultural agency and self-determination. In several distinct fields of study (i.e., indigenous studies, history, globalization studies, and sociology) this claim to cultural agency and self-determination is discussed in terms of *cultural sovereignty*: the legitimate authority/agency of cultural groups over their culture-specific norms and practices. In postcolonial discourse, such agency is pitted against the imperialist legacy of Western colonial rule, ethnocentric Western schools of thought, contemporary forces of commercialization and homogenization of culture, elitism, or a combination of factors. Such suggested oppositions embody a critique of Western ethnocentrism and cultural imperialism. This criticism arose in early twentieth-century anthropology and became consolidated in the concept of cultural relativism, which entails the view that cultural practices, beliefs, norms, and values must be studied within their own context, rather than evaluated according to external (in

other words, Western) standards and beliefs.[1] The concept served as a methodological breakthrough in anthropology, and initially promised a self-critical attitude of Western scholars studying non-Western cultures. Outside scholarly circles, and particularly after the Second World War, the concept of cultural relativism was regularly equated with a general reappreciation and respect for cultural groups previously dominated by colonizers or overpowered during the war. It therefore may support the resistance of interference or oppression when it counters the favoritism or ethnocentrism that often characterizes such interferences. Following this interpretation of cultural relativism, a majority cultural group must hold a sensitive and receptive position toward minority groups and is not entitled to simply superimpose its own cultural frameworks. As will be discussed later in this chapter, however, the relativism underlying cultural sovereignty claims may also serve majoritarian interpretations.

Before discussing cultural sovereignty, the concept of sovereignty itself deserves some attention. "Sovereignty" as a politico-legal concept is inherently tied to European frameworks of power, authority, and legitimacy that have developed alongside Western philosophical traditions throughout history. Defined by political scientist Daniel Philpott as "supreme authority within a territory," sovereignty initially was attributed to absolute monarchs holding a divine right to be the supreme ruling authority in their realms.[2] Following the shift toward constitutional forms of governance, sovereignty gradually became attributed to "the State," an institution which ultimately answered to "the people" or "the nation."[3] The nation as sovereign became twinned with the nation state – a concept which disputably originated in the Westphalian Peace Treaties of the seventeenth century and gained an impulse during the era of Romanticism.[4] Ideally, every "nation" or confessional community was entitled to its own state, and nation states were thus imagined to represent a single cultural group which was sovereign in their own geographical territory. In practice, however, nation states often encompassed

[1] Anthropologist Franz Boas is commonly referenced as the primary founder of cultural relativist ideas, though Boas and his student Alfred Louis Kroeber have recently been subject of postcolonial critique themselves. See, for example, Janine Hitchens, "Critical Implications of Franz Boas' Theory and Methodology," *Dialectical Anthropology* 19 (November 1994): 237–53; Gretchen Kell, "Kroeber Hall, Honoring Anthropologist Who Symbolizes Exclusion, Is Unnamed," *Berkeley News*, January 26, 2021, https://news.berkeley.edu/2021/01/26/kroeber-hall-unnamed/.

[2] Daniel Philpott, "Sovereignty," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. George Klosko (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 561.

[3] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (London: Verso, 1983), 7. Though capitalization of the word "State" is common use in public international law, I henceforth use lowercase "state" when referring to national governmental bodies.

[4] Derek Croxton, "The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 and the Origins of Sovereignty," *The International History Review* 21, no. 3 (1999): 569–91; Andreas Osiander, "Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth," *International Organization* 55, no. 2 (2001): 251–87.

multiple "nations" and pure state sovereignty was never fully realized in a practical sense. If anything, sovereignty of (constitutional) governments was non-absolute and often contested within and outside of its jurisdiction. Furthermore, increasing globalization of the twentieth and twenty-first century has given rise to far-reaching international integration on the political, judicial, and financial levels, which in turn has caused many scholars to characterize state sovereignty as being degraded, undermined, circumscribed, in crisis, and no longer useful as a concept to describe the legitimacy of power-claims.[5]

Not all scholars have been willing to abandon the sovereignty concept entirely, however. This subsection reviews scholarship that shares an incentive to re-evaluate and reshape sovereignty's heuristic use at a time in which traditional understandings seem to be of little value. "Cultural" sovereignty is one such alternative concept which plays a leading role in this thesis.

*Cultural Sovereignty and Humanitarianism*

In 1977, "experts in different socio-cultural disciplines" present at a meeting on "international understanding" organized by UNESCO in Warsaw avowedly argued that "international co-operation depended on the assertion of the cultural sovereignty of peoples; world peace and the peaceful coexistence of peoples were directly related to the principle of the cultural and political sovereignty of peoples."[6] The experts did not further define the difference between cultural and political sovereignty, but the quotation at least signaled that peaceful coexistence was not merely a political affair. Rather than subordinating cultural affairs to the political sovereignty of nation states, the self-determination of cultural groups was presented as a separate prerequisite for peace. A humanitarian understanding of cultural sovereignty argues that cultural groups have a (human) right to self-determination, considering culture-specific norms and practices. Speaking of "peoples," the experts suggest the concept of sovereignty is

[5] For discussions on contemporary use of the sovereignty concept, see for example Gerry Simpson, "The Guises of Sovereignty," in *Re-Envisioning Sovereignty: The End of Westphalia?*, ed. Trudy Jacobsen, Charles Sampford, and Ramesh Thakur, Law, Ethics and Governance Series (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 61; William Outhwaite, "The Postnational Constellation Revisited: Critical Thoughts on Sovereignty," *Berlin Journal of Critical Theory* 5, no. 1 (2021): 31–58; Joseph Camilleri, "Sovereignty Discourse and Practice – Past and Future," in *Re-Envisioning Sovereignty: The End of Westphalia?*, ed. Trudy Jacobsen, Charles Sampford, and Ramesh Thakur, Law, Ethics and Governance Series (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 33, 37; Philpott, "Sovereignty," 561.

[6] UNESCO Director-General, report in pursuance of 19C/Resolution 12.1, UNESCO's Contribution to Peace and its Tasks With Respect to the Promotion of Human Rights and the Elimination of Colonialism and Racialism, 20 C/14 + ADD. & CORR., ¶10 (September 28, 1978), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000028556. See also Gregor Feindt, Bernhard Gissibl, and Johannes Paulmann, eds., *Cultural Sovereignty beyond the Modern State: Space, Objects, and Media* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2021), 147n2.

universally applicable. The distinction between cultural and political sovereignty further suggests that this self-determination has different strands: the political sovereignty of "peoples" concerns the right to self-governance while cultural sovereignty concerns the right to shape one's own cultural life, exercise cultural practices, and have sufficient access to resources to do so.

Since the 1972 World Heritage Convention, UNESCO commonly declares it abides by a "principle of sovereignty", which states that its efforts are subordinated to state sovereignty.[7] However, the humanitarian defense of cultural sovereignty has become increasingly troubled by geopolitical invocations of the concept. As noted by human rights scholars such as Anne Bayefsky and Jonas Brendebach, state authorities may fend off human rights interventions based on a strictly relativist understanding of cultural sovereignty. Such an understanding prevents affirmative action on cultural practices or sociocultural frameworks that are considered "inhumane" by the international community.[8] Although the objective of human rights actors is to support self-determination and equity of cultural groups, and thus endorse a certain understanding of cultural sovereignty, these aims are obstructed by sovereignty claims that prevent human rights interventions based on cultural difference.

For the same reason, cultural relativism as a philosophical concept underpinning cultural sovereignty has increasingly become deconstructed and critiqued. As a theoretical concept, it contradicts itself due to its own situatedness in Western anthropology and overlaps with aspects of moral relativism. Any notion of shared humanity can be undermined by morally relativist positions, which has made cultural relativism a nuisance for human rights scholars.[9] In his research on UNESCO in the seventies, Brendebach therefore distinguishes two applications of cultural sovereignty: a "claim to sovereignty over culture" backed by a philosophy of "humanistic universalism" (UNESCO) on the one hand, and a claim to "cultural sovereignty" that legitimizes states' self-determination of cultural, political, and legal matters on the other.[10]

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[7] UNESCO General Conference, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, ¶6.1, 11.3 (November 16, 1972), edition December 2021, https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/; UNESCO General Conference, The 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, ¶2.2 (October 20, 2005), https://en.unesco.org/creativity/convention/texts.

[8] Anne F. Bayefsky, "Cultural Sovereignty, Relativism, and International Human Rights: New Excuses for Old Strategies," *Ratio Juris* 9, no. 1 (1996): 42–59; Jonas Brendebach, "Contested Sovereignties: The Case of the 'New World Information and Communication Order' at UNESCO in the 1970s," in *Cultural Sovereignty beyond the Modern State: Space, Objects, and Media*, ed. Gregor Feindt, Bernhard Gissibl, and Johannes Paulmann (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2021), 106–27.

[9] See, for example, Ulf Johansson Dahre, "Searching for a Middle Ground: Anthropologists and the Debate on the Universalism and the Cultural Relativism of Human Rights," *The International Journal of Human Rights* 21, no. 5 (June 13, 2017): 611–28; Michael F. Brown, "Cultural Relativism 2.0," *Current Anthropology* 49, no. 3 (June 2008): 363–83.

[10] Brendebach, "Contested Sovereignties," 127.

Even though UNESCO's principle of sovereignty still stands to this day, cultural sovereignty is less celebrated as a prerequisite for peace. On the contrary, sovereignty may be considered a threat to the more celebrated prerequisite of cultural diversity. Recently, in UNESCO's publication *Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity*, UN special rapporteur Alexandra Xanthaki stated:

> The cultural rights of individuals and communities can only thrive where cultural diversity is protected. Very often, we see cultural diversity being undermined at the domestic level. Reasons include alleged or real threats to national sovereignty, the need to promote the "national" or majority culture and the need to prioritize other interests, often development, over cultural rights. Yet, we now know beyond any doubt that recognizing cultural diversity and implementing cultural rights makes a significant contribution to the well-being and development of individuals and communities; and therefore ultimately to social cohesion and peace.[11]

In other words, cultural diversity has become the tenet that counterbalances state sovereignty claims of non-interference on cultural matters.[12] For the purpose of this thesis, however, UNESCO's objective to guard cultural diversity may be understood as a reformulation of its understanding of cultural sovereignty. Cultural diversity then serves as the indicator for the successful acquisition of self-determination by (minority) culture groups.

*Cultural Sovereignty of the Nation State*

The politico-legal understanding of cultural sovereignty prescribes that the state, as sovereign entity, has the supreme authority to shape cultural life through cultural policy within its territory. As mentioned before, the ideal of absolute territorial sovereignty of nation states had its time and place in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe. The common postmodern consensus on sovereignty of nation states is that its absoluteness, in the words of former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1995), "was never matched by reality."[13] The

[11] Alexandra Xanthaki in Jordi Baltà Portolés, ed., *Re|Shaping Policies for Creativity: Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good*, Global Report (Paris: UNESCO, 2022), 220, https://www.unesco.org/reports/reshaping-creativity/2022/en.

[12] Francesco Francioni, "Beyond State Sovereignty: The Protection of Cultural Heritage as a Shared Interest of Humanity," *Michigan Journal of International Law* 25, no. 4 (2004): 1220.

[13] Camilleri, "Sovereignty Discourse," 44. Citation taken by Camilleri from Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace 1995*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Nations, 1995).

unfeasibility of confessional or ethnic unity within nation states became obvious early on, especially in "multi-national" states such as Austria-Hungary.[14]

The state's authority over cultural affairs has nonetheless remained a critical determinant of international cooperation. For example, the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage consists of state representatives instead of direct representatives of (intangible) culture "inheritors."[15] In other words, states often function as intermediaries between domestic cultural groups and international Human Rights initiatives because of the prominence of national jurisdiction. As a result, UNESCO's vulnerability to political interests remains a point of scholarly critique.[16] In the EU, the design and execution of cultural funding programs is similarly dependent on and subordinated to national cultural policies of member states – as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Though one may argue national boundaries are growing porous due to globalization, the rise of populist nativism and neo-nationalism both within and outside the EU may serve as a counteracting force. Not in the least when it comes to cultural policy, which tends to be coupled with strict and exclusionary immigration policy. This development—characterized by Eirikur Bergmann as the "third wave" of neo-nationalism after the Second World War—has its roots in the 2008 financial crisis as well as the European migration crises following several armed conflicts in the Middle East.[17] The most radical of protectionist responses to these geopolitical shifts revert to ethnocentrism (as is seen in the New Right and other identitarian, ethnopluralist movements), and specifically in Europe, anti-federalism and absolute state sovereignty ("sovereigntism" in sovereignty discourse).[18] As Appadurai argues, the highly integrated global market system no longer provides "economic sovereignty" as a basis for the "national sovereignty" that sovereigntists aim to restore. Instead, nativist populists revert to a kind of cultural protectionism:

[14] For a detailed analysis of the Austro-Hungarian case, see Ephraim Nimni, "Introduction: The National Cultural Autonomy Model Revisited," in *National Cultural Autonomy and Its Contemporary Critics*, ed. Ephraim Nimni (New York: Routledge, 2005), 1–12.

[15] Francioni, "Beyond State Sovereignty," 1225–26.

[16] See, for example, Tim Winter, "Beyond Eurocentrism? Heritage Conservation and The Politics of Difference," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20, no. 2 (2014): 123–37; Christoph Brumann, "Anthropological Utopia, Closet Eurocentrism, and Culture Chaos in the UNESCO World Heritage Arena," *Anthropological Quarterly* 91, no. 4 (2018): 1203–33; Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett, "Rethinking the Social Impacts of the Arts," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 13 (2007): 136.

[17] Eirikur Bergmann, *Neo-Nationalism: The Rise of Nativist Populism* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 131.

[18] Simpson, "The Guises of Sovereignty," 62.

> In the absence of any national economy that modern states can claim to protect and develop, it is no surprise that there has been a worldwide tendency in effective states and in many aspiring populist movements to perform national sovereignty by turning towards cultural majoritarianism, ethno-nationalism and the stifling of internal intellectual and cultural dissent. In other words, the loss of economic sovereignty everywhere produces a shift towards emphasizing cultural sovereignty. This turn towards culture as the site of national sovereignty appears in many forms.[19]

Here we once again find a politico-legal definition of cultural sovereignty: "the state's sovereign or superior authority to define the cultural needs of its citizens and the cultural parameters of their lives."[20] In the eyes of sovereigntists, there is little doubt that the state is entitled to use its authority to maintain and protect the majority culture which ultimately forces "outsiders" to assimilate.

This insider/outsider dynamic, characterized by political scientist Marlene Wind as "the tribalization of Europe," has led to a highly polarized political climate.[21] Amongst many others, Wind identifies these developments as a growing "divide" in European politics between pro- and anti-federalist stances, in which the latter may be characterized as "wall-builders," and the former as "globalists."[22] Specifically referring to disputes on cultural issues, political scientist Simon Bornschier describes this development as "a conflict opposing libertarian-universalistic and traditionalist-communitarian values" of culture, creating a "new cultural divide" in EU's political landscape between "the New Left" and the "extreme populist Right."[23] It is this divide I refer to when speaking of polarization in Europe throughout this thesis.

*Indigenous Cultural Sovereignty*

The polarization of debates on cultural and immigration policy and the cultural divide Bornschier refers to point to a general lack of jurisdiction that ensures collective (or "cultural")

[19] Arjun Appadurai, "Democracy Fatigue," in *The Great Regression*, ed. Heinrich Geiselberger (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017), 28–29.

[20] Bayefsky, "Cultural Sovereignty," 43.

[21] Marlene Wind, *The Tribalization of Europe: A Defense of Our Liberal Values* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2020).

[22] Ibid., 5; Wolfgang Streeck, "The Return of the Repressed as the Beginning of the End of Neoliberal Capitalism," in *The Great Regression*, ed. Heinrich Geiselberger, Ebook (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2017); Simon Bornschier, "The New Cultural Divide and the Two-Dimensional Political Space in Western Europe," *West European Politics* 33, no. 3 (2010): 419–44.

[23] Bornschier, "The New Cultural Divide," 440.

rights in liberal democracies.[24] The classic foundation of the liberal democratic nation state prioritizes individual rights, serving the nation as a single (in Anderson's words "imagined") community.[25] In reality, this causes cultural minority groups (e.g., indigenous groups or "autochthonous national minorities") to struggle for recognition within the state's judicial system, which does not support collective or group rights. As argued by Ephraim Nimni, states continue to act as "nation" states despite their ethnic heterogeneity, using habitation and citizenship as qualifiers rather than ethnicity.[26] The state's judicial structures, however, are inevitably prompted by the dominant cultural frame, in turn limiting the achievement of a multicultural society. The concept of state and nation are still intertwined to the extent that the state's potential as "multi-national" (i.e., multi-*cultural* or multi-*ethnic*) governing institution is contested.

In specific contexts of friction between cultural/ethnic minorities and states, the concept of cultural sovereignty gains a meaning that is slightly different from the humanitarian perspective. Situated in postcolonial discourse, cultural sovereignty is posed as the opposite of cultural imperialism. From this relativist perspective, sovereignty is culturally determined rather than universally applicable. Native American scholars Wallace Coffey and Rebecca Tsosie, for example, advocate a sensibility to indigenous understandings of sovereignty which are culturally opposed to Western politico-legal understandings.[27] Coffey and Tsosie reveal the deeply problematic consequences of colonization, where indigenous groups still depend on the colonizer's institutions to assert or (at least partially) reclaim their own sovereignty today. They argue for a "reappraisal of the tribal sovereignty doctrine" (i.e., the US federal law regarding indigenous rights), "one which looks within – to the 'cultural sovereignty' of Indian Nations – for the core of its meaning rather than to an externally defined notion of tribal 'political sovereignty.'"[28] From the perspective of indigenous studies, cultural sovereignty thus refers to sovereignty of indigenous communities, where the mode of assertion or maintenance of sovereignty is culturally ingrained in indigenous social structures and therefore diverts from the imposed (Western) legal frameworks of power, legitimacy, and territory. To endorse such

[24] Wallace Coffey and Rebecca Tsosie, "Rethinking the Tribal Sovereignty Doctrine: Cultural Sovereignty and the Collective Future of Indian Nations," *Stanford Law & Policy Review* 12, no. 2 (2001): 197; Nimni, "Introduction," 6; George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), chap. 1, Kindle.

[25] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

[26] Ephraim Nimni, "Conclusion: The Sovereign Predicament of Dispersed Nations," in *National Cultural Autonomy and Its Contemporary Critics*, ed. Ephraim Nimni (New York: Routledge, 2005), 106.

[27] Coffey and Tsosie, "Rethinking the Tribal Sovereignty Doctrine."

[28] Ibid., 191.

cultural sovereignty means to advocate for acknowledgement of culturally situated sovereignty and for loosening the grip of the colonizer's overruling laws.

Sociologist Laura Adams defines cultural sovereignty as "the assertion of a group's right to cultural expression free of external imposition," but departs from the kind of inward-looking stance that Coffey and Tsosie suggest.[29] Instead, Adams attempts to question cultural sovereignty's assumed binary opposition to cultural imperialism in the context of central Asia during the Soviet era. She argues that, through Soviet cultural institutions, "Central Asian culture was both enabled and constrained," and that the postcolonial definitions and usages of cultural sovereignty are not always sufficient to explain context-specific assertions to cultural self-determination.[30] Adams' work serves as a reminder that the theoretical definitions of cultural sovereignty given in this section are rarely directly applicable and serve as a starting point to investigate the complex reality of culture and related authority claims.

## 1.2 Sovereignty and the Sonic

The question remains how the concept of cultural sovereignty relates to traditional and folk music. For the sake of clarity, this section is divided in categories that run parallel to the three different perspectives on cultural sovereignty presented in the previous section: indigeneity, nationalism, and humanitarianism. The category of humanitarianism will play a leading role in the following chapters.

*Indigeneity*

In "Sonic Sovereignty," Trevor G. Reed builds further on Coffey and Tsosie's concept of cultural sovereignty, conceptualizing musical practices of the Hopi as sonic expressions of indigenous sovereignty.[31] Reed's analysis of the text and melodies of Hopi songs shows how their performance constitutes an indigenous understanding of sovereignty. Reed argues that "indigenous expressions that activate and generate relations between individuals and between people and other actors in the world—no matter their form—may be sovereign acts."[32] In other words, musical practice and performance is a form through which Hopi assert their sovereignty

[29] Laura L. Adams, "Culture, Colonialism and Sovereignty in Central Asia," in *Sovereignty After Empire: Comparing the Middle East and Central Asia*, ed. Sally N. Cummings and Raymond A. Hinnebusch (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 201–2.

[30] Ibid., 202.

[31] Trevor G. Reed, "Sonic Sovereignty: Performing Hopi Authority in Öngtupqa," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 13, no. 4 (2019).

[32] Ibid., 514.

to outsiders. Like Coffey and Tsosie, the purpose of Reed's work is to show how different the Native American understanding of sovereignty is compared to the "settler" (i.e., federal state) understanding of political (tribal) sovereignty. Reed's musical examples show intersections between music, identity, and territoriality that are unique to the Hopi community and require an increased sensibility of (non-indigenous) policymakers "to recognize and respond appropriately to Indigenous sonic sovereignties."[33]

*Nationalism*

Indeed, in the European tradition, sovereignty is predominantly established by and exercised through constitutional laws (i.e., through legal texts). Though folk music arguably plays a role in establishing European legal frameworks of authority and legitimacy, it is presumably different from the "sonic sovereignty" described by Reed. Obviously, then, it is by no means my intention to appropriate indigenous "sonic sovereignty" as a universally applicable concept to musical practices and sovereignty of cultural groups. Still, I think it is worth investigating the possible perception of traditional music performance as a constitutive element of contemporary sovereignty claims. Such an investigation sheds light on the currency of traditional folk music on both sides of the new cultural divide and uncovers how musical heritage is currently utilized or instrumentalized.

Merely several centuries ago, when sovereignty of nation states was on the rise as the new foundation of a geopolitical world order, folk music was a primary ingredient of nation-building. More specifically, it was the fundament for both "national" and "nationalist" music, according to ethnomusicologist Philip Bohlman. Bohlman argues folk music historically follows a "transitioning journey," from "representing the immanent quintessence of the nation to representing the nation itself."[34] This "quintessence" is historically believed to be present in music from isolated "natural or cultural geographies," highly connected to a sense of authenticity and place.[35] Only after travelling past the stages of modernization and civilization, we find at the end of the "journey" a "national music" that has sprung from this quintessential core, and evolved into "art music" fully capable of representing the nation "itself" (i.e., its contemporary state of being).[36] Whether musical materials gain a connotation of national or

[33] Ibid.

