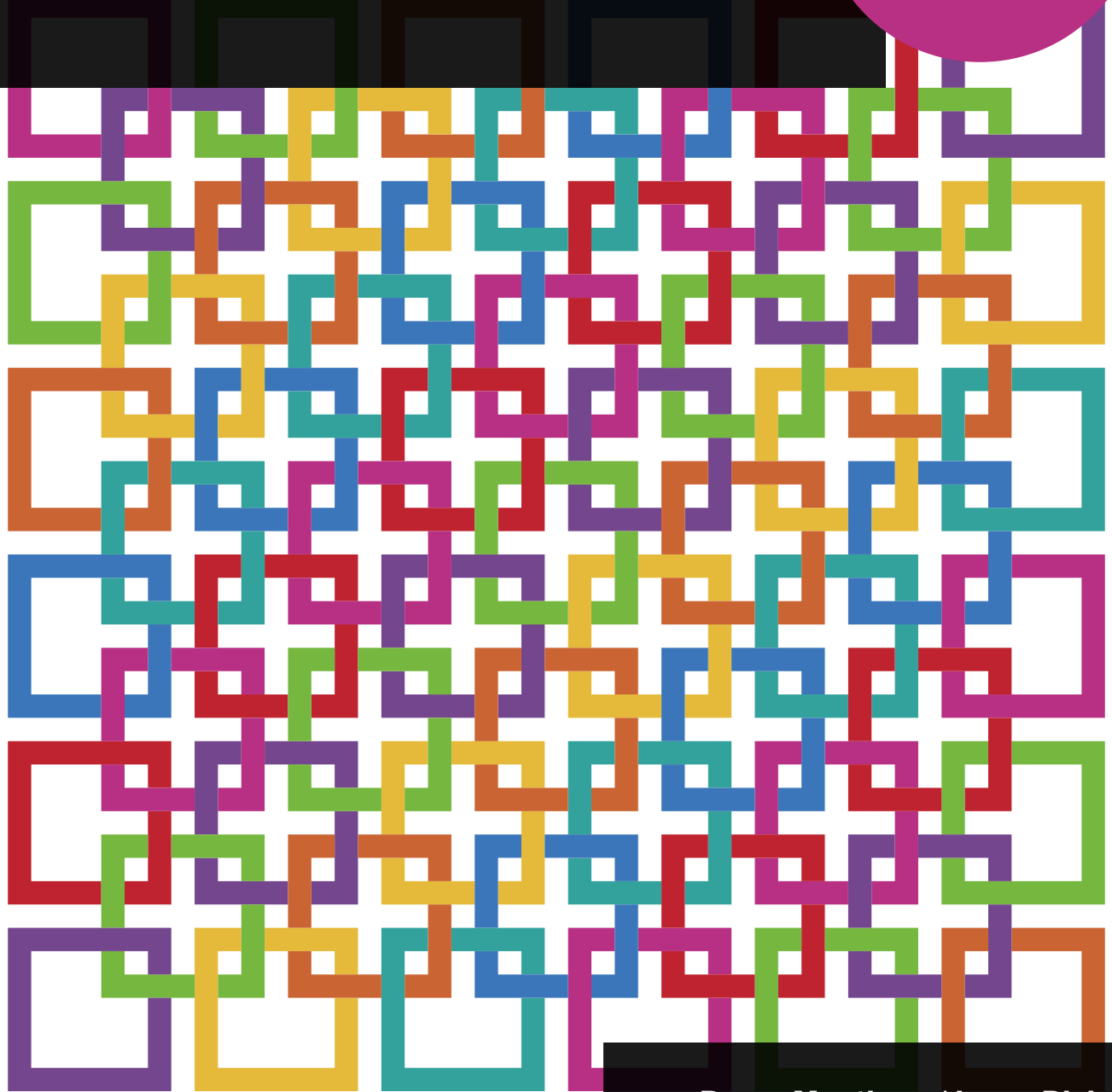


Framing Ethno-World

CONDENSED
REPORT

Intercultural Music Exchange, Tradition, and Globalization



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Introduction

This condensed report presents key conclusions from the white paper report, *Framing Ethno-World: Intercultural Music Exchange, Tradition, and Globalization*, which is intended to serve as a conceptual framework to advance the research agenda for a comprehensive study of the Ethno program overseen by Jeunesses Musicales International (JMI). The complete white paper was generated on the basis of a literature review and critical analysis informed by:

- Publicly-oriented (outward-facing) descriptions of and claims about the JMI Ethno program;
- Issues discussed in extant research literature;
- Deliberations at Ethno Research meetings held at York St. John University (May and December, 2019);
- Issues presented in 7 ethnographic case studies of Ethno camps undertaken in 2019 by members of the Ethno Research team; and
- The experiences of the Ethno Research team who attended Ethno France (February 2020).

WHAT IS ETHNO-WORLD?

Starting from modest beginnings as a folk music camp in Sweden (1990), the Ethno program, hereafter referred to as Ethno-World, has evolved over the subsequent 30 years to become a network of international music camps (typically 7–14 days in length) for “youth” (variously defined, but officially listed as 13–30) that take place in an ever-increasing number of countries around the globe. In recent years Ethno-World has broadened its activities to include workshops, trainings, and a concert tour program (“Ethno on the Road”). The Ethno program is described on the JMI website (<http://jmi.net/programs/ethno>) and the Ethno-World website (<https://www.ethno-world.org/info/>) as “Jeunesses Musicales International’s program for folk, world and traditional music.”

WHAT DOES THE ETHNO-WORLD PROGRAM PURPORT TO DO?