[34] Philip V. Bohlman, *The Music of European Nationalism: Cultural Identity and Modern History*, ABC-CLIO World Music Series (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 86.

[35] Ibid., 84.

[36] Ibid., 89. Discussing the "evolution" of national music, Bohlman refers to the ideas of nineteenth-century German musicologist Carl Engel and British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams.

nationalist music depends more on the surrounding aesthetic rhetoric rather than musical genre or style. As Bohlman notes, "nationalist music comes into being through top-down cultural and political work, just the opposite of national music. Rather than representing something preexistent and quintessential—culturally prior to the nation—nationalist music represents cultural boundaries for the state that have political purposes."[37]

That music proved a means to buttress state sovereignty, draw territorial borders, and solidify a national identity is reflected in the influx of national folk song collections, compilations, anthologies, as well as folk song and dance competitions in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Europe. Recent scholarship on folk revivalism has arguably successfully critiqued the arbitrariness and subjectivity of such music revival projects, uncovering many discriminatory beliefs that underpinned romantic ideals of the teleological development of nature, nation, and destiny.[38] The case perhaps most referred to in relation to folk music, national identity, and territorial claims in European context is that of twentieth century German nationalism. The German anthology of *Landschaftliche Volkslieder* ("folk songs from the landscapes," launched in 1924), which – "in literal and figurative senses, … contested place" in the name of German nationalism, is a case in point, as well as implementations of folk song in Hitler Youth activities.[39] More relevant to the contemporary relationship between cultural sovereignty and traditional folk music are Bohlman's examples of instances where folk song supports the defense of cultural identities in contested border-regions within postwar Europe (i.e., South Tyrol, the Carpathian Mountain range, and Alsace-Lorraine), showing the significance of folk music in "musical monuments" in Europe today. One example is Bohlman's mention of folk music practices at street memorials in Bucharest after the fall of Romanian communism:

> Each performance of folk song and each ritual event at the street monuments serves as an act of creating monumental time by remembering the past. These monuments remind us that there are voiceless peoples who have not been given national spaces but who instead

[37] Ibid., 120.

[38] See, for example, Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music:" Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner*, New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[39] Bohlman, *The Music of European Nationalism*, 145. For folk music and the Hitler Youth, see Richard Klopffleisch, "Das Menschenbild im Liedgut der Hitlerjugend auf dem Hintergrund der Persönlichkeitstheorie der 'Deutschen Charakterkunde'" [The human image in songs of the Hitler Youth in the light of the personality theory of 'German Characterology'], *Musikpsychologie: Empirische Forschung–Ästhetische Experimente—Jahrbuch Der Deutschen Gesellschaft Für Musikpsychologie* 12 (1995): 149–57.

> recognize the power of musical monuments to claim some historical and national space as their own, publicly but fleetingly, through performance.[40]

These examples show how more recent practices of folk music are incorporated in claims of national space in European contexts by minority groups – be it physically or figuratively. A claim for national space, then, does not necessarily entail an assertion to political sovereignty and territoriality in a traditional sense, but rather embodies a claim to ownership of a social space to (re)gain a sense of cultural sovereignty.

*Humanitarianism*

Many music NGOs act from the conviction that music is a uniting force which – when used in favorable settings – may help to resolve conflict and create mutual understanding. The framing of music as a tool for peace and reconciliation is longstanding, and it is not difficult to understand how periods of conflict and disaster have served as new impulses for this assumption throughout history. Whether music is a universal language, or in fact a language at all, has been the subject of many scholarly enquiries since the twentieth century. It has been a topic of debate in anthropological research, ethnography, music education, philosophy, and later in empirical investigations of computational musicologists.[41]

It is not my intention to partake in this debate, but rather to unravel the use of this connotation in the work of NGOs implementing musical heritage. Ethno World, the project under investigation in the following chapters, operates on the assumption that traditional music practices function as a gateway to intercultural dialogue. Music traditions here function as representations of cultural difference, and their exchange symbolizes cultural encounters. Positive outcomes such as increased tolerance, acceptance, and respect are expected to emerge through a social mechanism famously described by psychologist Gordon Allport as the "contact

[40] Bohlman, *The Music of European Nationalism*, 129.

[41] For recent contributions to this debate, see Kathleen Marie Higgins, *The Music Between Us: Is Music a Universal Language?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012); Patrick E. Savage et al., "Statistical Universals Reveal the Structures and Functions of Human Music," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 112, no. 29 (2015): 8987–92; Samuel A Mehr et al., "Universality and Diversity in Human Song," *Science* 366, no. 6468 (2019): 970–88; Sangmi Kang, "The History of Multicultural Music Education and Its Prospects: The Controversy of Music Universalism and Its Application," *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 34, no. 2 (2016): 21–28. For earlier critical research in music education, see Richard Letts, "Music: Universal Language between All Nations?," *International Journal of Music Education* 29 (1997): 22–31; Patricia Shehan Campbell, "Music, the Universal Language: Fact or Fallacy?," *International Journal of Music Education* 29 (1997): 32–39; Patricia K. Shehan, "World Musics: Windows to Cross-Cultural Understanding," *Music Educators Journal* 75, no. 3 (1988): 22–26. See also John Blacking, *How Musical Is Man* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973).

hypothesis."[42] Allport's contact theory suggests that intergroup contact, based on commonalities (in this case, musical interests), reduces intolerant attitudes.

Critical scholarship on Allport's theory has already scrutinized the specific preconditions that are necessary for the contact hypothesis to be proven accurate.[43] In recent research on music NGOs there has also been a growing skepticism towards music's universality and its alleged inherent ability to bridge cultural divides. Ethnomusicologist and former human rights lawyer Nomi Dave, for example, critiques human rights initiatives that use music to "evoke cultural and local social mechanisms" while "assuming that music will transcend any cultural complexities and differences."[44] Too often, Dave argues, music is believed to affect social change as a universal language "just by being present," leaving the question of "what it can do in practical ways to improve people's lives" unanswered. Drawing from Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum's theoretical concept of "human capabilities," Dave advocates for a conceptual "practice- and goal-oriented approach" to music in human rights discourse, one that remains critical of music's presumed universality.[45]

Like Dave, ethnomusicologist Elaine Sandoval is critical when it comes to music's potential as a peacebuilding tool.[46] In a critical literature review, Sandoval places the peacebuilding efforts of music NGOs into pre-, mid-, and post-conflict categories. By critically juxtaposing music's assumed inherent ability to foster solidarity with Suzanne Cusick's research on weaponized music and torture, she points out how such assumptions are often flawed and therefore must not be taken for granted. She is skeptical of music's alleged capacity to build peace and advocates "good training in evaluation, pedagogy, methodology, and ethics" specific to local contexts.[47]

The following chapters of this thesis more closely examine how Jeunesses Musicales International (JMI), a self-proclaimed humanitarian NGO, has merged music's alleged universality with UNESCO's mission to safeguard cultural diversity through heritage preservation. In JMI's Ethno program, participants represent specific cultural identities by teaching traditional/folk music practices, of which the exchange and collective performance symbolizes music's ability to cross cultural boundaries. Before continuing, however, a last

[42] Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1955).

[43] See, for example, Tamar Saguy et al., "The Irony of Harmony: Intergroup Contact Can Produce False Expectations for Equality," *Psychological Science* 20, no. 1 (2009): 114–21.

[44] Nomi Dave, "Music and the Myth of Universality: Sounding Human Rights and Capabilities," *Journal of Human Rights Practice* 7, no. 1 (2015): 6.

[45] Ibid., 15.

[46] Elaine Sandoval, "Music in Peacebuilding: A Critical Literature Review," *Journal of Peace Education* 13, no. 3 (2016): 200–217.

[47] Ibid., 212.

theoretical point of contention must be settled: How does one refer to all these different "uses" or implementations of musical heritage?

## 1.3 The Expediency of Musical Heritage

This question emerged during fieldwork for this thesis' case study, in conversation with interviewees involved in JMI's activities. For example, Ethno organizer and participant Esther Wachtfeld suggested that JMI's use of traditional music "as a tool" was best described as a utilitarianism, in the sense that the utility of music was intended for the social good. Wachtfeld found the descriptor "instrumentalization," which I used in my initial questions (e.g., "Does JMI instrumentalize folk music?"), somewhat ambiguous:

> I think the word instrumentalization contains a lot, in the way that if you say instrumentalization, you always feel like it's for a bad thing. But it's ok, I get the questions, but I would suggest maybe to look to have a synonym … I just want to say that, for me at least, the word feels very strong. And to make comments about the word is kind of difficult.[48]

Indeed, assigning an instrumental value to culture does not imply that the result of using music as "a tool" to achieve something will be beneficial or "good," rather that it is used as a means to an "external" end.[49] To refer to utilitarianism in this context, however, implies that music—and by extension "art" or "culture" —has a positive impact on society.

Sociologists Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett identify this assumption as the "positive" strand in European intellectual tradition, alongside beliefs that arts have "negative impact" or no true "impact" in the first place.[50] Even though Belfiore and Bennett's work does not automatically include notions of "traditional" or "folk" culture, it accounts for ideas on the "impact" of culture that run parallel to those of Wachtfeld and others. Drawing from theory evolved from Aristotle's concept of catharsis, the authors identify three theoretical interpretations of the positive functions of the arts: "therapeutic" (i.e., the improvement of emotional well-being), "humanizing" (i.e., instilling desirable moral values) and "educational" (i.e., gaining knowledge).[51] The humanizing function of arts may be categorized under Jeremy

[48] Esther Wachtfeld (Ethno organizer), interview with the author, online, October 2, 2022.

[49] Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Value," in *The Oxford Handbook of Value Theory*, ed. Iwao Hirose and Jonas Olson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 29–43.

[50] Belfiore and Bennett, "Rethinking the Social Impacts of the Arts."

[51] Ibid., 143–44.

Bentham's eighteenth-century philosophy of utilitarianism, in which the arts are believed to possess a property which "tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good, or happiness … or … to prevent the happening of mischief, pain, evil, or unhappiness to the party whose interest is considered: if that party be the community in general, then the happiness of the community."[52]

It goes without saying, however, that culture—and not in the least folklore—has a long history of being used for propaganda purposes by non-democratic and totalitarian regimes.[53] In such instances, the uses of music are commonly qualified as instrumentalization or even appropriation. Because it is my intention to avoid any implications of moral superiority while discussing topical matters, I have chosen to steer clear of the term "utilitarianism" or "instrumentalism" as much as possible. If anything, the confusion that results from attempting to define a strict division between the intrinsic and extrinsic value of musical heritage undoubtedly outweighs the insights such a framework may yield.

To circumvent such complex philosophical discussions, I instead apply George Yúdice's concept of "expediency of culture."[54] A common definition of expediency or an expedient—an action that is useful or necessary for a particular purpose, but not always fair or right —might, at first, seem to offer little solution to the problem of subjectivity. As Yúdice makes clear, however, "the expediency of culture as a resource" is a strategy that permeates "contemporary life" at large, and whether it is "fair or right" is of secondary interest to the study of the phenomenon.[55] To step away from a normative position, Yúdice adopts a "performative understanding" of cultural expediency which "focuses on the strategies implied in any invocation of culture, any invention of tradition, in relation to some purpose or goal."[56] Dealing with many different societal actors (e.g., state governments, NGOs, IGOs, and other institutions) that act on the assumption that culture will address or even solve societal problems, Yúdice sees it fit to describe culture as a "resource," rather than a commodity.[57] The concept of culture-as-resource works in tandem with the much advocated need for heritage preservation and cultural diversity, and circumvents posing implementations of culture as utility or instrument.

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[52] Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation: Printed in the Year 1780 and Now First Published* (London: T. Payne, 1789).

[53] Belfiore and Bennett, "Rethinking the Social Impacts of the Arts," 139.

[54] Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture*.

[55] Ibid., chap. 1, "Expediency of Culture."

[56] Ibid., chap. 1, "A New Episteme?"

[57] Ibid., chap. 1, "Culture as Resource."

Drawing on Foucault's performative ethics and Judith Butler's notion of performativity, Yúdice understands the strategies employed by actors using culture as an expedient as assertions of "agency."[58] Not only agency in terms of the empowerment of the disenfranchised, but also in terms of establishing political change. My theoretical approach diverges from that of Yúdice on this point. Because of the strong presence of nationhood in histories of folk music genres in European contexts, and the recent revival of this history in cultural nativism amongst neo-nationalists, I use "cultural sovereignty" as the descriptor for the kind of agency investigated in this thesis. As discussed, the concept of sovereignty is perhaps more contested than ever before, and cultural sovereignty means different things to different actors. Precisely because of its contested nature, however, it is suitable to unveil the kind of conflict that emerges when NGOs, politicians, and funding institutions attempt to draw from the same judicial and economical frameworks to use musical heritage as a cultural expedient to opposing ends. It evokes a politico-legal discourse that helps to address the constrictions and pitfalls of strategies in polarized contexts, where cultural and national identity are easily conflated, and geopolitical conflict is confused for cultural strife. I thus use the theoretical concept of cultural sovereignty as a specific type of agency, one that addresses the problem of polarization.

Provided with this theoretical framework, I return to the hypothesis of this thesis: *Music NGOs, governments, and political movements in a polarizing Europe use musical heritage as an expedient to cultural sovereignty*. The following chapter investigates how the various actors involved in JMI may use musical heritage on a regional (i.e., European) scale as an expedient to assert or express their understanding of cultural sovereignty.

[58] Ibid., Introduction, chap. 5, "The NGOization of Culture."

# 2. Jeunesses Musicales International and Ethno World in Europe: A Regional Perspective

NGOs, (supra)national governments, philanthropists, and other actors have increasingly used musical heritage as an expedient to achieve social and economic objectives in Europe since World War II. This chapter presents the NGO Jeunesses Musicales International (JMI) and its folk music program Ethno World as a case study to unravel how the objectives of these actors intersect and overlap. The chapter pays particular attention to how JMI's dependency on governmental funding pushes the association's humanitarian objectives into the domain of national cultural policy. Section 1 discusses the history of the network's humanitarianism and its growing interest in folk music as a tool for social betterment. Section 2 dives deeper into the operative framework of JMI, revealing how national cultural funding programs are part of sustaining JMI's network. Section 3 explains how JMI has incorporated traditional/folk music in its activities through the Ethno World program and elaborates on how this has affected the association's humanitarian profile. The final section connects the actors discussed in sections 1 through 3 to the different understandings of cultural sovereignty discussed in the previous chapter. I argue that both humanitarian and political understandings of cultural sovereignty, though at times resulting in opposing objectives, serve the functioning of JMI's network.

## 2.1 From FIJM to JMI: Making a Global Change Through Music

Jeunesses Musicales International AISBL (JMI) is a non-profit organization seated in Brussels and officially active since 1945.[1] It is best described as an international network of NGOs that facilitate musical activities for youths such as concerts, competitions, summer camps, orchestras, and choirs. The association which unites these NGOs aims to be "non-governmental

[1] Formerly known as "Sécrétariat de Fédération Internationale des Jeunesses Musicales asbl," (F.I.J.M.). Abbreviated as either JMI or JM International. *Jeunesses Musicales* is Translated to English as "Youth and Music" (YM). The acronym "a(i)sbl" stands for *association (internationale) sans but lucratif*, "(international) non-profit association." See JM International, "JMI Statutes," ratified in Groznjan, June 2014, last accessed March 8, 2023, Google Drive, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XUgIc0s95KnFCS3npEKHBJCVKMmEso5h/view?usp=sharing; Hervé Behaegel, "Jeunesses Musicales International: Modification des Statuts" [Jeunesses Musicales International: Modification of the Statutes], 10156523 Part B (2010), https://fincheck.be/en/jmi/0820.748.177/Brussel/publications; Christian Michiels, ed., *Federation Internationale des Jeunesses Musicales, 1945–1995: The First 50 Years*, trans. Karen Barnes, Anne Cornélis, and Esther Juan (Brussels: F.I.J.M., 1995).

and free of any ideological, political, social, racial or else wise discriminating position and standing for the human rights in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child."[2] JMI is governed by a board appointed by a General Assembly of its members, and claims to be the "largest," "most active," and "most recognized" network of youth and music NGOs in the world.[3] It backs up these claims with calculations of its general and digital outreach for each JMI program, estimating a total of more than six million "people reached all around the world."[4]

JMI owes its hallmark of human rights advocacy to its foundational roots. Envisioned by co-founder Marcel Cuvelier as an "underground musical scouting movement" in Belgium during the German occupation of World War II, the initial Fédération Internationale des Jeunesses Musicales (FIJM) was meant to safeguard the youth's access to music by facilitating dedicated music events.[5] (To provide chronological clarity, the acronym FIJM is used here to emphasize the association's activities prior to the change of name around 1995.) The association intended to assemble nationally operating non-profit organizations for youth and music in Europe and beyond, to serve as a network, and to act as a joint force in the newly established International Music Council (an advisory body of UNESCO, est. 1949). The emergence of FIJM was anchored in the geopolitical peace established after the Second World War. As such, the association occasionally refers to its activities as "promoting," "building," "spreading the values of," and bringing the "spirit of" peace.[6] Similar descriptors of FIJM as a "peace music movement" are used by Matt Clark, the current programs and marketing director at the JMI head office, when referring to the association's history.[7] Clark states FIJM started "as a way to bring young people together as a kind of direct reaction to the bridges that were broken" during the war.[8] This link between FIJM and postwar geopolitical stability is also identifiable in the

[2] JM International, "JMI Statutes," Article 3.2.

[3] JM International, "Membership Info Booklet," n.d., last accessed March 8, 2023, https://jmi.net/membership; JM International, "JMI Brochure," Google Drive, last modified April 18, 2016, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1a3JY1Y2bhklL6h435cYl9lfvghMwjsbt/view?usp=sharing; JM International, *JMI Global Highlights, 2019–2020*, published online, 2021, https://jmi.net/about.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Luc Leytens, "Short History of the Federation Internationale des Jeunesses Musicales," in *Federation Internationale des Jeunesses Musicales, 1945–1995: The First 50 Years*, ed. Christian Michiels, trans. Karen Barnes, Anne Cornélis, and Esther Juan (Brussels: F.I.J.M., 1995), 16.

[6] Ethno World, "About," Ethno World, accessed December 23, 2022, https://ethno.world/about/; JM International, *Ethno Global Music Gatherings: Ethno Events Programme 2020* (Brussels: JM International, 2020), 4; JM International, *Ethno Global Music Gatherings: Ethno Events Calendar 2021, January–April* (Brussels: JM International, 2021), 2; JM International, *Ethno Global Music Gatherings: Ethno Events Calendar 2021, June–December* (Brussels: JM International, 2021), 3–4; JM International, *JMI Global Highlights*, 24; JM International, *Annual Report 2010: Making A Difference Through Music* (Brussels: JM International, 2010), 16.

[7] Matt Clark (JMI Programs & Marketing Director), interview with the author, online, July 7, 2021.

[8] Ibid.

foreword of FIJM's self-published fifty-year anniversary book printed in 1995, where none other than NATO Secretary General Willy Claes is given the floor:

> By expanding the opportunities for many young people to play in international settings, Jeunesses Musicales has a key part to play in working towards a Europe of greater mutual understanding, a Europe in which the divisions of the past are no longer conceivable, where greater concordance, not discordance, is the dominant motif.[9]

At the time of its initiation, FIJM thus resembled a post-conflict or post-catastrophe NGO that utilized music for peacebuilding and "civil society rebuilding," which is in line with Elaine Sandoval's post-conflict category of music NGO objectives.[10]

JMI's humanitarian mission still stands today. The JMI secretariat is granted a consultative status by UNESCO, accredited by the United Nations Office at Vienna (UNOV), and is an observer member of the European Youth Forum, and member of Culture Action Europe (CAE).[11] Alongside collaborations with non-governmental (music) organizations, JMI has established links with inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) such as the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue Between Cultures (2004), the Arab Academy of Music (1971), the International Labour Organization (1919), and the World Bank Institute (1955).[12] Whereas FIJM's mission as a post-conflict NGO was to rebuild society, JMI now profiles itself as an organization that aims to prevent future conflict (i.e., a pre-conflict music NGO). This shift can be traced in current mission statements of JMI, such as the one formulated by Clark in 2021:

> We are trying to create better human beings, or at least give people the opportunity to become better human beings globally. To collaborate, to love, to appreciate other people from different countries and cultures, so we don't end up with a 1945 situation again. I mean, it's a bit of a big thing to take on as your organizational mission, but that is the reason … We don't say we will do it single handedly, but we are part of the movement, of the global peace movement that is trying to ensure that the balance stays a little bit

[9] Willy Claes, "Foreword," in *Federation Internationale des Jeunesses Musicales, 1945–1995: The First 50 Years*, ed. Christian Michiels, trans. Karen Barnes, Anne Cornélis, and Esther Juan (Brussels: F.I.J.M., 1995), 9.

[10] Elaine Sandoval, "Music in Peacebuilding: A Critical Literature Review," *Journal of Peace Education* 13, no. 3 (2016): 202–4.

[11] Union of International Associations, "Jeunesses Musicales International," in *Yearbook of International Organizations*, 11th ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2022), https://uia.org/s/or/en/1100033233.

[12] Ibid.

> on the side of good and hopefully we overcome some of the world's problems together in a little bit of a better way.[13]

Parallel to this gradual shift towards conflict prevention, the musical genre of JMI's activities transformed from strictly classical music to stylistic pluralism. FIJM's preoccupation with music from the Western classical tradition was part of Cuvelier and FIJM co-founder René Nicoly's legacy. The founders respectively held prominent positions at classical music institutions in Belgium and France and shared the common assumption amongst the cultural elite that "classical music" was "good music," which was most suitable for educating future generations.[14] As the association expanded globally in the sixties and seventies, however, such arbitrariness grew increasingly untenable. The anniversary publication of 1995 may well serve as a proverbial tipping point of the internal debates on FIJM's purpose and musical direction. While Secretary General Dag Franzen suggested "still classical music is the main musical media of JM worldwide," other contributors argued that stylistic pluralism should be FIJM's new bedrock.[15] Meir Wiesel, president of JM Israël and participant of FIJM's internal "Future Project" group in 1990, described this new direction as follows:

> There seemed to be a consensus among all FIJM members, namely that a project of the Federation must be unique on the international scene, of high professional quality, and a forerunner in its musical message to young musicians everywhere … And so came along the marvelous idea of pluralism of musical genres. Not easily – for quite a few members still believed in the reign of classical music alone. But gradually we recognized that Jeunesses Musicales can become the cradle for this idea to develop and flourish. It fits practically every demand: it forsees [*sic*] the music of the future …, it is unique, because no other established organization has so far declared it to be its flag (beware – we must not wait too long for this to happen); and it can be done on a high, professional level.[16]

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[13] Clark, interview.

[14] Leytens, "Short History," 24.

[15] Dag Franzen, "A Global Cluster of Music," in *Federation Internationale des Jeunesses Musicales, 1945–1995: The First 50 Years*, ed. Christian Michiels, trans. Karen Barnes, Anne Cornélis, and Esther Juan (Brussels: F.I.J.M., 1995), 3.

[16] Meir Wiesel, "Quo Vadis Do - Mi - Re?," in *Federation Internationale des Jeunesses Musicales, 1945–1995: The First 50 Years*, ed. Christian Michiels, trans. Karen Barnes, Anne Cornélis, and Esther Juan (Brussels: F.I.J.M., 1995), 77.

This quotation indicates several key developments in the context of FIJM (and music NGOs in general) at the time. Foremost, it shows the first cracks in stylistic hierarchy maintained by music NGOs' activities in which classical music "reigned" supreme. Following political decolonization, countercultural resistance, and the rise of a "world music" industry in the second half of the twentieth century, FIJM members questioned more than ever the elitism of classical music education and FIJM's Eurocentric predilection for Western classical music. Statutory adjustments were made accordingly in 1974, when the association reformulated its aim "to stimulate the interest for the *different musical traditions* and different means of expression" (emphasis added).[17] Similarly, FIJM president Elef Nesheim found that equal status of musical genres allowed the association to "represent a tremendous diversity of countries and cultures."[18] What remained, however, was the core criterion of quality, indicated in the final words quoted above. Or as JM France representative Martin Beyers put it, "all forms of music and artistic expression are treated equally, the only prerequisite being quality."[19]

Additionally, Wiesel's words show that the structural transformation of FIJM was not merely motivated by a heightened social awareness. His suggestion of a new unique selling point comes with a polite warning for possible competition from within the field of music NGOs. Indeed, the rebranding of FIJM to JMI had a competitive—if not commercial—aspect, which is understandable for any organization seeking international sponsorship at a time of financial crisis.[20] In a poetic metaphor relating FIJM to the trunk of a tree branching out into a network of member organizations, Franzen expects "the FIJM tree will have to compete with a number of other trees to be observed by the surrounding world … It does not have to be the greatest tree worldwide, but i[t] surely has to attract the eye of the observer."[21] Beyer echoes the sentiment of Franzen's poetic statement when calling for the "unsung heroes" of Jeunesses Musicales to at least "become more media-minded."[22]

The turn to stylistic pluralism and increased media-mindedness are clearly visible in JMI's activities since 1995. One may note for example the anglicization of the association's

[17] Leytens, "Short History," 32.

[18] Elef Nesheim, "After the First Fifty Years," in *Federation Internationale des Jeunesses Musicales, 1945–1995: The First 50 Years*, ed. Christian Michiels, trans. Karen Barnes, Anne Cornélis, and Esther Juan (Brussels: F.I.J.M., 1995), 7.

[19] Martin Beyer, "FIJM in the Nineties," in *Federation Internationale des Jeunesses Musicales, 1945–1995: The First 50 Years*, ed. Christian Michiels, trans. Karen Barnes, Anne Cornélis, and Esther Juan (Brussels: F.I.J.M., 1995), 72.

[20] Specifically in the nineties, FIJM faced financial challenges. See Leytens, "Short History," 37.

[21] Franzen, "A Global Cluster of Music," 4.

[22] Beyer, "FIJM in the Nineties," 73.

name, the logo prominent on all JMI associated (online) materials, and the variety of jazz, pop, rock, and folk music programs JMI now offers worldwide.

## 2.2 Federation and Franchise

Organizations who wish to become a member of JMI are invited to apply for either national or associate membership. The association's statutes allow only one national member per country.[23] National members are entitled to bear the name of "JM + country name" and are expected to have "a nation-wide structure" operating "on nation-wide level," without generating profit and without political affiliations.[24] Organizations of countries where a national member already exists, or organizations that otherwise do not meet the necessary requirements, may apply as associate members. In all cases, applicants must share democratic and ideological principles with JMI and be "free of any ideological, political, social, racial or else wise discriminating position."[25] Members pay a fee that is dependent on the organization's size and the Human Development Index of the country in which they are seated. In return, members receive benefits which may be categorized as knowledge exchange (training and support in fundraising), visibility (digital promotion and use of the JM trademark), representation (JMI claims to represent its members "at various policy platforms, dialoging with key political stakeholders"), and, most importantly, collaboration ("member-2-member" projects, collaborative fundraising, and participation in JMI's international programs).[26] Moreover, members gain the right to participate and vote in the association's annual general assembly. At voting rounds concerning membership applications, statutory changes, and budget plans, a national member's vote weighs five times heavier than that of an associate.[27]

The federal design of FIJM, consisting of member "states," is most likely a result of the postwar geopolitical context in which Cuvelier and Nicoly first concretized their ideas. The idea of a youth and music movement on an international scale at first served as opposition to the perceived threat of Nazi youth mobilization in Belgian and French occupied territories, and later it came to function as a deterrent of fascist ideologies in future generations.[28] Similar to the structure of the League of Nations (1919) and the United Nations (1945), FIJM's federal design with national delegates reflects a prevalent post-conflict longing amongst politicians and

[23] JM International, "JMI Statutes," Article 9.3.
[24] JM International, "Membership Info Booklet."
[25] JM International, "JMI Statutes," Article 10.4.
[26] JM International, "Membership Info Booklet," 4–5.
[27] JM International, "JMI Statutes," Article 19.5.
[28] Leytens, "Short History," 16.

policymakers for the restoration of state sovereignty in the new geopolitical order, for the return of democratic principles, and for a future of international integration and collaboration. As the path towards European integration has been inevitably rocky in the past seventy-five years, so has FIJM's expansion been troublesome at times. In contribution to the fifty-year anniversary publication, former Secretary General of JM Belgium and JM Flanders Luc Leytens explains how applications of eastern European countries such as that of Hungary in 1964 caused controversy because of the lack of "complete independence from the State" in such countries.[29] The federal design further caused problems for applicants from Czechoslovakia, who were initially not granted national membership to JMI because different applicants from this region were unable to form a united national application.

The financial means of FIJM/JMI's headquarters have also fluctuated throughout its history. As mentioned by Leytens, Cuvelier was hesitant to apply for state funding because of possible governmental preconditions and thus financially relied upon the Philharmonic Society of Brussels.[30] His successor Paul Willems, unable to draw on the Society's funds, was forced to create a separate secretariat supported by funding from the Belgian federal government. This operational grant (1959) was the starting point of government support which JMI has received to this day. In 2019, as shown in **figure 1**, JMI estimated that 9% of the budget consisted of support from the Belgian government. Most recently, in 2022, JMI received an operational grant of 48.000 euros from the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO) which amounts to at least 4% of the associations budget.[31] A possible example of the governmental conditions distrusted by Cuvelier can be found in article 20.4 of JMI's statutes, which states that the board must contain a delegate of the Belgian federal government as ex officio board member (without voting rights).[32]

[29] Ibid., 26.
[30] Ibid., 25–26.
[31] BELSPO, email correspondence with author, June 8, 2022. Calculation is based on a budget estimation of 1.3 million euros, listed in Union of International Associations, "Jeunesses Musicales International."
[32] JM International, "JMI Statutes," Article 20.4.

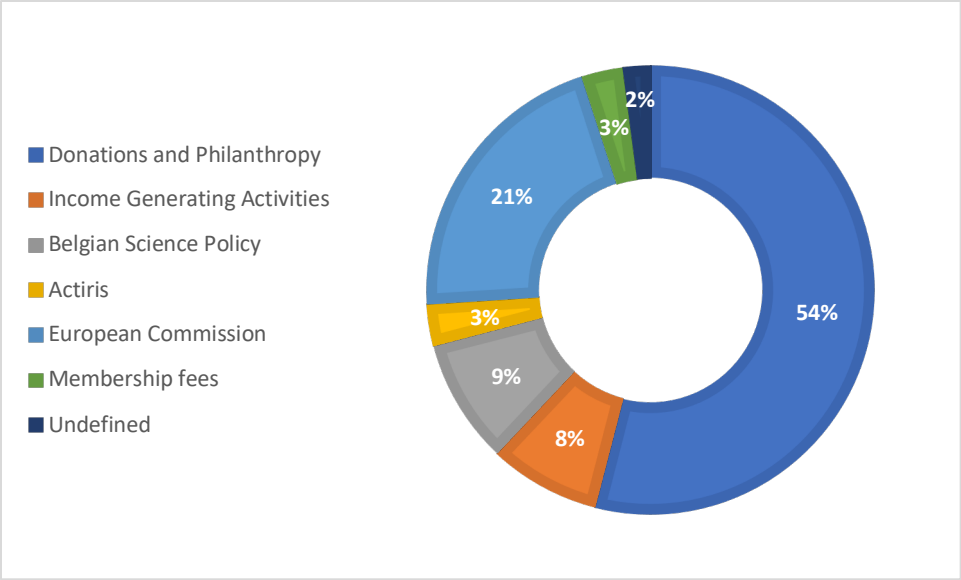


**Figure 1. Sources of Income 2019–2020.**[33] Total budget of 2019 is 1,220,362 euros.

**Figure 1** is based on the most recent budget JMI has made publicly available, with one notable adaptation. The source contains an error: all mentioned percentages in the pie chart add up to 98%. In **figure 1**, I have corrected this error by adding an undefined category of 2%. Name tags of other categories are quoted from the source. The following elaboration on JMI's funders is restricted to the two largest categories: "Donations and Philanthropy" and "European Commission."

"Donations and Philanthropy" include a multi-year grant of 2.5 million US dollars awarded to the JMI secretariat in 2018 by the American foundation Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies (MACP).[34] In 2019, MACP expended $668,567 of the total amount, which roughly corresponds with JMI's total received donations of that year. In 2020, the grant amount was raised to 3.1 million USD, possibly due to the unexpected circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. The total expended amount increased to $1,290,707 in 2020 and to $2,077,316 in 2021. MACP's description of the grant shows the funding is directed to JMI's folk music program Ethno World only, under the header of "Ethno: Global Music Connections."[35] Before discussing the Ethno program, a glance at the objectives behind MACP's "Arts & Cultures

[33] JM International, *JMI Global Highlights*, 50. Additionally, JMI's entry in the database of the Union of International Organizations suggests the association receives or has received financial support from the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, the National Lottery Belgium, and Transparency International (TI, 1993). See Union of International Associations, "Jeunesses Musicales International."

[34] This information is retrieved from MACP's online tax forms (990-PF) of 2018 through 2020. See Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, "Financials," accessed December 15, 2022, https://www.macphilanthropies.org/resources/financials/.

[35] Ibid.

domain" may already clarify why the foundation has chosen to fund Ethno rather than other or all JMI programs.[36] In this domain, MACP namely aims to support "folk arts" and "Native American art," specifically targeting "intergenerational transmission of artistic skill and cultural knowledge."[37] MACP's grant serves as an example of FIJM/JMI's fruitful transition towards stylistic pluralism, as the once strictly classical music association now receives more than half of its income from funding directed towards folk music.

Contributions of the European Commission (EC) include funding from the Creative Europe program. The official objectives of this program are to "safeguard, develop and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage" and to "increase competitiveness and economic potential of the cultural and creative sectors."[38] Perhaps coincidentally, Belgium and France—the bedrock of FIJM's founders—stand out as the top recipients of the EC's cultural funding during the first term of Creative Europe (2014-2020) as well as in the first year of the new term of the program (2021-2027).[39] Cultural funding in the European Union has an intricate history that is worth mentioning here. JMI—a non-governmental association—notably receives funding from the EC, which is in many ways a supranational governmental body. The design and budget of EU's culture program is a result of negotiations not only with the cultural industries, but also with political actors, not in the least the European Parliament (EP). Studies on the history of EU's culture programs identify a tension between economic and political instrumentalist arguments in such negotiations, between actors who seek more cultural integration (e.g., to cultivate a European identity) and those who wish to protect the authority (i.e., sovereignty) of individual member states over cultural policy.[40] With the rise of

[36] Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, "Arts & Cultures," accessed January 6, 2023, https://www.macphilanthropies.org/domains/arts-cultures/.

[37] Ibid.

[38] European Commission, "About the Creative Europe Programme," accessed January 6, 2023, https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/about-the-creative-europe-programme.

[39] Data is retrieved from EU spending and revenue charts of the Creative Europe Program (3.0.11) over 2014-2020 and 2020-2027. See European Commission, "EU Spending and Revenue 2014-2020," accessed January 6, 2023, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/2014-2020/spending-and-revenue_en; European Commission, "EU Spending and Revenue 2021-2027," accessed January 6, 2023, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/2021-2027/spending-and-revenue_en.

[40] See, for example, Bjarki Valtysson, "Camouflaged Culture: The 'Discursive Journey' of the EU's Cultural Programmes," *Croatian International Relations Review* 24, no. 82 (2018): 14–37; Annabelle Littoz-Monnet, "Encapsulating EU Cultural Policy into the EU's Growth and Competiveness Agenda: Explaining the Success of a Paradigmatic Shift in Brussels," in *Cultural Governance and the European Union: Protecting and Promoting Cultural Diversity in Europe*, ed. Evangelia Psychogiopoulou (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), chap. 2, Google Play Books. For the EU's competences in cultural policy, see European Commission, "EU Competences in the Field of Culture," accessed January 6, 2023, https://culture.ec.europa.eu/policies/eu-competences-in-the-field-of-culture; Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Consolidated version), Article 6, OJ C 202 (June 7, 2016), 52–53, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-

Euroscepticism, populism, and neo-nativism in Europe, this tension has arguably increased, and "cultural heritage preservation" has gained currency in both pro- and anti-federalist narratives. Bracketing the political frameworks and discourses behind EU's culture programs for now, it is important to remain alert to the underlying political forces that shape the EC's funding of JMI.

JMI's financial circumstances have not always been so favorable, however. In 1959, FIJM's secretariat was uncoupled from JM Belgium. In the seventies, both the secretariat and the association's members suffered loss of financial means due to oil crisis and its economic ramifications. During the recession in the early nineties, FIJM was compelled to give the responsibility for fundraising to individual members. At the General Assembly in 1992, it was decided that a distinction must be made between "'projects of the FIJM' … for which it also carries complete financial responsibility," and "'projects with the FIJM'; which are mainly supported by other organizations or member states."[41] This resulted in a franchise-like structure that characterizes JMI today. JMI member organizations receive the benefits mentioned earlier in this chapter, but the secretariat generally does not provide financial support for individual (local) JM programs. Thus, to cover the costs of hosting a JM program and to maintain JMI membership, member organizations must raise or apply for funding locally. JMI's expenses for its own programs, categorized as "JMI Programs" in **figure 2**, are for network-broad events and celebrations (i.e., the World Youth Choir), the yearly General Assembly, world conferences, and training sessions for members.

content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12016E006; Treaty on European Union (Consolidated Version), Article 3, OJ C 202 (June 7, 2016), 17, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A12016M003.

[41] Leytens, "Short History," 37.

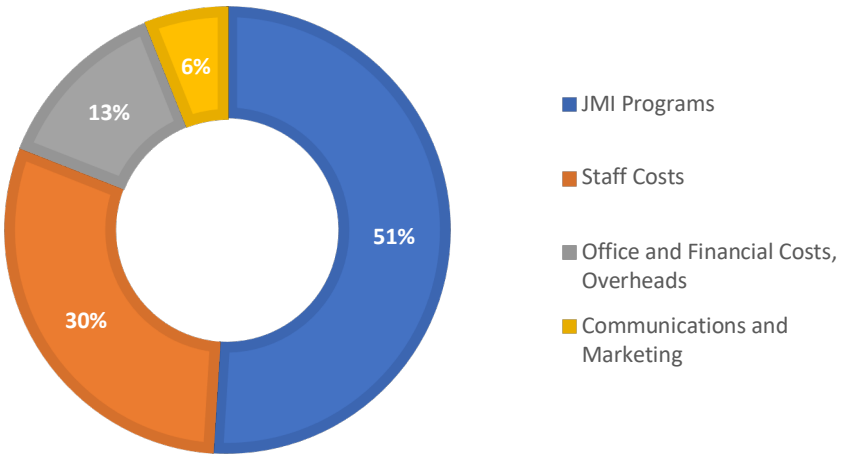


**Figure 2. Division of Expenses 2019–2020.**[42]

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the franchise structure has made individual JMI members more vulnerable to (local) financial and political upheaval. Many members of JMI's non-governmental network rely on governmental support through local and national cultural funding programs. For example, JMI's anniversary publication mentions that, up to 1995, JM Greece "received no subsidy from the State, which means that they lack the resources to be very active."[43] Another case in point is the case study of the association akustikUm – Muzička omladina JMBH by Jasna Ahmetović.[44] The Yugoslav wars appear to have significantly damaged the funding infrastructure for JM members in Bosnia and Herzegovina. While Ahmetović agrees that "the potential of music to facilitate intercultural dialogue is one that should be exploited," especially in relation to ethnic conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina, she argues that Jeunesses Musicales' "development is not supported by the political system of the country nor by available cultural policy instruments."[45] In other words, the franchise structure significantly blocks JMI's potential as post-conflict NGO. Despite JMI's non-governmental profile, these examples further illustrate the association's difficulty of circumventing political/governmental decisions.

[42] JM International, *JMI Global Highlights*, 51.
[43] Michiels, *The First 50 Years*, 110.
[44] Jasna Ahmetović, "Jeunesses Musicales and the Development of Musical Culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Current and Potential Challenges and Transformations" (Master's thesis, Belgrade, University of Arts in Belgrade, 2015).
[45] Ibid., 4.

## 2.3 Ethno World: A New Flagship

Though certain members struggled to maintain membership, FIJM's activities expanded in countries where political and economic circumstances grew favorable (e.g., in Western Europe and Canada), and earned a place in local cultural networks. In Sweden, for example, folk musician Magnus Bäckström had somewhat enviously followed how Swedish FIJM members Rikskonserter and Musik för Ungdom ("Music for Youth," or JM Sweden) became involved in FIJM's classical World Youth Orchestra (WYO) and the World Youth Choir.[46] As a folk music advocate, Bäckström identified a structurally disadvantaged position of folk music practices in the (inter)national infrastructure for cultural funding. He hoped JMI would be a possible partner in his "struggle for acknowledgement."[47] Inspired by the WYO, Bäckström came up with a format for an international folk music gathering called "Ethno" that might "get JMI 'in the boat.'"[48] Looking back during an interview in 2019, he states Ethno "had/has a purpose and was/is part of a broader social strategy," was "cultural policy," "an attitude and a statement," and "part of a plan" to "get folk music more acknowledged and a natural and equal part of the musical landscape in the society."[49] In the next chapter I will elaborate on these statements.

Even though Rikskonserter and JM Sweden supported the organization of Ethno Sweden early on, and even helped to promote the project within FIJM, it was not before the early 2000s that FIJM/JMI took a serious interest in the Ethno format. In the meantime, Ethno gatherings started a life of their own, popping up in Estonia (1997) and Belgium (1999), led by volunteers. Though FIJM provided financial support to Ethno Sweden in 1991-1993, the association was still preoccupied with classical music projects. Former Ethno Sweden organizer Peter Ahlbom recalls his initial reaction when, after several staff changes at JMI around 2004, the head office proposed to adopt Ethno as an official program:

> When JMI wanted to present Ethno as a JMI program, some people (including me) were a bit irritated. "Do they want to steal our project?" But since more Ethnos had been started, we could see the importance to have a hub like JMI for all of us.[50]

[46] All translations of names and titles are my own, unless stated otherwise.

[47] Magnus Bäckström in Hugo Ribeiro, Magnus Bäckström, and Peter Ahlbom, "An Autobiographical History of Ethno Sweden: A Testimonial about Its Origins, Underlying Ideology and Initial Goals," *ORFEU* 4, no. 2 (2019): ¶3.2.

[48] Ibid., ¶3.9.

[49] Ibid., ¶3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.9.

[50] Peter Ahlbom in Ribeiro, Bäckström, and Ahlbom, "An Autobiographical History," ¶4.

JMI's timing of "adopting" Ethno is in line with the association's transformation towards stylistic pluralism described above. As 1995 served as a tipping point, it is logical that Bäckström's arguments for incorporation into JMI only found significant resonance at JMI several years later. Besides sharing the goals of "peace, inspiration, and building an international network" with FIJM, Bäckström had argued:

> Folk/world music adds two more dimensions: 1) the variety of music styles brings a more comprehensive musical reference to the individual, which also can be substantial creative and artistic input, and 2) you get encouraged and strengthened coming from a small, often marginalized, music tradition at home into a global context where you and your music are appreciated and highly valued.[51]

Once FIJM/JMI's network was ready to acknowledge Bäckström's arguments of the added value of "folk/world music," the association added to its profile an area of human rights discourse that the alleged elitism of classical music had prevented: postcolonial discourse. JMI's adoption of Ethno serves as the association's answer to postcolonial critiques of international classical music projects that arguably maintain Western cultural hegemony built on inherently racist, colonialist, elitist, and patriarchal frameworks. JMI's current description of Ethno World (i.e., JMI's name for the Ethno program) reveals several objectives that were less clearly articulated by FIJM before:

> Ethno is a platform for building respect and tolerance, preserving cultural heritage by ensuring that traditional, folk and world music live on within young people, and is transmitted from generation to generation. It widens and deepens relationships among musicians and cultures from around the world, whereby participants are able to build a greater appreciation of each other's respective cultures through music. As such, Ethno uses music as a powerful tool to combat xenophobia, intolerance and racism.[52]

Like Bäckström, JMI here advocates for the exchange of musical heritages ("folk," "traditional," and/or "world music"), suggesting folk music is a suitable and topical tool to oppose racism and intolerance, perhaps even more effectively than classical music. Through Ethno, the association's profile now includes topics of multiculturalism and cultural rights from

[51] Magnus Bäckström in Ribeiro, Bäckström, and Ahlbom, "An Autobiographical History," ¶3.5.
[52] JM International, "Ethno," accessed September 29, 2022, https://jmi.net/programs/ethno.

a humanitarian perspective, calling for "inclusion," "intercultural dialogue," and "bridging cultural divides."[53] This endorsement gives a twist to the "music is a universal language" trope formerly employed by classical music NGOs, which has been increasingly criticized for its Eurocentric undertones. Nowadays, JMI regularly refers to music's universality being present within Ethno, as well as other JMI programs.[54] For example, on the reception of the MACP grant, JMI stated in 2020:

> This new development to the Ethno program is set to broaden the cultural horizons of many young people, and in a time when the world is in increased need of open, respectful dialogue between its peoples and nations. What better way could there be, than through our universal language – music.[55]

This quotation echoes a (questionable) underlying assumption held by music NGOs in Elaine Sandoval's "pre-conflict" category, namely music's inherent ability to create empathy, solidarity, and to build "cross-cultural relationships between the people 'represented' by those musics."[56] Inspired by Sandoval's critical arguments on such assumptions, the next chapter will further investigate Ethno in the local context of the Swedish folk music community. Before examining this local context, however, it is necessary to understand how folk music is connected to cultural representation at Ethno gatherings.

### *The Ethno Format*[57]

There are several core elements constituting Ethno gatherings across the globe concerning the participant group, workshop design, activities, and duration. Participants must generally be between sixteen and thirty years old and are selected by organizers through application. The application process ensures a participant group that is culturally diverse and has a certain

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[53] Ibid.

[54] JM International, *Ethno: The New Spirit of World Music* (Brussels: JM International, 2010), 8; JM International, "Let's keep fighting the good fight, making beautiful music together, and connecting people through our universal language," Facebook, August 12, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/JMInetwork/photos/a.93890838244/10158662654748245/?type=3&source=57&paipv=0&eav=AfZ5FsFlAl-d5l7Om1QKMUsu-LekU0nKbpD31XIvgRqyix9_hsxLkGKwz8iNTkKdcfk&_rdr; JM International, "EnCORE Classical Vol. 1 - MVT. 2: Music with No Borders," Encore Classical, 2019, https://www.encoreclassical.org/encore-mvt2.

[55] JM International, "News," Ethno, November 17, 2020, https://ethno.world/a-new-tone-for-global-folk-music-program/.

[56] Sandoval, "Music in Peacebuilding," 211.

[57] Besides the information available online and the ethnographic study carried out by the Ethno Research team, I draw from personal experience attending Ethno gatherings over the course of five years. Between 2018-2021, I attended six different Ethno gatherings across Europe.

balance of instrument groups (i.e., rhythm, harmony, and melody instruments). Though a certain level of musicianship is not required, an ethnographic study by Ethno Research recently showed that a majority of 78 interviewees had received "formal training in the Western classical musical tradition" and qualified themselves as "experienced" musicians.[58] Participants pay a one-off fee that includes room and board. Many Ethnos have separate fees for participants residing within or outside the EU, and eligible participants can apply for JMI's "Ethno Mobility Grant" to cover both travel and participation costs.[59] Gatherings generally last for approximately seven to ten days, containing tune-learning and arrangement workshops, rehearsals, and group performances.

The repertoire consists of songs and tunes (i.e., instrumental melodies) that participants themselves bring to the gathering. Preferably, participants bring music "from their culture" or "from their countries," referred to as traditional or folk music (it is this material JMI refers to when speaking of cultural heritage).[60] The number of participants varies between different gatherings: small Ethnos may host fifteen participants while bigger gatherings (such as Ethno Sweden) host up to 100 participants. Because of the restricted time, participants are divided into groups that respectively will teach a tune or song. While participants are free to join any group they want, it is commonplace that groups are divided by nationality or cultural identity. Within these separate groups, participants collectively decide on one piece of music (e.g., tune, song, or a medley) that represents their group. Throughout the first few days of the gathering, individual groups teach their arrangement to the rest of the participants, who learn the music by ear (general arrangement structure is often provided on a flip chart). In the daily program, workshops are often named after the geographical roots of the tune (e.g., Spain, France, Belgium, but also Catalonia, Occitania, or Flanders). After all groups have presented and taught their tune, arrangements are made with the support of artistic mentors (i.e., designated musicians hired by organizers) and a setlist is made and rehearsed for one or several performances at the end of the gathering. The setlist often compromises the order of "countries" that are represented with each tune, and occasionally includes the title of the song or tune. Outside the workshop and rehearsal schedule there are usually opportunities to schedule informal workshops or leisure activities.

[58] Sarah-Jane Gibson, Lee Higgins, and Ryan Humphrey, "30 Years of Ethno: The History of Ethno Research" (York, UK: International Centre for Community Music, 2021), 11–12. For JMI's description of Ethno gatherings, see Ethno World, "About."

[59] Eligibility depends on the country of residence. See JM International, "Ethno Mobility Grant 2023," Ethno World, last modified September 8, 2022, https://ethno.world/ethno-mobility-grant-2023/.

[60] Ethno World, "About."

## 2.4 Sovereignty over Culture: Sidenotes and Takeaways

With the information provided above, it is now possible to connect JMI and Ethno World to the theoretical framework in the previous chapter. The case study of JMI and Ethno World introduces various actors taking an interest in musical heritage: NGOs (e.g., JMI and its partners), state governments (e.g., Belgium and other states funding local JM organizations), supranational governments (e.g., the EC), international organizations (e.g., the UN and UNESCO), philanthropists (e.g., MACP), music entrepreneurs or "pioneers" (e.g., Cuvelier, Nicoly, and Bäckström), and commercial parties. To a certain extent, these actors share humanitarian ambitions to improve and maintain geopolitical stability, ensure access to cultural life and heritage, support (musical) education of future generations, speak up for the disenfranchised, and create a form of international cohesion. Alongside these ambitions, however, individual actors arguably are motivated to solve other context-specific problems or demands in which the endorsement of musical heritage serves as an expedient. Re-emphasizing Yúdice's understanding of the expediency of culture, it is the performative strategies of these actors that are of interest, not the moral implications of such strategies. Obviously, the ends to which musical heritage is used as an expedient are multifaceted, and I am therefore compelled to single out one that, in my view, is inherently connected to connotations of "traditional" or "folk" heritage: cultural sovereignty. Put differently, I suggest cultural sovereignty is a specific type of agency or authority that inevitably is invoked when actors implement "traditional" or "folk" music. The meaning and necessity ascribed to cultural sovereignty by these actors varies and overlaps, and comes from a variety of standpoints (e.g., humanistic universalism, political, and legal).

The transformation of FIJM/JMI discussed in this chapter shows how the incorporation of Ethno World was not only a necessary step to increase its sensitivity to postcolonial issues, but also crucial to keep a foothold in the field of music NGOs. The incorporation of Ethno World allowed JMI to emphasize societal issues of intolerance, racism, and xenophobia by promoting exchange of musical traditions and celebrating a global heritage of music. By endorsing traditional music for these purposes, JMI aligned its objectives with UNESCO's effort to connect cultural heritage to social justice and human rights. In turn, this attracted interest from MACP, a foundation that champions indigenous (Native American) cultural preservation through its cultural funding program. The following observation by Ethno researchers Gibson et al. serves as an example of how the performance and exchange of musical heritage at JMI's Ethno program may relate to a humanitarian and/or indigenous understanding of cultural sovereignty:

> For several individuals, taking part in Ethno had enabled them to feel as if they had a sense of empowerment to 'reclaim' their own cultural identity through the process of sharing repertoire that they viewed as being a product of their own cultural background.[61]

This lived experience of Ethno participants suggests the program generates a sense of (individual) cultural agency and empowers participants of Ethno gatherings to (re)gain a form of autonomy over their cultural identity. The word "reclaim" may further imply an assertion that is legitimate or rightful, meaning that traditional music enables individuals to resist or reject unrightful impositions of culture (i.e., cultural imperialism) and "take back" a right to self-determination: sovereignty over culture. From what or from whom might participants want to reclaim their cultural identity? Evidently, this depends on participants' perception of and interpretation of large-scale cultural processes (i.e., their situated knowledge). Gibson et al. unfortunately do not clarify their use of terminology, leaving it to the reader to speculate why participants may feel disconnected from their cultural identity. Ethno researchers do provide examples of participants sensing that—through teaching and performing music from their cultural background—they are able to provide an alternative to dominant historical narratives of their home country or region, counter prejudices resulting from constructed global hierarchies (e.g., "developing countries" versus "developed countries"), or simply to acquire knowledge on the cultural history of their home country.[62]

In the background of the previous sections, however, lingers the political and legal aspects of cultural sovereignty, the kind of authority over cultural policy that is in hands of policymakers and governmental bodies, and which continues to operate along state boundaries. FIJM's federal design, for one, shows a central role for nationally operating institutions and their representatives. The franchise model further positions JMI's current network in the domain of national cultural policy: member organizations often depend on funding from national governments. As the examples of Greece and Bosnia and Herzegovina show, (maintaining) government support in some instances has become a prerequisite for national JM membership. Additionally, governments that do support local JM organizations may do so for

[61] Gibson, Higgins, and Humphrey, "30 Years of Ethno," 37.

[62] Ibid., 35–36; Roger Mantie and Laura Risk, "Framing Ethno-World: Intercultural Music Exchange, Tradition, and Globalization," White Paper (York, UK: International Centre for Community Music, 2020), 34, https://www.ethnoresearch.org/publication/framing-ethno-world-full-report/.

other reasons than to support JMI's globalist incentives. A case in point may be JM Hungary, which is partially funded by Victor Orbán's Miniszterelnökség ("The Prime Minister's Office").[63] Amongst critics, the Hungarian Prime Minister has acquired a reputation for agitating xenophobic and racist sentiments. Though a nuanced perspective on this example is called for, it is telling that an association aiming to counter xenophobia is arguably unable to fully circumvent such a political force that diametrically opposes its objectives. The support received from MACP seems a welcome alternative to the instability of government funding, but since the grant is awarded to the secretariat instead of individual members, it does little to diminish the dependency of local JM organizations on state money.

The Creative Europe program is a special case in relation to expediency of culture and cultural sovereignty, considering the widely debated division between economic and political integration that has marked the development of the European Union. As far as culture was and is intentionally instrumentalized to bolster the Union's common market, culture programs remain shackled to the principle that "true" (i.e., traditional) cultural sovereignty remains in the hands of nation states. Any cultural incentives that promote international integration within and beyond the EU thus must balance between Eurosceptics and enthusiasts, between pro- and anti-federalists, without crossing the boundary of state sovereignty. To put it bluntly, Creative Europe's objective to collectively safeguard European cultural heritage may thus be interpreted as an amalgamation of national interests in the field of culture that complements the cultural sovereignty of member states.

With these observations in mind, new questions arise regarding the format of Ethno. A large part of the program's profile leans on the promotion and preservation of cultural heritage. This is arguably one of the characteristics that secures funding from both the EC and MACP, as well as national governments' funding of local JM organizations. As Christoph Brumann, Tim Winter, and other scholars in the field of cultural heritage have shown, assigning "heritage" status to cultural artefacts and practices is subjective and it is therefore necessary to analyze what entities hold authority to assign such labels.[64] At Ethno, participants themselves are in charge of choosing repertoire, of which the requirements are minimal ("a song or tune from their home culture … something that is not too difficult but not too simple either").[65] In an

[63] JM Hungary, *Activity Report*, accessed January 13, 2023, https://jmhungary.org/activity-report/?lang=en.

[64] Christoph Brumann, "Anthropological Utopia, Closet Eurocentrism, and Culture Chaos in the UNESCO World Heritage Arena," *Anthropological Quarterly* 91, no. 4 (2018): 1203–33; Tim Winter, "Beyond Eurocentrism? Heritage Conservation and The Politics of Difference," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 20, no. 2 (2014): 123–37; Albrecht Riethmüller, ed., *The Role of Music in European Integration: Conciliating Eurocentrism and Multiculturalism*, 2 vols., Discourses on Intellectual Europe (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2017).

[65] Ethno World, "About."

attempt to distinguish Ethno from conservative preservationist projects in the field of cultural heritage, JMI programs and marketing director Clark admits there is a discrepancy between how JMI describes Ethno online and how gatherings work in practice:

> [For] Ethno [the idea] has been to say "Yes, every culture/every country has their folk music, but there is that space, where there's more space, where we can share." Ethno is not a folk music preservation project. You don't go to Ethno to learn how to preserve a Swedish polka from the you know, whatever..., you're not going there and learning from the Swedish reference. It's young people teaching each other music from their countries and culture.[66]

It seems the Ethno format builds upon the assumption that cultural heritage is represented through the music selected (and negotiated) by its participants. It does not necessarily question, however, how this repertoire might have acquired this status and what historical (and political) processes might have preceded its promotion into the privileged "heritage arena."

At Ethno, denominators for cultural identities are often conflated with nationality (i.e., an "Indian" folk song represented by the "Indian" delegation of participants, or a "Brazilian tune" represented by "Brazil"), and it is up to participants to nuance this national framework. A possible consequence is that participants, encouraged to contribute to a bricolage of national cultural heritages, turn to music that captures a certain national identity or image, more so than their personal sense of cultural belonging. In a sense, participants are encouraged to reinforce cultural or national boundaries, after which—through the process of teaching, learning, and performing it with an international multicultural ensemble—these boundaries are symbolically crossed or transcended. The same observation is made by Roger Mantie and Laura Risk, when stating:

> Participants put up their own walls of national and cultural identity and search out the walls of others, in full knowledge that these walls will be broken down over the course of the camp. The higher the walls, the greater the thrill of transgression, even in the safe and curated space of a music camp. Thus, in a seeming paradox, Ethno breaks down cultural differences and promotes cross-cultural harmony by reinforcing individual cultural identity.[67]

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[66] Clark, interview.
[67] Mantie and Risk, "Framing Ethno-World," 36.

The paradox described by Mantie and Risk reveals a tension between sameness and difference, between the particularity and universality of culture, and by extension, a symbolic duel between cultural self-determination and cooperation. Mantie and Risk argue that, on the one hand, traditional music in this context signifies a specific cultural identity and its performance affirms cultural differences between participants (i.e., "wall-building"). On the other hand, the performance of traditional music by a multicultural group of musicians signifies a "breakdown" of cultural differences. It unites culturally different participants, allowing them to interact, cooperate, and share common interest in each other's (musical) cultures.

In the Ethno format, JMI translates UNESCO's humanitarian ideal of cultural sovereignty for all "nations," or the right to "sovereignty over culture" in Brendebach's words, into a context where representations of "national" cultures manifest through folk/traditional music.[68] For some participants, this idea of "national" representation undoubtedly fits seamlessly with their perception of cultural identity. It becomes troublesome, however, for participants who rely on repertoire that is heavily politicized. Ethno Research has already shown how some participants stumble across a deep and at times problematic history of romantic nationalist folklore and political instrumentalism of twentieth-century folk revivals, rendering tune-selecting for cultural representation a difficult task.[69] Dealing with traditional folk music and cultural representation, it seems inevitable for these participants to be confronted with how such genres have been used as an expedient by political actors to assert sovereignty in geopolitical contexts. Especially in Europe, where "traditional" and "folk" music connotations are historically so heavily integrated into nation building.

These issues are not necessarily insurmountable problems that render the Ethno format flawed. On the contrary, the atmosphere of Ethno gatherings is open, dynamic, and the format is highly flexible. Workshop titles and group formations may be adopted to suit the participants' desires. One may wonder, if one should not simply be glad that musical heritage is used to advance humanitarian goals rather than exclusionary political ideologies. I would gladly agree, were it not that the latter have anything but faded. Instead, neo-nativism in the European Union has gained terrain in the political discourse. In some cases, rising neo-nationalism has also spurred an interest in "traditional" and "folk" music as an expedient to drive a wedge between

[68] Jonas Brendebach, "Contested Sovereignties: The Case of the 'New World Information and Communication Order' at UNESCO in the 1970s," in *Cultural Sovereignty beyond the Modern State: Space, Objects, and Media*, ed. Gregor Feindt, Bernhard Gissibl, and Johannes Paulmann (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2021), 127.

[69] Mantie and Risk, "Framing Ethno-World," 34.

domestic and foreign culture. In populist contexts, where nationalist adoration of "folk" culture tends to go hand in hand with xenophobic and racist sentiments, cultural sovereignty regains currency as a protectionist ideal. Has the public grown less susceptible to such framing of folk music amidst this new wave of neo-nationalism, perhaps by virtue of JMI's efforts and the Ethno program? There is no better local context to study in this regard but the place where the first Ethno gathering emerged: Sweden.

# 3. Ethno Sweden, Folk Music Activism, and the Sweden Democrats: A Local Perspective

In the past decade, members of the Swedish folk community have been reminded of an inconvenient truth: neo-nationalists have not forgotten folklore. In fact, a new political reality no longer allows community members to dismiss neo-nationalists' interest in folklore as a marginal inconvenience. In this chapter, I relate Ethno Sweden to this development and discuss the ways in which the expediency of traditional folk music is relevant to contemporary cultural sovereignty claims. In the first section, I analyze how JM Sweden and Ethno Sweden rely on government support to remain operational. This analysis underlines the argument made previously, that JMI's humanitarianism remains largely within the domain of state sovereignty, due to its reliance on national funding policies. Additionally, the Swedish case is an apt example of how JMI's franchise structure functions relatively successfully when local circumstances are favorable. The second section discusses JM Sweden's position in the landscape of Swedish cultural policy. It shows that, despite JMI's non-governmental principles, the boundaries between cultural policy and humanitarianism become blurred once local members are dependent on state money to remain self-sufficient.

The third section dives deeper into the role of folk music in Swedish cultural policy and addresses the recent interest of nativist populists of the political party Sverigedemokraterna ("The Sweden Democrats," SD) in Swedish folk music. It provides historical context of Swedish folk music and cultural policy, positioning the emergence of Ethno gatherings relative to new right-wing endorsements of folk culture. I speculate on how SD's 2022 electoral win may affect Swedish cultural policy and how this may have both positive and negative consequences for Ethno Sweden. The fourth section explains how SD's endorsement of folk culture has been rejected by activist practitioners, giving rise to a heated debate that reveals deep divisions regarding culture. It presents suggestions coming from JMI (amongst others) that Ethno Sweden, through its presence, fueled the resistance of xenophobic uses of folk music.

The main point of this chapter is that folk music in Sweden is currently used as an expedient by both libertarian-universalists and traditionalist-communitarians to assert opposing claims to cultural sovereignty. While Ethno Sweden, the Swedish national cultural funding programs, and the Sweden Democrats may express fundamentally different interpretations of

cultural sovereignty, they are drawing from similar resources (e.g., financial and musical) under the guise of cultural heritage preservation.

### 3.1 Ethno Sweden, JM Sweden, and JMI

The first Ethno gathering ever was hosted in 1990 by organizers of the Falun Folk Festival in Falun, Sweden. During the first decade of Ethno Sweden's existence, organizers received both financial and logistical support from FIJM/JMI and the Swedish national JM member Rikskonserter (a governmental agency for promoting music concerts). Financial support was never structural, however, and the level of Jeunesses Musicales' involvement in Ethno Sweden varied continuously over the years. After the final edition of the Falun Folk Festival in 2006, Rikskonserter's youth department (JM Sweden) continued to oversee Ethno Sweden's organization in collaboration with a regional music institution called Folkmusikens Hus ("The House of Folk Music") in Rättvik. Rikskonserter did not survive the governmental cultural policy reform of 2011, and since then Folkmusikens Hus has been fully in charge of Ethno Sweden.[1]

The relationship between Ethno Sweden and the federation of Jeunesses Musicales has been anything but a straightforward chain between Ethno Sweden, "JM Sweden," and JMI. In fact, after Rikskonserter was disbanded, a separate organization under the name of JM Sweden continued a separate trajectory, focusing on the facilitation of JMI's program Imagine (an all-style music competition for youths). In the meantime, Folkmusikens Hus continued to host Ethno gatherings while adapting to the transformations of Swedish cultural policy. It became member of a newly designed organ for the national coordination of musical activities across Sweden's regional counties: Regional Musik i Sverige ("Regional Music in Sweden," RMS). RMS currently counts twenty-three members, most of which are regional music institutions ("regional" in this context refers to the twenty-one regional councils and should not be confused with a musical classification). In 2020, JM Sweden was integrated into RMS, making RMS the formal national member of JMI. The name "JM Sweden" and RMS are now used interchangeably, referring to the same organization. As national JMI member, RMS is now responsible for three JMI programs running in Sweden: Imagine Sweden, Ethno Sweden, and Young Audiences Music Sweden (YAM).[2]

[1] Hugo Ribeiro, Magnus Bäckström, and Peter Ahlbom, "An Autobiographical History of Ethno Sweden: A Testimonial about Its Origins, Underlying Ideology and Initial Goals," *ORFEU* 4, no. 2 (2019): 7–29.

[2] Regional Musik i Sverige, "Jeunesses Musicales International (JMI)," accessed October 5, 2022, https://regionalmusikisverige.se/jeunesses-musicales-international/.

Although, on paper, RMS is formally responsible for Ethno Sweden, the association is currently still in the process of incorporating Ethno Sweden in the shared framework of JMI activities in Sweden. In September 2021, regional music institution Musik i Dalarna ("Music in Dalarna") outsourced Gustaf Bäckström Elmelid (son of Ethno founder Magnus Bäckström) to RMS for the position of international coordinator of all JMI activities in Sweden. Due to the unforeseen consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, Elmelid has only recently started to establish an active connection with Folkmusikens Hus regarding Ethno.[3]

In the meantime, Folkmusikens Hus has established a relatively sustainable operating structure that makes the organization of yearly Ethno gatherings possible. Financial and logistical support for Ethno Sweden is supplied through various funding channels from two main streams in the Swedish public funding infrastructure, culture and education, which I discuss separately here. Before the cultural policy reform in 2011, decisions on the distribution of funding for regional culture institutions were made on the state level. Cultural institutions applied to Kulturrådet ("Swedish Arts Council," the government agency for cultural funding), and funds were allocated to applicants who sufficiently contributed to national cultural policy goals. In 2011, the Reinfeldt government installed the Kultursamverkansmodellen ("Culture Collaboration Model"), introducing an additional intermediate stage of the funding process. Since then, cultural institutions no longer directly apply for funding from Kulturrådet but must negotiate with regional councils for a share of the regional cultural funding. Regional councils, in collaboration with their respective municipalities and cultural actors, then present a cultural plan to the Kulturrådet which distributes funding accordingly. In the case of Ethno Sweden, this means organizers receive state funding that is channeled from Kulturrådet, through the regional council of Dalarna (where Rättvik is located), to Folkmusikens Hus. Additionally, there are indirect channels of support leading from Kulturrådet to Ethno Sweden. For example, the organization of Ethno Sweden is supported by Folk You (an association for folk and youth organizations) and the Sveriges Spelmäns Riksförbund ("National Organization of Swedish *Spelmän*," SSR).[4] These organizations are in turn supported by collaborative cultural associations such as Axkultur and Musikarrangörer i Samverkan (MAIS) who also receive funding from Kulturrådet.

[3] Gustaf Bäckström Elmelid (international coordinator of JMI activities in Sweden), interview with the author, online, October 3, 2022.

[4] *Spelmän*, the plural of *spelman*, is intentionally left untranslated. *Spelmän* is a specific Swedish term for "amateur" Swedish folk musicians who distinguish themselves from professional *folkmusiker* ("folk musicians") by their knowledge of specific traditions. For a discussion on the difference of these terms, see David Kaminsky, *Swedish Folk Music in the Twenty-First Century: On the Nature of Tradition in a Folkless Nation* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2012), 110–16.

From the stream of educational funding, Ethno is supported through Folkbildningsrådet ("The Swedish National Council of Adult Education"). Like Kulturrådet, Folkbildningsrådet has a government mandate to distribute national funding to various *folkbildning* ("popular education") institutions.[5] Studieförbundet Bilda för kyrka och samhälle ("Study Association Bilda for Church and Community"), one of Sweden's ten *folkbildning* associations receiving funding from the council, is a key contributor to Ethno Sweden and Folkmusikens Hus. Indirect channels of support from Folkbildningsrådet get to Ethno through Kulturens, a study association for cultural practitioners that supports the SSR. Since the nature of support Ethno receives from organizations such as Folk You and SSR is not always explicitly stated, the support discussed here may vary from financial, to logistic, and/or material support (e.g., rehearsal spaces or equipment).

As the first and thus oldest Ethno gathering, Ethno Sweden has been able to grow relatively large (approx. 80–100 yearly participants) while benefitting from these national infrastructures of cultural and educational funding. Moreover, organizers have been able to extend Ethno Sweden's outreach across national borders and attract international funders. In 2015, for example, Folkmusikens Hus received $125,000 from Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies directed to Ethno Sweden, predating the foundation's support of JMI several years later.[6] In 2017 and 2022, Folkmusikens Hus collaborated with Bilda and the Swedish Institute to organize Ethno gatherings in Palestine.[7] As can be seen from Ethno Sweden's development, it is safe to say that the favorable conditions afforded by Swedish national cultural policy has allowed Ethno Sweden to flourish and grow.

[5] *Folkbildning* is the Swedish adaptation of the nineteenth-century German *bildung* concept, which acquired a prominent position in Swedish public life during the Folkhem ("people's home") era between the nineteen thirties and seventies. See, for example, Bernt Gustavsson, "The Idea of Democratic *Bildung*: Its Transformations in Space and Time," in *Popular Education, Power and Democracy: Swedish Experiences and Contributions*, ed. Ann-Marie Laginder, Henrik Nordvall, and Jim Crowther (Leicester: National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2013), 35–49. Further investigation is needed to analyze how important Swedish *folkbildning* or *folkrörelse* was to Ethno Sweden's genesis. Such an investigation may shed light on why Ethno started in Sweden rather than other places, and what principles of Swedish *folkbildning* were carried over to Ethno gatherings in other countries. Additionally, it may contribute to historical enquiries of music's civilizing function in nineteenth-century applications of *bildung* across Europe, as mentioned in Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett, "Rethinking the Social Impacts of the Arts," *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 13 (2007): 144.

[6] This information is retrieved from MACP's online tax forms (990-PF) of 2018 and 2019. See Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, "Financials," accessed December 15, 2022, https://www.macphilanthropies.org/resources/financials/.

[7] Further research is necessary to understand the how the religious context of Bilda relates to Ethno, and how Bilda's Swedish Christian Study Center in Jerusalem relates to Ethno Palestine.

## 3.2 JM Sweden, a Cultural Policy Actor?[8]

Since the Culture Collaboration Model encourages cultural institutions in Sweden to actively negotiate with regional councils, regional cultural policy debates have gained a new impulse. RMS, for example, actively profiles itself as a cultural policy actor through its co-initiated convention Folk och Kultur ("Folk and Culture"). The annual convention brings together representatives of cultural institutions, policymakers, and politicians (e.g., the minister for culture) at debates, seminars, and artistic performances. Furthermore, the make-up of the board of RMS further indicates the association's involvement in Swedish cultural policy. Besides three representatives of member organizations, it consists of seven regional politicians who hold a significant position in their respective region's culture committees and/or regional music institutions. What political parties are represented in the board of RMS depends on the composition of the respective regional councils, which in turn is determined through regional elections. The board, of which members are appointed for a period of two years, currently consists of representatives of the Swedish Social Democratic Party, the Christian Democrats, the Moderate Party, and the Centre Party.[9]

As international coordinator of JMI activities in Sweden at RMS, Elmelid has acquired access to cultural policymakers and stakeholders on both a regional and national scale. In an interview he responds as follows when I ask him to what extent his position allows him to lobby for JMI's activities in Sweden:

> If we're talking about [Folk och Kultur] coming up this February again, I have ideas for JMI during that event. I want to spread the word; I want to go deeply into what they do and try to make people see it. And we also have other big political events each summer. All the biggest politicians – the ones who [are] candidates for being the Swedish prime minister – are there. And RMS wants to do things there as well and they want to have JMI represented there. So, I actually feel it's a possibility, yes.[10]

Elmelid's access to the Swedish cultural policy arena may serve as an example of JMI's presence in cultural policy debates and demonstrates how JMI representatives may acquire a

[8] Large parts of sections 3.2 through 3.4 are quoted or paraphrased from a research report I completed in the context of a research internship at the International Centre for Community at York St John University: Gabriel Harmsen, "Leading by Example: Ethno Sweden's Approaches to JMI's Peacebuilding Objectives" (York: International Centre for Community Music, forthcoming).

[9] Regional Musik i Sverige, "Styrelsen och AU" [Board and working committee], accessed October 5, 2022, https://regionalmusikisverige.se/kontakta-oss/styrelsen-och-au/.

[10] Elmelid, interview.

seat at the table of policymakers. This seems in line with one of JMI's listed membership benefits.[11] However, it is not JMI's leverage as an international NGO that has granted Elmelid this position. Rather, it is the statutory construction of RMS and its resulting position within the cultural policy model of Sweden which made access to policymakers possible. Moreover, the choice for seating political representatives in the board of RMS seems to be at odds with JMI's founding principle as a non-governmental organization and its demand of national members to be "independent and autonomous from any external sources (religious, *political*, etcetera)" (emphasis added).[12]

### 3.3 Swedish Nativist Populism and Folk Music

At the turn of the millennium, cultural policy was generally not a highly debated topic during Swedish election time. Immigration policy, on the other hand, was and still is a knotty problem that has marked many facets of the political debate in Sweden as well many other EU member states. The rapid growth of right-wing populism in Sweden recently reached its culmination during the elections of September 2022, when anti-immigrant party Sverigedemokraterna ("The Sweden Democrats," SD) won roughly twenty percent of the national vote, becoming the second largest party in parliament and the supporting party of a new right bloc minority government. Since their election to parliament in 2010, SD's election program, as with many other right-wing populist programs across Europe, interlocked protectionist immigration policy with a nationalist and at times arguably xenophobic cultural policy. What stood out, however, was their open endorsement of "Swedish" folk music and dance. The party has campaigned to repurpose government funding of multicultural projects to Swedish folk culture institutions, organized alternative folk festivals for conservatives, glorified Swedishness in their reports of Swedish folk music events, and repeatedly stated in the press that Swedish folk music is of use in strengthening Swedish identity.[13]

To many folk music and dance practitioners and institutions, SD's endorsement came as an unpleasant surprise. Though folk music in Sweden has a history rooted in early twentieth century nationalism of the conservative and reactionary ruling class, the postwar counterculture

[11] JM International, "Membership Info Booklet," n.d., 4–5, last accessed March 8, 2023, https://jmi.net/membership.

[12] Ibid., 6.

[13] Linnea Helmersson, "Swedish Folk Music and Dance – Vibrant but Contested," ed. Oscar Pripp and Maria Westvall, *Nätverket – Etnologisk Tidskrift* 22 (2020): 27, 30; David Kaminsky, "Keeping Sweden Swedish: Folk Music, Right-Wing Nationalism, and the Immigration Debate," *Journal of Folklore Research* 49, no. 1 (2012): 74; Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, *Lions of the North: Sounds of the New Nordic Radical Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 98–99.

generation that grew up during the Gröna Vågen ("Green Wave") of the seventies had transformed the nationalist frame of "Swedish" folk music into a progressive one.[14] Ethno founder Magnus Bäckström states that it was the specific purpose of Ethno Sweden to spur that transformation:

> We took a stand against the ruling cultural norm. We did not like the national romantic, folklore spirit that folk music took in the decades before us. We felt it was false, nationalistic, and conservative … Playing folk music was for us not only for fun; it was also an attitude and a statement … We valued the idea of nurturing many voices (music, styles, genres), all equal in value, and we were against what we called cultural imperialism … The movement was international, and so were we. We felt a relationship to other folk or traditional musicians all over the world.[15]

Bäckström's stance was shared amongst many folk music practitioners at the time. The international movement he refers to includes folk revivals in the United States, Greece, and Hungary. Practitioners of these movements felt united in their effort to challenge a prevalent nationalist belief historically rooted in the emergence of nation states in modern Europe: the idea that traditional folk music harbored the core identity of a nation, envisioned as a homogenous cultural group. The romanticized construction of national identities based on shared cultural practices, interlinked with natural characteristics of geographical areas, was championed by eighteenth-century philosophers such as Johann Gottfried von Herder and fueled by nationalist revolutions. In Sweden, nationalist interest in folk music stemmed from the nineteenth-century Gothic Society and gained momentum through the publications of Folkmusikkommissionen ("The Folk Music Commission") in the early twentieth century, when Sweden first emerged as a modern democratic state.[16]

In the nineteen eighties, however, national identities and their alleged cultural traditions became famously deconstructed by scholars Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, and with

[14] For pre-war narratives of national folklore, see Jan Ling, "Folkmusik – en brygd" [Folk music – a brew], *Fataburen*, no. 34 (1979): 9–34; Mathias Boström, Dan Lundberg, and Märta Ramsten, eds., *Det stora uppdraget: Perspektiv på Folkmusikkommissionen i Sverige, 1908–2008* [The great mission: Perspectives on the Folk Music Commission in Sweden 1908-2008] (Stockholm: Nordiska museets förlag, 2010); David Kaminsky, *Swedish Folk Music*. For folk communities during the Green Wave, see Thomas Fahlander, *Gift dig aldrig med en spelman: Röster om folkmusik i Dalarna, från Isakes Kisti till Päkkos Gustaf* [Never marry a *spelman*: Voices of folk music in Dalarna, from Isakes Kisti to Päkkos Gustaf] (Möklinta: Gidlunds Förlag, 2020).

[15] Ribeiro, Bäckström, and Ahlbom, "An Autobiographical History," ¶3.1.

[16] Boström, Lundberg, and Ramsten, *Det stora uppdraget*; Kaminsky, *Swedish Folk Music*, 19.

regards to (folk) music, by Philip Bohlman (among many others).[17] By dissecting the constructed nature of nation as a uniform community consisting of the singular cultural group (the "folk"), these scholars paved the way for a critical investigation of biased authoritative claims and definitions of national identity. In the case of Sweden, similar work has been done in the field of folk (music) revival studies, not in the least by scholars such as Jan Ling, Dan Lundberg, and David Kaminsky.[18] Following such deconstructive criticism and social developments such as the Gröna Vågen, the Swedish folk music community today is predominantly left-wing oriented.

The Sweden Democrats seem to have fallen back on pre-war narratives of Swedish cultural identity in support of their proposed cultural and immigration policy since the early 2000s. After the party leadership was taken over by Jimmie Åkesson in 2005, self-proclaimed nationalist Mattias Karlsson acquired a prominent position as cultural policy spokesperson. According to Karlsson, the Swedish national and local authorities in charge of distributing cultural funding had neglected Swedish folk music and instead prioritized "foreign folk music" at public conservatories.[19] Ethnomusicologist Benjamin R. Teitelbaum has discussed how SD incorporates folk music in their party profile despite the lack of support in folk music communities.[20] Teitelbaum asserts this endorsement of Swedish folk music may be interpreted as an attempt to soften the party's extremist and neo-fascist image, softening its radical ethnonationalist profile, and transforming it to "cultural" nationalism.[21]

In an interview with Teitelbaum in 2011, Karlsson discusses his initial ideas for SD's perspective on Swedish culture and policy:

> Many of those who wrote about culture in the [party] newspaper at the time had an almost exclusive focus on the High Swedish. A lot of conservative poets, Carolean soldiers, Sweden's era as a great power, and Vikings, etc. And I felt that, while that was

[17] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition (London: Verso, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, Canto edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Philip V. Bohlman, *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*, Folkloristics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988).

[18] Ling, "Folkmusik – en brygd"; Dan Lundberg and Gunnar Ternhag, *Folkmusik i Sverige* [Folk Music in Sweden] (Smedjebacken: Gidlunds, 1996); Kaminsky, *Swedish Folk Music*. For theoretical discussions, see Tamara E. Livingston, "Music Revivals: Towards a General Theory," *Ethnomusicology* 43, no. 1 (1999): 66–85; Juniper Hill and Caroline Bithell, "An Introduction to Music Revival as Concept, Cultural Process, and Medium of Change," in *The Oxford Handbook of Music Revival*, ed. Caroline Bithell and Juniper Hill (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4–42.

[19] Teitelbaum, *Lions of the North*, 4, 89–91.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 104.

> interesting, the era as a great power is also politically sensitive. And then I thought that, if you are going to find something to build a cultural renaissance around, it should be something that unites as many as possible. Many of these traditions and holidays that they highlighted, connected to the Royal Family and the era as a great power, were ultimately just something that the aristocracy were involved in and cared about. And I thought now, the type of voter we had, I felt that it could be difficult to get them to identify with that. But this folk culture – that comes from the Swedish peasant tradition, that is something most Swedes have just two generations back.[22]

This quotation shows how Karlsson expected folk music—imagined as an "unbroken" tradition—to serve as a uniting force because he considered it to rely upon a broadly shared cultural history, or what might be referred to as cultural memory. Studies from Ling, Lundberg, and others help understand why Karlsson might be attracted to folk music as a nation-building tool to foster a "Swedish" identity because they discuss similar uses in the past.

One still must not assume that Karlsson's views entirely align with those of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Swedish bourgeoisie, who were the instigators of the first Swedish folk music revival. Instead, his objective to have people identify with Swedish folk culture speaks to SD's populist rhetoric, which must be interpreted in the current context of Sweden's (and by extension, Europe's) immigration crises. For example, Karlsson believes the endorsement of Swedish folk music would not only help preserve and protect a Swedish cultural identity but safeguard its accessibility to all who are willing to assimilate to it. His cultural nationalism thus diverges from older ethnonationalist conceptions of "blood" and related attitudes towards immigration. Other nationalists' preoccupation with the Stormaktstiden ("The Great Power Era," roughly spanning Sweden's seventeenth century) concerns Karlsson, because he senses it maintains a social hierarchy that is difficult for his voters to identify with. Instead, Karlsson imagines folk music to represent the Swedish community more accurately.[23] For Karlsson, folk music is a tool to reclaim cultural sovereignty from a state government that has ceded too much of its sovereignty to the European Union and has given too much room to immigrant cultures. On the one hand, this claim for sovereignty is thus framed as coming from a repressed cultural group (i.e., "the Swedes") within a state. On

[22] Ibid., 100. Quotation and translation by Teitelbaum.

[23] According to the SD, the Social Democrats' immigration policy has caused the *folkhem* to deteriorate, and the party therefore has taken up the responsibility to restore it. Hence the party's name – Sweden Democrats is a nativist alteration of the Social Democrats. See Eirikur Bergmann, *Neo-Nationalism: The Rise of Nativist Populism* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 217.

the other hand, however, SD essentially is trying to strengthen state sovereignty by turning to cultural majoritarianism, a tendency of populists pointed out in Chapter One. In the words of Appadurai, folk music functions as a "site of national sovereignty."[24]

Now that the Sweden Democrats have gained power as supporting party to the minority government, they have pushed cultural policy higher up the national political agenda and the practical implications of right-wing cultural policy are being increasingly considered and debated by public opinion makers.[25] SD's suggested cultural policy reform is guided by the incentive to cut expenses in certain institutions and funds, to redirect them to specific areas of "Swedish" culture, and to increase funds to specific heritage projects. Besides financial reform, these proposals are undergirded by ideological objectives: to diminish support for institutions that, from their vantage point, are considered elitist, multiculturalist and/or leftist, and to increase support for institutions that safeguard the "true" cultural heritage of Sweden. Some of SD's proposed cuts in cultural funding are supported by the Moderate Party, which shares a general conservative desire for less government interference in the cultural sphere. SD's proposals include, for example, a 25% cut (1.2 billion SEK) to the structural expenses of *folkbildning* institutions and the abolition of additional funding for *folkbildning* initiatives (60 million SEK).[26] Andreas Johansson Heinö, spokesperson of the liberal business think tank Timbro, speculates that the Moderate Party will engage in "symbolical bone throwing" in return for SD's support.[27] These "bones" may include other aspects of SD's suggested cultural policy, such as new funds (650 million SEK) for cultural heritage preservation, increased funding for folklore open-air museum Skansen, and the closing of Världskulturmuseet ("The Museum of World Culture" in Gothenburg) and youth theatre Unga Klara.[28]

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[24] Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, vol. 1, Public Worlds (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 28–29.

[25] Per Andersson, "M och SD vill ändra kulturpolitiken – men det lär bli svårt" [M and SD want to change cultural policy – but it will be difficult], *SVT Nyheter*, September 13, 2022, https://www.svt.se/kultur/vad-blir-det-for-kulturpolitik-efter-valet-1; Gunilla Kindstrand, "SD:s riktiga mål i kulturpolitiken" [SD's real goal in cultural policy], *Kvartal*, October 2, 2022, https://kvartal.se/artiklar/sds-riktiga-mal-i-kulturpolitiken/; Helena Nordenberg, "SD kommer göra avtryck i kulturpolitiken" [SD will make a mark on cultural policy], *Arbetsvärlden*, September 6, 2022, https://www.arbetsvarlden.se/sd-kommer-gora-avtryck-i-kulturpolitiken/; Veronica Palm, "Kulturen har något helt annat att vänta nu" [Culture has something completely different to look forward to now], *Dagens Arena*, September 14, 2022, https://www.dagensarena.se/opinion/kulturen-har-nagot-helt-annat-att-vanta-nu/.

[26] Jimmie Åkesson, "Nu är det dags för Sverige – Sverigedemokraternas förslag till statsbudget 2022" [Now is the time for Sweden – The Sweden Democrats' proposal for the state budget 2022] (Sveriges Riksdag, October 10, 2021), 138–39, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/nu-ar-det-dags-for-sverige--sverigedemokraternas_H9023938.

[27] Nordenberg, "SD kommer göra avtryck."

[28] Åkesson, "Nu är det dags för Sverige," 96–97; Aron Emilsson, "Museifrågor" [Museum Affairs] (Sveriges Riksdag, October 14, 2021), 2–3, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/_H9022476; Erika Josefsson, "Får SD kulturministerposten? 'Inte otänkbart'" [Does SD get the post of Minister of Culture? 'Not inconceivable'], *Aftonbladet*, September 8, 2022,

Obviously, speculations should be approached with caution, and the ramifications of potential cultural policy reforms for Ethno Sweden remain unclear. Though funding channels from the Folkbildningsrådet to Folkmusikens Hus may suffer, those coming from the Kulturrådet will not. Due to the Cultural Collaboration Model, the regional council in Dalarna holds significant authority to shape its distribution of cultural funds. In that council, Sweden Democrats now hold 16% of the mandates, and none of SD's members are seated in the regional board of culture and education. Even though Folkmusikens Hus has publicly rejected SD's cultural policies, it is considered an important organization for keeping alive and promoting regional folk music traditions, which is in the interest of local SD affiliates.[29]

### 3.4 Swedish Folk Music Activism and Ethno Sweden

The first electoral win of the Sweden Democrats in 2010 spurred many responses from Swedish folk music communities, some of which took shape as organized resistance.[30] In October of that year, an international group of approximately eight folk practitioners (most of them students at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, KMH) drafted a manifesto and set out to rally against neo-nationalists' framing of folk practices. However, as key initiator Rebecca Carter states:

> In 2010, when we put this this action together … we really wanted to be very clear that … we didn't want it to become something that was purely a response focused at the Sweden Democrats, that's not what it was at all. That would have been such a narrow way to respond to this broader spectrum and the sort of bigger issues. It may have been a catalyst with them taking place, but it was a very conscious decision to not mention them anywhere in the manifesto, in the reasons for wanting to do these actions.[31]

Under the name Folkmusiker mot Främlingsfientlighet ("Folk Musicians Against Xenophobia," FMF), the group formulated several core principles:

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https://www.aftonbladet.se/nojesbladet/a/mQR66O/far-sd-kulturministerposten-inte-otankbart. SD suggests cutting all public funding to the World Culture Museum and Unga Klara, because they allegedly only cater to the interests of urban populations and have a clear multiculturalist agenda. See Elisabet Andersson, "'Paradigmskifte' – radikala förslag från SD" ['Paradigm shift' – radical proposals from SD], *Svenska Dagbladet*, September 5, 2022, https://www.svd.se/a/l3g409/paradigmskifte-for-kultur-radikala-forslag-fran-sd.

[29] Helmersson, "Swedish Folk Music," 32.

[30] Ibid., 30.

[31] Rebecca Carter (initiator of activist group FMF in 2010), interview with the author, online, September 16, 2021.

> Swedish folk culture and diversity cannot become like opposite poles in the culture debate. It … doesn't really lead anywhere, for anybody, certainly not for the people that I was working with. And then the second thing [was] to try and make a space for everybody in the culture debate. So we were pointing out that actually, the Swedish culture debate is … not equal. We want both professionals and arrangers within the folk music genre to be able to have a voice in the culture debates, to make a climate where politicians, people practicing the tradition, and the audience are all taking part on an equal basis. And then the third thing [was] to widen the definition of Swedish folk culture. So, the general view of Swedish folk culture is and has been for a long time quite out of date, you could say, and can be condensed into some kind of like Skansen and midsummer culture … We want to lift the fact that Swedish folk culture isn't in any way something that is a constant, but rather that it's a changing tradition, which includes both amateurs and professionals, tradition bearers and innovators.[32]

To promote activities, organizers largely relied on public Facebook events where friends from the folk community could be invited. As Rasmus Andersson, former "core group" member, explains:

> The folk music community was the base. And we, of course, within our network, we knew a lot of people in that community. So, they joined. So many of the people showing up at the rallies we would recognize, of course, not everyone, but it was really high and low. It was students from the college, it was just other people that we knew were playing instruments as amateurs or whatever. But also, some people politically active, which we knew had connections to folk music and stuff like this. And of course, all the teachers showed up as well. And artists, really like the big famous artists of the folk music of Sweden also showed up, so everyone joined.[33]

The core group in Stockholm (hereafter "core group") deliberately left the organizational structure open, mostly describing it as a "grassroots movement" or "network." Following their example, satellite groups arose across Sweden, varying in organizational structure, type of activity, and network name. Nowadays, FMF has become a free-to-use caption for any folk

[32] Ibid.

[33] Rasmus Andersson (core group member of activist group FMF in 2010), interview with the author, online, August 30, 2021.

practitioner wishing to contribute to its core principles, though individuals usually consult with others in a private Facebook workgroup currently counting a little over 300 members. The activities include political (counter)protests, pop-up manifestations, discussion panels, presentations at festivals, jam sessions, and concert programming.

There is an identifiable impression among several individuals involved in Ethno Sweden, Ethno World, and JMI that Ethno Sweden indirectly contributed to the resistance of xenophobia described above. For example, former Ethno Sweden organizer Peter Ahlbom connected Ethno Sweden's societal role with the increasingly polarized immigration debate in Sweden in an interview in 2019:

> Ethno as a peace project was there from the start, but because of the growing nationalist parties with xenophobic programs, the refugee situation, etc., there is a more significant focus on those issues today.[34]

Ethno researchers Gibson et al. recently identified a similar suspicion held by Ethno founder Magnus Bäckström:

> When [Magnus Bäckström] reflects on the increasing political agenda which includes using folk music as a tool for nationalism, he believes that Ethno has become a "vaccine" where so many young folk musicians have attended an Ethno over the years, that they cannot see folk music as a tool for building walls against others. So, for Ethno Sweden, there has been a shift within the Gatherings in response to the changes that they are experiencing within broader Swedish society.[35]

Matt Clark, current programs and marketing director at the JMI head office, suggested during an interview in 2021 that an investigation of the relationship between folk music activists in Sweden and Ethno Sweden may help to understand how JMI contributes to a kind of "soft transmission of culture" which "impacts people over a very long time."[36] During the interview, Clark lamented the fact that "a systematic kind of monitoring and evaluation" of such impact is lacking, and expressed the hope that my own research could potentially kickstart such

[34] Ribeiro, Bäckström, and Ahlbom, "An Autobiographical History," ¶4.

[35] Sarah-Jane Gibson, Lee Higgins, and Ryan Humphrey, "30 Years of Ethno: The History of Ethno Research" (York, UK: International Centre for Community Music, 2021), 27.

[36] Matt Clark (JMI Programs & Marketing Director), interview with the author, online, July 7, 2021.

evaluation. He emphasized he had only heard about Ethno Sweden's potential impact on folk music activists second hand (from Ahlbom), and that the connection is presumptive rather than evidence based. Nonetheless, it was considered likely that Ethno Sweden was and still is a contributing factor to the anti-xenophobic attitude of the Swedish folk music community, due to its prominence in the local folk community over the past decades, its high participant rates, and the available means to invite a high number of international musicians to the gathering. Referring to the kind of understanding that could result from an investigation of the specific societal role of Ethno Sweden, Clark stated:

> [At Ethno, there are] young people teaching each other music from their countries and culture. So, I think that that kind of approach, systematically over many years within Sweden, surely has had an impact on the folk music scene. And it's understanding those connections and most specifically, when it comes to intercultural learning, intercultural dialogue, intercultural appreciation, and then, you know, how much does that lead them to concrete political action? Like this kind of mobilization, the creation of [FMF]? So, yeah, those were just a few questions that I had. I don't have evidence, I have not researched the subject, but it was always something that I thought would be interesting to research and to understand better.[37]

While the scope of this thesis does not allow for a longitudinal study of Ethno Sweden's societal role, the following chapter sheds light on the issue of efficacy and offers several preliminary answers to Clark's questions.

[37] Ibid.

# 4. Cultural Sovereignty for All? Practical Concerns Regarding Folk Music's Expediency

In the previous chapters, I have made the case that traditional folk music serves as an expedient to opposing claims of cultural sovereignty. Even though nationalist and humanitarian perspectives of cultural sovereignty may be fundamentally opposing, various actors draw from similar resources and operate under the imperative of cultural heritage preservation. Cultural policy makers collaborate with NGOs, political movements draw from (folk) community resources, and NGOs may rely on (national) public funds. Following this argument, several new questions arise: What are the ramifications of this common feature in polarizing contexts? How do practitioners effectively partake in cultural debates? Does folk music's expediency to political nationalism in any way compromise JMI's humanitarian objectives? Clark's questions regarding Ethno Sweden's relation to local resistance to racism and xenophobia are also on point, not because research might advocate for JMI's Ethno program, but because they raise a more fundamental question: When does the use of musical heritage in humanitarian initiatives practically challenge racism and xenophobia, considering its expediency to exclusionist assertions of cultural sovereignty? And when it does, how and why?

Taking Sandoval and Dave's advocated practice- and goal-oriented approach in music humanitarianism as an example, I believe here lies an opportunity for (ethno)musicologists to contribute to a more grounded and nuanced view of the efficacy of musical heritage's expediency to cultural sovereignty claims. This chapter investigates the practical implications of the hypothesis of this thesis and voices several concerns regarding the expectations of humanitarian musical heritage projects in political contexts. I discuss a series of interviews with (former) members of the Swedish community of folk music activists and present an "ethnographic snapshot" of the Autumn edition of Ethno Sweden in 2021.[1] I then investigate how Ethno Sweden approaches JMI's humanitarian objectives to combat xenophobia, and critically analyze whether the expectations of Ethno Sweden's societal role match reality. As

[1] Due to the constraints of this research project, I prefer to refer to my field work as "ethnographical snapshots" rather than full fleshed ethnographic studies. Excluding Peter Ahlbom, Erik Rask, and Matt Clark, all names of interviewees are anonymized. Large parts of this chapter are quoted or paraphrased from a research report I completed in the context of a research internship at the International Centre for Community at York St John University. Gabriel Harmsen, "Leading by Example: Ethno Sweden's Approaches to JMI's Peacebuilding Objectives" (York: International Centre for Community Music, forthcoming).

an example of how opposing assertions of cultural sovereignty may come uncomfortably close while "fishing in the same pond" of (musical) heritage preservation, I reflect on Ethno Sweden's previous performances at open air museum Skansen. I argue that, despite JMI's humanitarian ambitions, Ethno Sweden's (and, by extension, JMI's) potential to challenge xenophobic or intolerant uses of folk music is limited in practice by its reliance on questionable assumptions regarding the universality of musical traditions. The assumption that traditional music exchange supplants the need for verbal dialogue gives rise to uncomfortable situations, where national boundaries are (unintentionally) reconstructed and reimagined, romantic notions of folklore are upheld, and exclusionary nationalist narratives are left unchallenged.

## 4.1 Ethno Sweden's Position in the Swedish Folk Community

My practice-oriented approach draws on semi-structured interviews conducted in August to October of 2021 with two key figures of the network Folkmusiker mot Främlingsfientlighet ("Folk Musicians Against Xenophobia," FMF), a former artistic mentor of Ethno Sweden involved in the FMF network, two current and one former representative of Folkmusiker mot Rasism GBG ("Folkmusicians Against Racism Gothenburg," FMR GBG), one founder and one current representative of folk music youth organization Folk You, and a representative of the community music project Songlines.[2] All conversations were guided by the question: What is Ethno Sweden's position relative to local folk music organizations and networks that are or have been invested in resisting racism and xenophobia?

*Perspectives of Folk Music Activists in Sweden*

When asked for reflections on the Ethno program, several interviewees, including Rebecca Carter, stressed they have never attended Ethno Sweden.[3] For those who have attended Ethno Sweden or other gatherings, the extent to which their experience formed the impetus for joining the resistance movement varies. More often, local youth education programs for folk/world music are mentioned as instigators of "intercultural curiosity" and the attendance at Ethno as a

[2] For mentions of FMF in literature, see David Kaminsky, "Keeping Sweden Swedish: Folk Music, Right-Wing Nationalism, and the Immigration Debate," *Journal of Folklore Research* 49, no. 1 (2012): 83; Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, *Lions of the North: Sounds of the New Nordic Radical Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 90; Linnea Helmersson, "Swedish Folk Music and Dance – Vibrant but Contested," ed. Oscar Pripp and Maria Westvall, *Nätverket – Etnologisk Tidskrift* 22 (2020): 31.

[3] Rebecca Carter (initiator of activist group FMF in 2010), interview with the author, online, September 16, 2021.

logical consequence, further strengthening that interest.[4] Some mention Ethno Sweden as the primary catalyst for pursuing a career in folk and world music, encouraging them to enrol in folk music education programs where issues of racism and cultural nationalism are topics of discussion.

Interviewees such as Medina Berggren (former board member of FMR GBG) and Rasmus Andersson express that Ethno gatherings and Ethno "channels of communication" played a marginal role in building a network of activists and organizing activities.[5] Rather, the KMH folk music department, The Gothenburg University World Music program, and several public schools are described as "hubs" where a progressive social climate fuelled exchanges of political ideas amongst students, teachers, and staff.[6] These hubs facilitated spaces where young folk musicians could share their concerns, discuss political ideas, and organize meetings for planning protest activities. Moreover, students who sought to broaden the support base for their actions could tap into networks of professional Swedish folk musicians connected to these institutions. The interviewees' participation at Ethno is generally not aligned with their activist projects. Reflecting on his involvement with FMF in 2010 and several times thereafter, Andersson states:

> For me, Ethno was not that central in what we were doing and how we were thinking, but Ethno was part of the talk as, as something like, oh, we should just send those nationalist guys to a camp of Ethno. And in one week, they will never think about these stupid things again. It was more that kind of thing.[7]

Frederika Lundgren, member of the FMF movement and former artistic mentor of Ethno Sweden, separates Ethno from her work as activist:

> Ethno is really about meeting people from different cultures and having a nice time. Like, it's very rarely that you have these discussions on Ethno. And for me, I think that's really nice … I have FMR, and maybe specific people, that I talk about these issues

[4] This descriptor is often used in ethnographical research on Ethno. See, for example, Sarah-Jane Gibson, Lee Higgins, and Ryan Humphrey, "30 Years of Ethno: The History of Ethno Research" (York, UK: International Centre for Community Music, 2021), 25.

[5] Rasmus Andersson (core group member of activist group FMF in 2010), interview with the author, online, August 30, 2021; Medina Berggren (former board member of FMR GBG), interview with the author, online, October 5, 2021.

[6] R. Andersson, interview.

[7] Ibid.

> with, that are interested … But for me, since Ethno is such a happy place [laughs] This discussion is... I don't know, that's why also, for me, it doesn't really match, these two words: FMR and Ethno. Because it's totally different ways of kind of working against the same goal.[8]

The last two words of Lundgren's quotation reveal a commonality in all reflections on Ethno Sweden. All interviewees agree, based on their respective knowledge as insider or outsider, that the gathering indirectly contributes to creating an open and tolerant (Swedish) folk music environment. Multiple themes addressed in the Ethno Research publication "30 Years of Ethno" are echoed in the predominantly positive impressions of Ethno of these interlocutors.[9] For example, Ethno gatherings are considered helpful in opening or broadening worldviews, fighting prejudices, feeling connected through music, promoting inclusivity, and building bridges between cultures.[10] More concretely, Ethno is seen as a counterexample of intolerant communities:

> I feel Ethno is a lot about showing how wonderful music can be together and the similarities we all have.[11]

> I think Ethno pretty much is a visualization or like a concretization. It's made on the ideas of the open borders, and the meetings and everything that we all stand behind. Ethno is definitely a realization of those ideas in real life … Within the music community … Ethno is the perfect picture of it.[12]

> The most powerful tool in politics, I think it's not just thought experiments and theory, but examples. And examples, you can refer to it directly, and you can... you don't have to just have a loosely flying opinion about it. So, when you create samples, you make the … process progress … Internally, [Ethno Sweden] is, of course, I think spreading the right message, I hope, I guess. Externally, I don't think it's that powerful in society.[13]

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[8] Frederika Lundgren (folk music activist and former Ethno artistic mentor), interview with the author, online, August 31, 2021.
[9] Gibson, Higgins, and Humphrey, "30 Years of Ethno."
[10] Ibid., 40, 51–52, 68, 73, 112.
[11] Lundgren, interview.
[12] R. Andersson, interview.
[13] Serge Arpin (FMR GBG board member), interview with the author, online, October 5, 2021.

Attempting to imagine how music practically contributes to the resistance movement, FMR board member Serge Arpin does suggest the following:

> I guess they're contributing by practically… I mean, concretely stating that… "Come on, let's play a Swedish tune, even if you play Chinese pipa," … And "of course, we can try to play quarter [tones] or, or maybe we can compromise because it's very difficult."[14]

What stands out from this quotation is the equation or conflation of two distinct processes: "overcoming" cultural differences on the one hand, and negotiation in musical collaboration. The inclusion of a Chinese instrument in a performance of a Swedish song or the adaptation of musical heritage to increase playability is used a symbol of a tolerant environment. It is important to keep in mind, however that negotiations such as those of musical pitch (i.e., tuning standardizations) are historically tainted by imperialism and are not free of cultural hierarchies.[15] In Arpin's example, music using the Western equal temperament scale still seems to be the default to which arrangements including quarter tones (common to non-Western music traditions) may or may not have to conform.

Finally, the interviewed activists all highly value discussion and verbal dialogue. As Carter stated earlier, FMF was initiated as a platform for debate. Berggren suggests, when asked what Ethno could do to support their cause:

> It's always really good to just have these discussions, I think, also about cultural appropriation, or about "how is music and politics involved?" … If you play folk music in a country where [there is] a debate about whether or not it's nationalistic, I think it's a statement to play that music. But how to do it, I don't know, like panel debates or discussions at the camp or stuff like that, or just raising the awareness about the questions and discussing it.[16]

[14] Ibid.

[15] Fanny Gribenski, "Negotiating the Pitch: For a Diplomatic History of *A*, at the Crossroads of Politics, Music, Science and Industry," in *International Relations, Music and Diplomacy: Sounds and Voices on the International Stage*, ed. Frédéric Ramel and Cécile Prévost-Thomas (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 173–92.

[16] Berggren, interview.

*Perspectives of (Folk) Music Associations for Youths*

To further position Ethno Sweden in Sweden's cultural landscape, I have asked representatives of two related (folk) music initiatives for youths to reflect on the gathering. One of such initiatives is Folk You, a non-profit youth organization for "world music, dance and crafts in Sweden with influences from all countries in the world."[17] It started out in 2012 as an initiative by members of the Riksförbundet för Folkmusic och Dans ("Swedish Folk Music and Dance Association," RfoD).[18] Folk You co-founder and current Ethno Sweden organizer Erik Rask explains that the organization was initially fuelled by the incentive to counter SD's conservative and anti-immigrant framing of folk culture:

> It was also like a political movement. We were all really engaged politically and had a very strong feeling. Because in 2010, it was like a lot of things happening at the same time. We had a feeling that it was really urgent and important what we were doing.[19]

Folk You is currently separated from RfoD and mainly funded by the Swedish governmental agency Myndigheten för ungdoms- och Civilsamhällesfrågor ("Agency for Youth and Civil Society Affairs," MUCF). It receives this funding based on its commitment to youth and democracy, its national structure, and the amount of its member organizations. Occasionally, Folk You consults the Swedish government in the form of referrals regarding policy changes through the Swedish system of *remisser och remissvar* ("consultations and responses").[20] Folk You board member Theodor Jönsson refers to this competence as the "political muscle" of Folk You which allows it to "influence politics in democratic questions for youth and cultural questions."[21]

Because Folk You can funnel its grant money to member organizations (e.g., FMR GBG), Jönssen also considers Folk You to have "economic" muscle. For example, a dedicated Folk You member called Ethno Experience has been set up, which offers resources and scholarships for participants to attend the gathering. Though never having attended Ethno

[17] "Folk You är en ideell ungdomsorganisation för oss som verkar inom folk- och världsmusik, -dans och hantverk i Sverige med influenser från alla världens länder." Folk You, "Om Folk You" [About Folk You], Folk You: Folkkultur För Unga, accessed January 28, 2022, https://www.folkyou.se/vad-ar-folk/var-ide/.

[18] Translation taken from David Kaminsky, *Swedish Folk Music in the Twenty-First Century: On the Nature of Tradition in a Folkless Nation* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2012), 170.

[19] Erik Rask (organizer of Ethno Sweden), interview with the author, online, September 28, 2021.

[20] In this system, stakeholders are consulted for advice before the government takes a stance on policy proposals. See Government Offices of Sweden, "Remisser," Government Offices of Sweden, accessed December 21, 2022, https://www.regeringen.se/remisser/.

[21] Theodor Jönsson (FMR GBG board member), interview with the author, online, September 30, 2021.

Sweden himself, Jönsson believes the gathering "does a lot good for you in the sense that you have to understand different cultures and different people in different languages and just make it work."[22] In that sense, he argues, Ethno creates a space for cultural exchange and problem-solving that is like the learning environment of *folkhögskolor* but condensed into a much smaller timeframe.[23]

At Folk You, there is a detectable "blurring of boundaries" between non-political and political incentives in the non-profit sector. With regards to folk music activism, Jönssen states:

> If we want to fund Folk Musicians Against Racism with 100,000 Swedish kronor, because they have a great idea, we can do that. There's nobody stopping us. We don't even have to legislate anything; we just need a decision to make it happen.[24]

Folk music activism is thus intertwined with public funding. Though Carter argued FMF was not intended as an anti-SD movement and Folk You's support of FMR GBG was formally motivated by democratic principles rather than left-wing activism, both actors saw SD's endorsement of folk music as a catalyst for their resistance of neo-nationalism in the folk music scene. For example, many activities of FMF and affiliated activists arose as a response to statements or actions of SD representatives. Jönssen's words may further clarify why folk music funding became a point of debate between 2014 and the 2022 election, when the SD was still an isolated opposition party to Sweden's left bloc majority government. Undoubtedly, the ability of FMR GBG to draw from public funds added fuel to the fire of anti-establishment populists. The SD perceived the funnelling of public money to certain areas of the folk community—starting at the Swedish government and ending in the hands of left-wing folk music activists—as the government's abuse of power for political ends. Further research may closely follow transformations of funding streams, now the right bloc has taken over.

Another association for youths and music that is related to Ethno Sweden is Songlines. In 2017, Jeunesses Musicales Sweden (JM Sweden) and the Swedish Inheritance Fund facilitated the start of Songlines, a three-year music project across thirteen counties in Sweden.[25] After the project term ended, journalist and instigator Ina Åberg continued Songlines as an independent NGO and applied for JMI associate membership. Songlines reaches out to regional music

[22] Ibid.
[23] *Folkhögskolor*, plural of *folkhögskola*, are Swedish public education institutions.
[24] Jönssen, interview.
[25] The Swedish Inheritance Fund is a state fund, of which applications for grants are overseen by the Swedish Ministry for Health and Social Affairs.

institutions to organize musical workshops for newcomers (i.e., refugees) in Sweden lead by independent music "coaches."[26] Åberg explains:

> The main purpose is to use music as a tool to come together, to make peace, and definitely to make people meet across all the borders: language borders, social borders, country borders and even in our country; big cities, small cities.[27]

Furthermore, the project aims to diversify state-led music institutions which, according to Åberg, predominantly consists of "white, Swedish born children" studying mostly "Western music."[28] Through song workshops, Songlines aims to make music communities accessible for young and creative newcomers facing social and language barriers at Swedish music institutions.

Since Songlines and Ethno Sweden have a shared history of being Jeunesses Musicale members, the organizations are connected in various ways. Åberg consulted with Ethno Sweden's artistic mentors and organizers to exchange pedagogical methods, which is—like Ethno gatherings—based on "peer-to-peer" learning.[29] Additionally, Songlines took inspiration from Ethno gatherings to create music camps for youths with a "party" and family atmosphere.[30] Since 2017, Ethno Sweden has collaborated with Songlines several times by inviting Swedish newcomers to their gatherings. There are, however, also significant differences between the two projects. Songlines is mainly a national and local project, and the musical repertoire depends entirely on the desires of participants (i.e., it is not limited to folk genres). Further distinguishing the two projects, Åberg states:

> Ethno is such a beautiful project and I think it's so great that people with almost the same skills from all over the world can get together to know each other … I think Songlines is something else. But for us, it's very interesting to be able to send the most skilled ones to Ethno, because then they can meet with people from all over the world … It's like really something extra, something super [luxurious] to be able to do that. And I think that means a lot to those who have been there. One guy who went there …

[26] Ina Åberg (Songlines organizer), interview with the author, online, September 2021.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] For detailed research on Ethno's "peer-to-peer" learning approach, see Gibson, Higgins, and Humphrey, "30 Years of Ethno," 25–26, 40.
[30] Åberg, interview.

said that Songlines is like "Come on, let's play," but in Ethno it's more like "We're making a concert together." So that's the difference.[31]

Åberg's perspective on the musical and performative competence necessary for participating in Ethno is insightful because such competency may determine how participants interact during the gathering and how new competencies emerge through this interaction.[32] It also suggests that Ethno's demand of certain musical skills—and access to resources to acquire such skills—may still somewhat limit the demographic of Ethno participants.

*Preliminary Conclusion*

The results of the interviews presented above show that Ethno Sweden is used as a reference point and example of a tolerant and inclusive musical space by various activist movements and music organizations. However, Ethno gatherings played a marginal role for several key figures of the protest movement. More formative for their move towards affirmative action appears to be learning environments such as local youth orchestras, popular education institutions and universities, where extensive periods of attendance helped interviewees to gradually develop their stance in cultural debates surrounding Swedish folk music. This is not to say Ethno gatherings have not indirectly contributed to the folk community's public rejection of right-wing endorsement. Ethno is considered to have an exemplary function, challenging the false opposition between cultural diversity and the survival of national musical heritage, as well as countering "notions of musical traditions as being static or unchanging."[33]

## 4.2 Reflections from Ethno Sweden 2021

What about the perspectives of Ethno Sweden participants and organizers themselves? This section discusses ethnographic fieldwork I carried out at Ethno Sweden 2021. Other than previous ethnographic work carried out by Sarah-Jane Gibson at Ethno Sweden 2019, my fieldwork more specifically targets the participants' views on the Ethno Values and Commitments document (**figure 3**), JMI's humanitarian objectives, and the possible translation

[31] Ibid.

[32] For research on musical competence in intercultural music exchange, see Benjamin Brinner, "Beyond Ethnic Tinge or Ethnic Fringe: The Emergence of New Israeli/Palestinian Musical Competences & Connections," *Min-Ad: Israel Studies in Musicology Online* 7, no. 2 (2009): 41–61.

[33] Gibson, Higgins, and Humphrey, "30 Years of Ethno," 68.

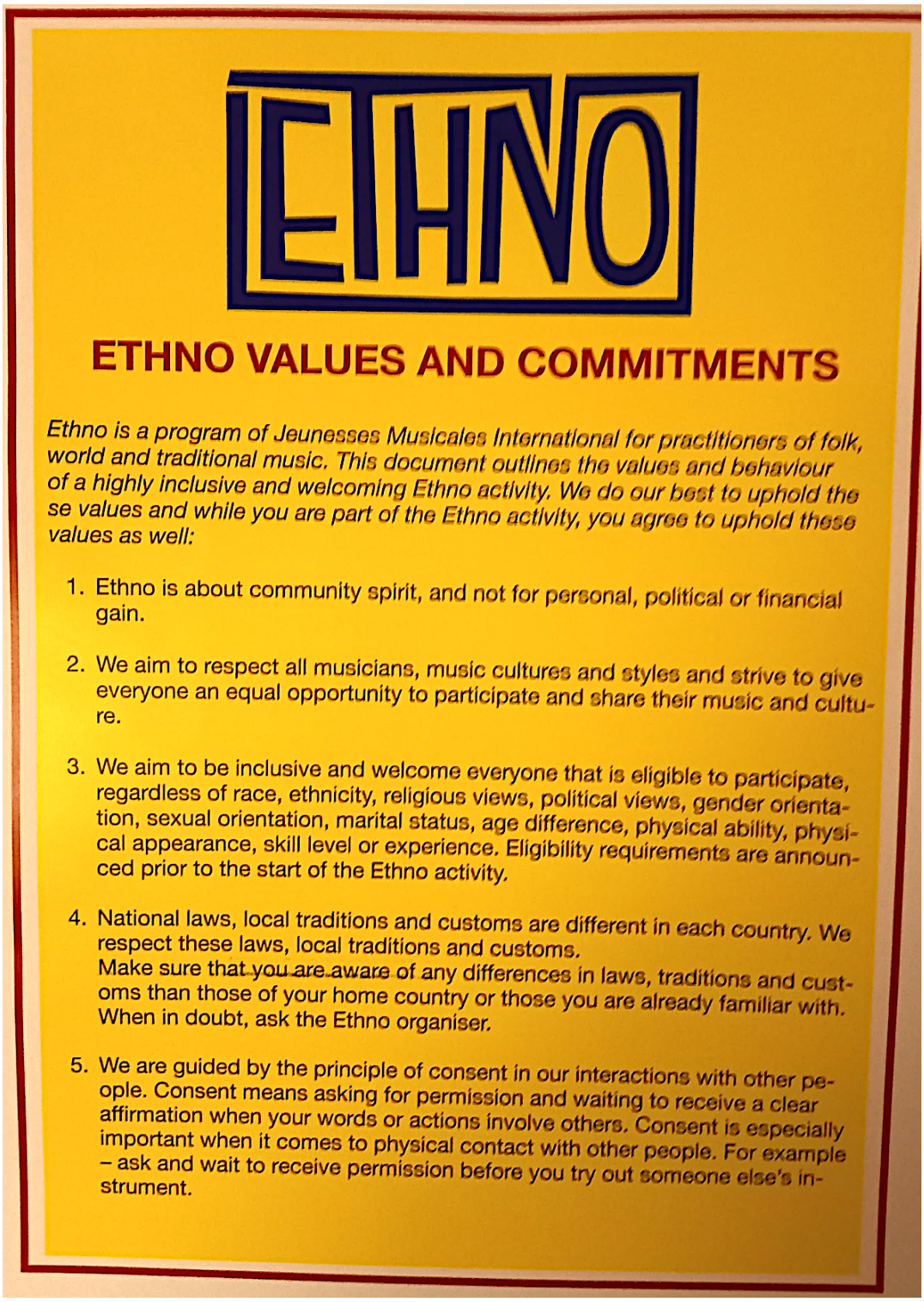
of these statements into practice.[34] The perspectives of organizers and participants on humanitarian issues are critical in understanding the expectations and practical limitations of Ethno, and to bring into view the expediency of traditional folk music in real life contexts. This "ethnographic snapshot" of Ethno Sweden 2021 consists of semi-structured interviews with fourteen out of thirty-five (Swedish and non-Swedish) participants, a separate online interview with organizer Erik Rask prior to the gathering, and a joint interview with Rask and Peter Ahlbom. The 2021 gathering was Ahlbom's last time organizing Ethno Sweden before retirement. The general reflections that confirm the findings previously presented in the "30 Years of Ethno" publication will only shortly be mentioned here.[35] Ethno is characterized as an inclusive and tolerant learning environment which is socially intense but fun to be part of. It provides a welcoming and safe space for individuals to develop musical skills, to connect with people, and to broaden one's horizon. It helps to recognize differences and build one's own cultural identity.

All interviews were guided by the question: How do participants/organizers of Ethno Sweden relate to JMI's humanitarian objectives? To start the conversation, interviewees were asked to reflect on Ethno Sweden's Values and Commitments poster, as well as a quotation from JMI's website describing their humanitarian objectives.[36]

[34] For general reflections of participants' experience of Ethno Sweden, see Sarah-Jane Gibson, "Ethno Sweden: A Catalyst for Change," Pilot Case Studies (York, UK: International Centre for Community Music, 2019).

[35] Gibson, Higgins, and Humphrey, "30 Years of Ethno," 17, 26, 36–37, 40, 42, 44–45, 47–48, 50, 52–55, 59, 64, 89, 112-113.

[36] "Ethno is a platform for building respect and tolerance, preserving cultural heritage by ensuring that traditional, folk and world music live on within young people, and is transmitted from generation to generation. It widens and deepens relationships among musicians and cultures from around the world, whereby participants are able to build a greater appreciation of each other's respective cultures through music. As such, Ethno uses music as a powerful tool to combat xenophobia, intolerance and racism." JM International, "Ethno," accessed September 29, 2022, https://jmi.net/programs/ethno.



ETHNO

## ETHNO VALUES AND COMMITMENTS

*Ethno is a program of Jeunesses Musicales International for practitioners of folk, world and traditional music. This document outlines the values and behaviour of a highly inclusive and welcoming Ethno activity. We do our best to uphold the se values and while you are part of the Ethno activity, you agree to uphold these values as well:*

1. Ethno is about community spirit, and not for personal, political or financial gain.

2. We aim to respect all musicians, music cultures and styles and strive to give everyone an equal opportunity to participate and share their music and culture.

3. We aim to be inclusive and welcome everyone that is eligible to participate, regardless of race, ethnicity, religious views, political views, gender orientation, sexual orientation, marital status, age difference, physical ability, physical appearance, skill level or experience. Eligibility requirements are announced prior to the start of the Ethno activity.

4. National laws, local traditions and customs are different in each country. We respect these laws, local traditions and customs.
Make sure that you are aware of any differences in laws, traditions and customs than those of your home country or those you are already familiar with. When in doubt, ask the Ethno organiser.

5. We are guided by the principle of consent in our interactions with other people. Consent means asking for permission and waiting to receive a clear affirmation when your words or actions involve others. Consent is especially important when it comes to physical contact with other people. For example – ask and wait to receive permission before you try out someone else's instrument.

**Figure 3.** Ethno Sweden (Autumn) 2021 Values and Commitments (image: Gabriel Harmsen)

*Perspectives of the Organizers of Ethno Sweden*

Both Ahlbom and Rask recognize a gradual shift of Ethno's position in the Swedish cultural-political landscape. As stated in the previous chapter (section 3.4), issues of nationalism and xenophobia concern Ahlbom more than during the early years of Ethno Sweden. Similarly,

Rask explains that a growing consciousness of postcolonial issues in the public debate has led a young generation of organizers to re-examine Ethno's positionality as a Western European organization.[37] In recent years, the organizers of Ethno Sweden have worked together with other Ethno organizers to document a set of general values and commitments. In the Ethno Committee, facilitated by JMI, a specific subcommittee has been appointed to navigate towards a shared understanding of Ethno's core values (**figure 3**). Acknowledging without hesitation that Ethno must be studied and practiced through a postcolonial lens, the committee has included topics of racism and cultural appropriation in their conversations.[38] Moreover, the Swedish organizers are more than welcoming to ICCM researchers who aim to contribute to an open and nuanced conversation on such topics. Over time, organizers have come up with practical changes at the gathering, such as the omission of the country of residence on participants name badges, and consultations with participants to correctly identify the cultural heritage they wish to represent during the gathering. Additionally, an effort has been made to invite musicians from local migrant communities to Ethno Sweden.[39]

Ethno Sweden's role in local debates on national identity and folk music erupting in 2010 has remained marginal, however, and organizers have refrained from overtly vocalizing any political stance of Ethno. Besides the fact that Ethno gatherings are non-political in principle, Rask explains this is due to the difficulty of getting across a nuanced argument in the public debate. Over the past decade, the political debate on Swedish national and cultural identity has polarized and afforded hard-line positions of both left and right-wing politicians. Besides SD's exclusionary rhetoric, Rask identifies rigid arguments coming from the political left which also challenge some of the ideals and concepts upon which Ethno Sweden gatherings are built. In extreme cases, Rask finds that political debates on cultural appropriation and the deconstruction of specific terminology (e.g., "world music") border on "identity politics:"

> Who can say what? You have this identity; therefore, you're allowed to say that, but you have another identity and then here is your list of things you're allowed to do. And, and dividing people depending on what kind of identity you label people with, they are allowed to do different things. Or mainly, they are not allowed to do different things.[40]

[37] Rask, interview, September 28, 2021.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Peter Ahlbom (organizer Ethno Sweden 2021), interview with the author, November 5, 2021, Rättvik.
[40] Erik Rask, interview with the author, November 5, 2021, Rättvik.

Rask worries that the absence of nuance in left-wing arguments based on identity may lead to rash condemnations of Ethno representing a "sort of colonialism and appropriating everybody's music."[41] So far, Ethno has not received such critique from the Swedish folk scene. However, Rask is concerned that voices condemning every form of cultural borrowing will overshadow young (Swedish) musicians' curiosity, preventing them from joining the gathering in fear of "saying the wrong thing" or "doing the wrong thing."[42] Presuming most participants of Ethno Sweden are politically left-oriented, Rask anticipates that ideological left-wing debates on cultural heritage will affect participants more than those on the other side of the political spectrum.

Though the organizers consider explicit handling of postcolonial perspectives on racism, (appropriations of) cultural heritage, and cultural identity within Ethno contexts necessary, open conversations on such topics generally remain within the circle of organizers and artistic mentors. Ethno Sweden's 2021 program did not include guided conversations amongst participants, workshops, or other activities that directly addressed issues of racism, intolerance, and xenophobia. Instead of taking a direct approach, the organizers believe the handling of such issues is integrated in the gathering as experience:

> We are aware of these things. But the way I feel that Ethno is handling this, is just to be another example, example of something else. Example of acceptance of everyone. We don't, somehow, we don't need to talk about it. Although we are all aware of it, somehow.[43]

This statement echoes JMI's view that music is a universal language which transcends the limitations of verbal communication. The organizers present several reasons for being cautious with group conversations on sensitive topics (such as racism, nationalism, and xenophobia) during the gathering. Part of a successful camp experience relies on the power of music to create a non-verbal sense of emotional connection and understanding. To a certain extent, verbal dialogue on racism may therefore be redundant, and negate an impactful and positive camp experience. Preferably, the spontaneous (musical) interactions and workshops foreground a

[41] Ibid. For scholarship on traditional music and cultural appropriation, see Giovanna Carugno, "How to Protect Traditional Folk Music? Some Reflections upon Traditional Knowledge and Copyright Law," *International Journal for the Semiotics of Law* 31, no. 2 (2018): 261–74; Juniper Hill, "'Global Folk Music' Fusions: The Reification of Transnational Relationships and the Ethics of Cross-Cultural Appropriations in Finnish Contemporary Folk Music," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 39 (2007): 50–83.

[42] Rask, interview, November 5, 2021.

[43] Ahlbom, interview.

sense of universality which provide the participants an alternative example to individualist and intolerant structures within contemporary society:

> The core is like, okay, but if we just, you know, look each other in the eye take care of each other, and we are here together, then the world would be a much better place … I think [relying on music] makes [the experience] stronger too, that it's not a political statement to be part of it, it's like you just come in here and you are sort of, you're just an individual. And then things happen, and you have an experience ... I think that people, what they take with them back is like an experience that will inspire them to maybe get involved in activism to do things, but not here.[44]

Following these statements, it is my impression that conflicting fundaments of participants' respective worldviews are not necessarily ignored or marginalized, but to some extent they are deliberately left obscure. This creates a space for participants to experience collaboration based on shared values of respect and tolerance, despite possibly having fundamentally different outlooks in life. Frictions that do arise due to personal or cultural differences—if noticed or specifically addressed—are resolved through dialogue between organizers/volunteers and participants, more frequently in private than in group setting. Furthermore, explicit group discussions on racism and xenophobia may be considered too complex and cerebral for a youth gathering which is primarily focused on making music and having fun. Demanding that such activities take place may burden the program's flexibility and joyfulness.

Finally, the organizers regularly identify a tension between their own vision of Ethno gatherings and JMI's descriptions of "what Ethno is."[45] Some descriptions of JMI's humanitarian objectives, such as cultural heritage preservation, are not considered applicable to Ethno Sweden. It is argued that some top-down initiatives, such as obligatory signing of a code of conduct by participants, might not match the free-spirited nature of the gathering. Additionally, there is a concern that through JMI's management of Ethno programs, the grassroots structure will transform into a top-down organization in which JMI acquires a more "strict and controlling" role.[46]

[44] Rask, interview, November 5, 2021.
[45] Ahlbom and Rask, interview, November 5, 2021.
[46] Ibid.

*Participants of Ethno Sweden 2021*

Fourteen out of the thirty-five musicians attending Ethno Sweden in 2021 shared their perspectives on JMI's humanitarian objectives. They recognized to a variable extent that both these objectives and Ethno Sweden's Values document aligned with their experiences at the gathering. For example, the following non-Swedish participants reflect on the Ethno Values document as follows:

> It represents what it is, Ethno … This is really how it happens.[47]

> Maybe you can feel some hypocrisy, you know, when you look at this type of paper. But I feel when I [started the camp], I feel that there is no hypocrisy at all … Pretty much everything of this is pretty close to the reality.[48]

> What I like is that I actually feel that it's not just a paper on the wall, that people actually go according to these rules … it's really a tolerant atmosphere.[49]

During the gathering, there were two distinct moments in which a plenary talk referenced Ethno's larger societal role. During both of those moments, the term "peacebuilding" was used as a descriptor for the gathering.[50] One of these moments referred directly to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. When asked to reflect on these specific moments, most interviewees expressed the belief that Ethno gatherings are capable of effectively resolving prejudices amongst participants through social and musical interaction. The question whether Ethno gatherings either directly or indirectly combat issues of racism and/or xenophobia provided a variety of answers. Regarding camp activities, Ethno was considered "as an agent for change" by merely facilitating intercultural exchange.[51] The following statements are reminiscent of Allport's contact theory:

> I would say, when you're playing with someone you can't speak to … you get to know them without using words. And then … your thoughts about them are changing. If you

[47] Levan (participant Ethno Sweden 2021), interview with the author, November 3, 2021, Rättvik.
[48] Simone (participant Ethno Sweden 2021), interview with the author, November 5, 2021, Rättvik.
[49] Ilona (participant Ethno Sweden 2021), interview with the author, November 4, 2021, Rättvik.
[50] Fieldnotes.
[51] The descriptor "agent for change" is used in Ethno Research. See Gibson, Higgins, and Humphrey, "30 Years of Ethno," 54–59.

> have like, maybe thoughts that are bad or good, or like you have your thoughts that you have worked up just seeing the person … it disappears. Because you're getting to know the person. And I think that's a great tool to make racism disappear … Xenophobia, it's when you are afraid of someone. I think it's: You're scared of the people. And when you're seeing that we are, we are the same in some ways, then it disappears, I think. And then when we're playing together, or just listening to each other, then we see that.[52]

> I feel like racism and xenophobia is based on the lack of experience with people and more, like, "oh, somebody said, this group of people is bad, so I'm going to believe they're bad." And that I feel like is the most common reason for xenophobia and racism. So, experiencing actually, other people from other cultures, nations, and so on, really does help to broaden your views to see that, as I've also said before, there are people that are not much different from us.[53]

However, such mechanisms work on the premise that there are in fact participants who hold such fear or prejudice towards others. When speaking about fundamentally different worldviews, interviewees also acknowledged that attendees mostly share similar values and an intercultural curiosity from the outset of the gathering:

> I think that maybe it could be that an Ethno is partially the way it is—inclusive and very open—and people act the way they do, because a specific group of people come here, choose to come here. Because it is a choice.[54]

> I think that the people that came here are not random people … You can feel the community because there have similar values that bring the people here. It's not random. Maybe, if there was like, casual peoples, these [Ethno Values] cannot be true.[55]

> It's hard to, like, not preach for the choir. How do you get outside the choir?[56]

[52] Hanin (participant Ethno Sweden 2021), interview with the author, November 3, 2021, Rättvik.
[53] Karlo (participant Ethno Sweden 2021), interview with the author, November 5, 2021, Rättvik.
[54] Noelia (participant Ethno Sweden 2021), interview with the author, November 3, 2021, Rättvik.
[55] Simone, interview.
[56] Hanin, interview.

> I think that people here gather mostly just because of music. And they're already not this kind of people who would fit into any category of phobias or prejudice against some social categories or… I don't know, concepts. So, in a way, I think that what's most important to these people in Ethno, is just music and being able to play music, being able to share music … because they share the similar values.[57]

It seems the tolerant atmosphere of Ethno relies heavily on the dispositions of participants, rather than it being an effect of musical interaction. This like-mindedness amongst participants seems to mitigate Ethno's potential to expose participants to differing values.[58] Though cultural differences are often topic of conversation, sensitive issues regarding gender, race, and religion are treated with caution. The following female interviewee, for example, explained how a conversation on a common value of gender equality took an unexpected turn:

> We were talking about how it felt to move to a big city and feel unsafe at night, because you can't walk alone. And she said "Yeah, and every time I see a person of colour, I'm like, don't kill me" … I was so uncomfortable … It caught me by surprise a bit, because you don't really talk like that [at an Ethno] … But we didn't talk about that at that point.[59]

Similarly, participant Noelia shared a story in which she was confronted with a conservative perspective on gender:

> People … had more traditional views of like women, and where they would stand in society. I can't remember exactly what they said at all. But I remember being pretty shocked about that …, because I did not agree. Like, women are supposed to be working at home? Or like, yeah, stuff like that. But I didn't say anything, because it was, like, "Okay. They that's how they see the world, I guess."[60]

It appears that participants who encounter issues of racism or fundamentally differing values must negotiate whether it is desirable to address these frictions during the gathering. Several

[57] Ilona, interview.
[58] Gibson, Higgins, and Humphrey, "30 Years of Ethno," 66.
[59] Disa (participant Ethno Sweden 2021), interview with the author, November 3, 2021, Rättvik.
[60] Noelia, interview.

interviewees were hesitant about explicitly discussing issues of race, gender, and national identity in group context. One concern was that such activities will disturb the positive atmosphere, provoke discussions, conflicts, and make certain participants feel less welcome than others. If successfully guided, conversations still were considered challenging due to the sensitivity of the topics, language barriers, and the fact that some participants might be more informed and equipped to express their views. Additionally, participants worried such conversations would lead to political debates, while it is Ethno's aim to include every eligible participant, regardless of political views (**figure 3**, point 3).

Outside the context of the gathering, several interviewees believed that Ethno concerts contribute to the diversification of the folk music community in Sweden, especially at venues or festivals that are currently predominantly visited by white Swedish-born citizens (e.g., Bingsjöstämman). Additionally, participants may spread a message of tolerance once they return home after a visit to the gathering. Thus, the idea that Ethno instigates social change by providing an example of peaceful, joyful, and musical interaction between young people from across the world was shared amongst participants and organizers alike:

> They're showing, setting the example, so that people can look, and they can follow … It's a very good practice, because … you don't have to waste time explaining it, and people will much more easily access and see this, this is also very a vehicle for, for this respect and for this integration.[61]

Jesse, the participant quoted above, worried that JMI threatens to overlook its own Western European positionality when focusing too much on universal humanitarian ambitions. As an experienced (non-Swedish) Ethno participant, he noticed Ethno gatherings are predominantly visited by people who are following or have followed formal music education and feel at least reasonably comfortable within a "Western European cultural paradigm."[62] This paradigm is noticeable in the fact that camp schedules and daily routines are ingrained with the regularity of Western Christian society. This European orientation of Ethno World is not regarded as a weakness; it is rather the lack of acknowledgement that is considered problematic when portraying Ethno as a global peace project:

[61] Jesse (participant Ethno Sweden 2021), interview with the author, November 4, 2021, Rättvik.
[62] Ibid.

> I think it should be more clear and more understandable the fact that this is a program built around the culture of European middle class privileged musicians … and it's not a problem that people, that JMI and Ethno world says, Okay, this is a program based on this culture. But I think … in order to work towards this integration and this openness, and … inclusiveness, they have to start first by defining, okay, this is the paradigm of this program.[63]

Building further on the idea that attending an Ethno gathering itself may be considered a privilege, Levan inverted the logic of "Ethno as peacebuilder," stating:

> Because there is peace then we can do that kind of thing. But we are not making it.[64]

*Preliminary Conclusion*

The reflections of Ethno Sweden's organizers reveal how they negotiate expectations and demands of a gathering. Even though conversations on racism and xenophobia are considered necessary, organizers and participants at Ethno Sweden are hesitant to include group conversations dedicated to social issues during the gathering. Instead, more significance is given to having a positive musical experience and non-verbal communication. From the accounts of participants, however, it becomes clear that fundamental layers of cultural differences that lie beneath a surface level of knowledge are less easily learned or exchanged without verbal conversation. Interviewees believed that, apart from a shared goal of music learning, people that attend Ethno gatherings generally also share similar values when it comes to social issues. As one interviewee put it simply: "If you are applying for an event like this, you're probably already not thinking too much to be a strong racist."[65] The ability to combat racism and xenophobia through intercultural exchange at gatherings such as Ethno Sweden is dampened by the prevalent struggle not to preach to the choir. Both Swedish and non-Swedish interviewees suggested several changes which could help Ethno Sweden target a more diverse participant group and audience, such as finding more neutral venues to play such as local libraries, finding non-musical platforms and local contexts to speak about Ethno "logic," and investing more in scholarships to create a more diverse participant group.[66]

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[63] Ibid.
[64] Levan, interview.
[65] Davi (participant Ethno Sweden 2021), interview with the author, November 6, 2021, Rättvik.
[66] Hanin, interview; Ilona, interview; Simone, interview.

Overall, Ethno still functions as an example of intercultural tolerance and respect and provides positive and meaningful experiences for participants. As practical limitations of such projects are inevitable, one may question the value of painstaking practical evaluations of humanitarian initiatives when the general incentives are well intended and at the least unharmful. It is tempting to argue that not humanitarian but exclusionary, racist, and xenophobic uses of folk music deserve primary concern when it comes to (scholarly) analysis and critique. As I will show in the final section, however, in a world where folk music serves as an expedient to cultural sovereignty to a wide range of actors, it is more productive to focus on the intersections and strange alliances that occur between actors with opposing intentions.

### 4.3 Urgency of History?

While Ethno Sweden and the SD represent polar opposites in conceptions of cultural sovereignty and the use of traditional folk music as expedient, they both operate under a guise of cultural heritage preservation. What follows is a real-life example of the outcome of this theoretical overlap which will not only support the hypothesis of this thesis, but also highlight how contradicting claims to cultural sovereignty clash as they draw from similar cultural resources.

Between 2009 and 2013, Ethno Sweden's program included a performance on Sollidenscenen, the main stage of open-air living history museum Skansen in Stockholm (est. 1891). Skansen's museum grounds presents a reconstruction of pre-industrial Swedish society, exhibiting farmsteads, town houses, and workshops from the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Skansen's employees present "living history" to the public, by dressing up in folk costumes and demonstrating crafts on site. During the visit of Ethno Sweden to Skansen, small groups of participants also performed at these sights (e.g., smaller stages, outside farmsteads, and in the museum's church).

Skansen played an important role for the revival of Swedish folk music in the beginning of the twentieth century, a revival which mainly served romantic nationalist incentives for Swedish nation building.[67] Though Skansen has undergone several transformations throughout the past century, it remains criticized by museologists for maintaining romanticized ideals of Swedishness, mythologizing "folk culture," insufficiently representing social hierarchies, and for the lack of chronology in its portrayal of Swedish history.[68] In section three of the previous

[67] Kaminsky, *Swedish Folk Music*, 46.

[68] Magdalena Hillström, "Nordiska museet and Skansen: Displays of Floating Nationalities," in *Great Narratives of the Past. Traditions and Revisions in National Museums. Conference Proceedings from EuNaMus,*

chapter, FMF initiator Carter was quoted expressing similar critique, arguing Skansen represents a stereotype rather than a tradition in continuous transformation.

In recent years, Skansen has gained attention from populists with a strong anti-immigrant stance, who associate the museum with their objective to protect Swedish cultural heritage from external threat. The Sweden Democrats, for example, have suggested to increase state funding for Skansen under the heading of cultural heritage preservation.[69] A more radical anti-immigrant fraction of the SD, Alternativ för Sverige ("Alternative for Sweden," AfS), similarly has shown interest in Skansen as a representation of Swedishness.[70] Though the attention is undesired by the museum staff, it is not surprising considering Skansen's romantic nationalist legacy and its recent critique. Skansen appears to function as a nationalist blueprint of Swedish cultural heritage which right-wing conservatives desperately want to protect from foreign interference.

Ahlbom explains that, at the time, the organizers did not consider the museum's controversial history of romantic representation of folk culture. It was an opportunity for a visit to the capital and a performance at a nationally well-known venue. Though the organizers discontinued the collaboration with Skansen after four years due to unfeasible logistics, Ahlbom and Rask react positively to the suggestion of performing at Skansen in the future. Ahlbom believes providing historical context to visitors attending performances of Ethno participants "might not be necessary" and expects most audience members to "understand that this is not what is happening in society today."[71] Rask considers explaining the romantic nationalist history of Skansen to Ethno participants possible, but not urgent: "I don't see that particular thing as super sensitive. In the same way, I don't feel that I have to explain it when I play a Swedish folk tune."[72]

Since Sollidenscenen is also a separately established concert venue, Ethno's stage performance alone does not immediately involve Ethno participants in a scene of romantic

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*European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of the Past and the European Citizen, Paris, June 29–July 1 & 25–26 November 2011. Report No. 4*, ed. Dominique Poulot, Felicity Bodenstein, and José María Lanzarote Guiral, vol. 4 (Linköping: Linköping University Electronic Press, 2011), 33–48, http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp_home/index.en.aspx?issue=078; Johan Hegardt, "Time Stopped. The Open-Air Museum Skansen of Artur Hazelius," in *Manufacturing a Past for the Present: Forgery and Authenticity in Medievalist Texts and Objects in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. János M. Bak, Patrick J. Geary, and Gábor Klaniczay (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 287–306.

[69] Jimmie Åkesson, "Nu är det dags för Sverige – Sverigedemokraternas förslag till statsbudget 2022" [Now is the time for Sweden – The Sweden Democrats' proposal for the state budget 2022] (Sveriges Riksdag, October 10, 2021), 96–97, https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/nu-ar-det-dags-for-sverige--sverigedemokraternas_H9023938.

[70] Helmersson, "Swedish Folk Music," 29–30.

[71] Albom, interview.

[72] Rask, interview, November 5, 2021.

nationalism. However, positioning separate ensembles throughout the park without informing participants about the context and history of the museum is arguably questionable for several reasons. Participants, occasionally dressed in traditional clothing from home as concert attire, risk being perceived as a part of Skansen's "living history" enactments. Unintendedly, performances may seem framed as an exhibition of the cultural "Other," exoticizing cultures that heavily contrast Skansen's Scandinavian surroundings. In general, Ethno Sweden's aim to promote a notion of tradition in continuous transformation is at odds with Skansen's intentional design to create a tableau vivant of a world "frozen in time."

It is not my goal to prioritize the question whether Ethno Sweden must perform at Skansen. A performance of Ethno, for example, might provide a welcome contrast to Skansen's portrayal of mythologized folk culture. Neither am I arguing organizers must necessarily provide participants with a disclaimer on Skansen's history, although it may be a sensible effort to raise some historical awareness. What matters, in my opinion, are the expectations created when positing Ethno Sweden as a humanitarian project to counter xenophobia, while solely relying on music's universal nature to communicate this message. If Ethno is to engage with societal issues, I would suggest it cannot ignore the relevance of historical contexts. As argued by Chérie Rivers Ndaliko in her research on music and intervention by international NGOs in conflicts on the African continent, non-profit organizations must prevent the reinforcement of "historic patterns of patronage and policy promotion that undermine the autonomy and agency of local communities."[73] Ndaliko advocates for a re-evaluation of the "urgency of history" in the work of music NGOs, to prevent unintended (harmful) consequences. In agreement with Ndaliko, I wish to emphasize the necessity of verbal dialogue to achieve such historical awareness, since music making alone tends to cover up rather than expose the complex layers of historical contexts and narratives. "Talking about it" is similarly suggested by members of the activist community (e.g., by Berggren), when asked what Ethno Sweden could do to support their cause.

The aim of this chapter has been to show how the imperative to preserve musical heritage works as a guise for cultural sovereignty claims of a wide range of political actors, NGOs, local music institutions, and practitioners, who all attribute specific value to the connections between musical repertoire, geographical space, the community inhabiting this space, its protection, and its prosperity. This connection to geographical boundaries is, perhaps, the crucial factor

[73] Chérie Rivers Ndaliko, "Mobutu's Ghost: A Case for the Urgency of History in Cultural Aid," in *The Art of Emergency*, ed. Chérie Rivers Ndaliko and Samuel Mark Anderson (Oxford University Press, 2020), 138.

connecting musical heritage and cultural sovereignty, and in future research, it is the connection worth questioning the most.[74]

[74] This final note echoes the question David Kaminsky poses in his analysis of SD's folk music endorsement: "Have we successfully challenged that impulse to ascribe value to music and folklore based on its age, its association with a particular group of people, a place?" See Kaminsky, "Keeping Sweden Swedish," 90.

# Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that music NGOs, governments, and political movements in a polarizing Europe use musical heritage as an expedient to cultural sovereignty. This specific type of cultural agency is connected to traditional folk music genres because such genres frequently draw cultural boundaries and are used to represent cultural differences. More so than genres such as classical and pop music, musical heritage is tied to geographical space and lies at the heart of the concept of both national and nationalist music. Though there is sufficient critical research on the nationalist politicization of folk music in European history, as well as on general activities of music NGOs, current humanitarian implementations of musical heritage have hitherto been scarcely researched in relation to the polarization of European politics. With this thesis I have intended to draw attention to this relatively unexplored territory, presenting "cultural sovereignty" as a key theoretical concept underlying the expediency of folk/traditional music in cultural policy, humanitarianism, and activism.

*Summary*

The first chapter has provided three perspectives on cultural sovereignty: a humanitarian, politico-legal, and indigenous perspective. The humanitarian perspective, taken as the central topic of this thesis, distinguishes itself from the others by its assumption that the cultural self-determination of "peoples" constitutes a universal value which, when respected, will ensure peaceful coexistence of nations. This perspective arguably also stands out due to its vagueness regarding how and through which institutions "peoples" must assert and defend their cultural sovereignty, as it calls on a shared humanity that is united despite its cultural heterogeneity. The other two perspectives are more straightforward in this regard: it is either the state that is entitled to asserts its sovereignty from internal or external opponents (i.e., the politico-legal perspective), or a self-identified cultural group which is entitled to claim the sovereignty over cultural affairs that it may have lost to the state's oppressive policies (i.e., the indigenous perspective). In all three perspectives, musical heritage (i.e., folk/traditional music) serves as a resource for buttressing and expressing sovereignty over culture, because of its inherent ties to nationhood, national identity, and national boundaries. As a cultural expedient, traditional folk music may serve to emphasize a certain universality of mankind (i.e., a deep musical connection symbolized by the diversity of musical practices) or the particularity of individual cultural groups (i.e., cultural relativism symbolized through unique and "authentic" musical traditions).

The second chapter has taken the humanitarian perspective of music NGO Jeunesses Musicales International as a starting point, by mapping out how the association implements musical heritage in its Ethno World program on an international scale. The analysis of JMI's franchise structure has revealed that JMI's network is divided along national boundaries and that its members rely heavily on national cultural policy infrastructures. This makes the network vulnerable to financial and political upheaval on a local scale. JMI's humanitarian aims to build a resilient society have been seriously limited in the past by the fact that the network lacks resources to reach out to members in need. It seems that during times of financial hardship (e.g., in Greece) or political struggle (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina) local JM members will more likely wither than step up to organize music activities at times when they are most needed. In short, despite JMI's non-governmental principles, the network operates largely within the domain of state sovereignty.

The incorporation of the Ethno World program has put JMI back on the map of international non-profit music organizations and has won the non-governmental support from the philanthropy foundation MACP. By taking up folk music, JMI has aligned its objectives with UNESCO's effort to connect "global cultural heritage" to social justice and human rights. JMI claims that it uses traditional music practices "a tool" for the social good by empowering participants to assert cultural agency. I have argued this "social good" resembles UNESCO's understanding of cultural sovereignty. In other words, JMI's anti-racism and tolerance objectives show an all-encompassing aspiration to strengthen the cultural sovereignty of "peoples" which leads to social betterment on a global scale. Aiming for "cultural sovereignty" in this sense is understood as the effort to (re)establish a cultural order which is freed from illegitimate or unjust oppressions of cultural groups and resists violations of human rights.

Chapter Three has shown how the politico-legal and humanitarian perspectives of cultural sovereignty become intertwined on a local scale, in the case of Swedish cultural policy. Generally, the Swedish case is an example of how the JM network may flourish when the conditions are favorable: the streams of cultural and educational public funding have afforded a fertile ground for Ethno Sweden to grow and develop, and even reach out past its national boundaries. This is largely due Sweden's inclusive cultural policy, an inheritance from the Folkhem era, that has worked in tandem with Ethno Sweden's multi-cultural and humanitarian ideals.

In recent years, however, the political winds have turned, and folk music has become a bone of contention between libertarian-universalistic and traditionalist-communitarian positions in Swedish politics. The Sweden Democrats, now elected a supporting party of

Sweden's minority government, have actively used folk music to promote their radical exclusionary immigration and cultural policy. Arguably agitating xenophobic and racist sentiments, SD's framing of folk music has prompted a response from the left-oriented folk music community, including Ethno Sweden organizers. Though JMI profiles itself as a non-political association, spokespersons from JMI and Ethno Sweden have suggested that there might be causality between Ethno Sweden's strong presence in the folk music community and the presence of folk music activists against xenophobia in Sweden. Through facilitating musical heritage exchange—relying on the universal ability of music to bring people together—it is suggested that Ethno creates more tolerant attitudes towards cultural difference and creates a folk music community that is resistant to xenophobia.

Chapter Four has approached the hypothesis from a practical perspective, discussing several limitations and concerns concerning folk music's expediency in humanitarian projects. It reveals that Ethno's influence on folk music activists and their activities has been marginal. Verbal dialogue is highly valued by activists, which is stark contrast with the absence of conversations about xenophobia or racism at Ethno Sweden. Interviews with Ethno Sweden organizers show that musical exchange is purposefully prioritized over verbal communication for practical reasons, but also because organizers believe the creative process brings about a more powerful experience for participants. In other words, organizers rely on music's ability to achieve emotional connection between people to learn to tolerate each other's differences, while assuming music "does the talking." Interviews with participants show that, when it comes to attitudes towards cultural differences, the majority already shares an intercultural curiosity at the outset of the camp. Encounters with cultural values that are at odds with principles of race and gender equality may occur but are rarely addressed to maintain a positive atmosphere.

*Three Closing Arguments*

On many accounts, Ethno gatherings have proven to be meaningful and educational experiences for participants. Considering all the restrictions and organizers deal with, and all interests that must be negotiated, initiators deserve proper acknowledgement and respect, including my own. It has not been my intension to point out flaws in the Ethno format, nor to merely single out any kind of naïve idealism without constructively contributing to the discourse on the issues discussed. The main aim has been to show how, through promoting traditional music practices, political and humanitarian actors emphasize the particularity of individual cultures and/or universal humanity to support their respective understanding of cultural sovereignty and its argued necessity. Taking JMI's humanitarian perspective as the starting point, this thesis brings

to the fore several complications that are tied to the use of musical heritage as expedient in the context of political polarization. These are issues that are crucial to contemporary notions of "folk" and/or "traditional" music and their implementation in cultural policies, and in my view, deserve more critical attention in further research.

1. Though both humanitarian organizations and states may work together under the imperative to preserve music traditions, their respective understanding of the kind of cultural sovereignty such collaboration affords may be different or become oppositional. Public funds for musical heritage projects are continuously being restructured following political developments on a national and European level. As these developments show a turn towards neo-nationalism and populism, support for "traditional" music projects will not necessarily diminish, but rather be recast in a protectionist and exclusionary frame. Folk music organizations that draw from governmental support (e.g., JMI's network and Folkmusikens Hus) will be compelled to reevaluate how endorsement from the radical right may affect their image and the message they intend to carry out. The grey area between non-governmentality and governmental support in this instance has become foregrounded, and organizations must negotiate how to uphold their principles without biting the hand that feeds them.
2. This dilemma is to a large extent caused by a pervasive habit to (re)construct national boundaries by assigning a (national) heritage status to specific music, or to continue building on the frameworks constructed by early folk music revivalists. On the one hand, this may serve efforts to support the disenfranchised and to counter cultural imperialism. On the other hand, this habit at times perpetuates essentialized and romanticized notions of folk music and leaves divisive and discriminating uses of traditional music unchallenged. The nuances and subtleties of these context-specific connotations of "folk" or "traditional" music make its implementation for social betterment a complicated task. For traditional music to create contexts of inclusion, a critical perspective towards music and national identity is necessary: one that more outspokenly counters the nativist populist framings of folk music that are looming in a polarizing political climate.
3. To achieve such critical perspectives, it is arguably inadequate to rely on the processes of music exchange alone. The expectation that traditional music from different cultures serves as a universal language for intercultural dialogue, supplanting the need for verbal dialogue, inhibits the effectiveness of music projects advocating intercultural tolerance and respect. It is obviously not a prerequisite for traditional music projects to include political discussions. If, however, the objective is to use traditional/folk music as a tool to tackle the

challenges of our time and to bridge cultural divides, the complex history of folk music and nationhood must be considered as relevant and urgent.

*Alternative Avenues and Future Approaches*

Over the course of this research, multiple related topics emerged that required more in-depth analysis than the scope of this thesis allowed for. Nonetheless, these "alternative avenues" provide food for thought and are therefore presented here alongside perspectives for future research on the expediency of traditional/folk music.

One of such avenues, for example, is the struggle of Europe-based NGOs such as JMI to connect to the majority world. As JMI's network operates within a franchise structure, its global outreach may be compromised by the structure's incompatibility with certain local systems of (public) cultural funding. Moreover, further research in this direction may discuss to what extent EU-based outreach profiled as development cooperation—such as Folkmusikens Hus and Bilda's initiation of Ethno Palestine—leads to structural improvement for and self-sufficiency of local actors. When it comes to musical heritage exchange, researchers and participants of Ethno gatherings have already signaled a need for critical examination of how musical styles are merged into "hybrid" tune arrangements, where certain (culturally determined) musical vocabularies (e.g., harmonic progression and rhythmic structure) gain prominence over others.[1] There is room for discussion on how Ethno gatherings handle debates on appropriation an ownership in relation to heritage.

Another topic that branches out from the analysis of JMI's operating structure and Ethno World is the tension between grassroots initiatives and their centralization by JMI's secretariat. The secretariat's coordination of Ethno gatherings has significantly increased after receiving MACP's grant for Ethno World. On the one hand, this support seems a welcome alternative to government funding, and may provide JMI more financial stability and sustainability to improve the coordination of Ethno World. On the other hand, the grant has saddled JMI with the continuous responsibility to report tangible results to stakeholders and live up to certain demands or expectations. As is the case with many NGOs in the field of culture, MACP has drawn Ethno gatherings into evaluating "mechanisms of incentive and compensation" which

[1] Sarah-Jane Gibson, "Ethno on the Road and Världens Band: Beyond the Ethno Gatherings" (York, UK: International Centre for Community Music, 2019), 15–16.

urges JMI to quantify their "social impact" through data research, presenting "amount of people reached" as a barometer of social progress.[2]

As a result, the narrative of what Ethno gatherings encompass and carry out is increasingly controlled by JMI. There have been several reports of non-member organizations across the world being reprimanded by JMI for naming their gathering Ethno.[3] A debate has emerged amongst Ethno organizers of (non)member organizations on who owns the right to organize an Ethno gathering. The "spin-off" gatherings with consciously misspelled titles (e.g., ChilEtno in Chile, TradinEtno in Croatia, and Etno Histeria in Slovenia) that have emerged and disappeared over the years are a testimony to this debate. One cannot help but be reminded of the competition amongst music NGOs discussed in the second chapter. It is imaginable that JMI insists on maintaining "Ethno" as an exclusive trademark to get a foot in the door of the international field of (non)governmental cultural funding programs. Perhaps, the issue of quality plays a role here too, as JMI cannot oversee "Ethno-like" activities from nonmembers. For smaller organizations, however, who rely on volunteers, obligatory membership of JMI may serve as a financial obstacle rather than a network opportunity.

Ending on a personal note, I have encountered specific challenges that arise when aiming to present critical research on the activities of NGOs, while simultaneously inviting them to contribute to the research itself. Naturally, stakeholders in the non-profit sector hold high hopes and expectations that research outcomes will support and advocate for their activities. At the same time, it is in the interest of both the academic community and the organizations under investigation that critical research continues to signal opportunities for improvement and refinement, to contextualize humanitarian initiatives in frameworks outside the third sector, and to ask uncomfortable questions when necessary. Scholarly advocacy has become part of the "compensation" mechanism for funders in the non-profit sector, which is inherent to the expediency of culture that, as Yúdice argues, characterizes contemporary society. There are, however, few guidelines for scholars who are commissioned to do critical research by a non-profit actor such as JMI. In conversations with colleagues, and drawing from my own experience, it has become my understanding that scholars often must walk a tightrope between critical research and advocacy, attempting to remain scholarly integrity without unintentionally

[2] George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), chap. 1, Kindle.

[3] Esther Wachtfeld (Ethno organizer), interview with the author, online, October 2, 2022. This issue was confirmed in several informal conversations with members of the Ethno community who wished to remain anonymous. The legality of naming something "Ethno" is also discussed by Peter Ahlbom in Hugo Ribeiro, Magnus Bäckström, and Peter Ahlbom, "An Autobiographical History of Ethno Sweden: A Testimonial about Its Origins, Underlying Ideology and Initial Goals," *ORFEU* 4, no. 2 (2019): ¶4.

threatening the organization's reputation in the process. As the tendency to quantify social impact grows, researchers are increasingly in need of methodological and communicational guidelines which ensure sound research practices in the field of NGOs. It is my conviction that any future investigation on the efficacy of folk/traditional music projects in the non-profit sector will benefit from this discussion.

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