According to the JMI website, the stated mission of the Ethno program is “to revive and keep alive global cultural heritage amongst youth.” The wording is slightly different on the Ethno-World website, which reads, “to revive, invigorate and disseminate our global traditional musical heritage.” The JMI website describes four aspects of the program:

(1) intercultural learning through peer education in traditional music, (2) sharing music traditions and learning from one another, (3) personal development through exchange, and (4) traditional music, social inclusion and respect. The language on both websites emphasizes such points as the importance of “intercultural dialogue and understanding,” “democratic peer-to-peer learning,” “building respect and tolerance” (combating “xenophobia, intolerance and racism”), and “preserving cultural heritage.”

The Ethno-World website lists the following objectives of the program:

- Preservation/conservation of cultural heritage, keeping traditional music alive amongst young people;
- Fostering intercultural dialogue;
- Promoting non-formal music education through peer-to-peer and experimental learning;
- Facilitating mobility of young musicians and emerging talent, locally and abroad;
- Creating equal opportunities for musicians of all genders;
- Celebrating young talent in an inclusive environment;
- Enabling young musicians to gain performance experience under professional conditions;
- Building confidence in young people's talents and inspiring them to further their musical and creative development;
- Growing self-respect and respect for others;
- Creating awareness of oneself, one's own culture and the world; and
- Creating a democratic space for the creation/performance of music without hierarchy.

COMMENTARY

By their nature, research agendas are intended to serve particular audiences. What is outlined in this condensed report has been generated on the basis of the conceptual discussion provided in the complete white paper. The full report aspires to contribute to the scholarly community by connecting recent scholarship on cultural globalization, tradition and revival, interculturality, sites of musical exchange, and peer-to-peer learning with ethnographic detail generated by the Ethno Research project.

The complete white paper, *Framing Ethno-World: Intercultural Music Exchange, Tradition, and Globalization*, offers a broad contextualization of the Ethno-World program through a range of scholarly lenses, grouped loosely under the headings “Globalization and Culture” and “Intercultural Music Exchange Encounters.” The final section of the full report, summarized below, proposes an agenda for the final two years of the Ethno Research project.

An Agenda for Ethno Research

With the intent of advancing the agenda of Ethno-World Research, the authors of this condensed white paper propose three fundamental distinctions to help clarify future research: intentionality, impact, and evaluation. By *intentionality* is meant both espoused intent and enacted practices, as undertaken by JMI/Ethno-World, Ethno camp organizers, Ethno camp artistic leaders, and Ethno camp attendees. By *impact* is meant the discernible differences that result from Ethno camp activity. These differences are describable on three levels: camp participants (including organizers and artistic leaders), localized and diasporic subcultural and intercultural activity, and cultural production generally. By *evaluation* is meant assessing the relationship between stated goals and observed effects (i.e., the relationship between action and impact), assessing the merits of the goals and intentions of JMI and Ethno camp organizers, and problematizing the impact Ethno-World has had on camp participants, on subcultural and intercultural activity, and cultural production. Evaluation for the purpose of this research agenda does not mean “program evaluation,” a form of assessment generally understood as initiated and undertaken by or in service of an organization with the intent of determining operational efficacy. Put differently, evaluation in the context of this white paper has been undertaken in the service of general scholarship, not in the service of a particular organization (even though the findings and discussion may have implications of interest to various organizations, most notably JMI and Ethno-World).

INTENTIONALITY

At their most basic level, Ethno-World camps are music camps for younger adults. Similar to many other music camps, they are short-term events whereby young adults with an interest in music gather, typically for 7–14 days, for the expressed purpose of making music together, concluding with a public performance of some kind. Sometimes, as was the case with the first Ethno Sweden camp and as continues with some Ethno camps today, there is a connection with a local music festival or event. Although enforcement is looser at some camps than others, another important feature of Ethno is the emphasis on youth, with most camps setting an age range of approximately 13–30. What is claimed by JMI/Ethno-World (and by extension, many Ethno organizers) as making Ethno-World camps distinctive is the focus on “non-formal” peer-to-peer learning, intercultural exchange, and “traditional music.”

Much is made of non-formal peer-to-peer learning in the official discourse of Ethno-World. It is true that a central feature of Ethno camps is the practice of attendees sharing the “traditional music” of their home country or region with their peers during the introductory phase (usually the first days) of the camp. Camps also typically include informal music and culture sharing amongst attendees while not in formal rehearsal periods. It should be noted, however, that much of the learning during an Ethno camp also takes place during rehearsals led by the artistic leaders, whose title and status during a camp resemble typical music teaching and learning settings led by qualified or credentialed experts. Given the implementation of Ethnofonik, a de facto training institute for artistic leaders, the claims to being “non-formal” are open to question.

Much is also made of the intercultural aspects of Ethno camps in the official discourse of Ethno-World. Here too, it is undeniable that, due to the composition of camp attendees, Ethno camps are, by their nature, “intercultural.” Although camps are conducted in English, which functions as the lingua franca, language diversity is a prominent feature of Ethno camps. Ethnographies conducted by the Ethno Research team in 2019 corroborate the claim that the intercultural aspects of Ethno are highly valued by many participants. It should be noted, however, that, while participant profiles vary from camp to camp, the majority of camps are held in Europe and the majority of attendees are European. The recent support for “Mobility Grants” would appear to recognize the underrepresentation of participants from certain parts of the globe, especially those from the Global South.

Despite the term “traditional music” being undefined, Ethno-World continues to emphasize it in their public-facing discourse. Traditional (or folk) music is generally understood by organizers, artistic leaders, and attendees as music that has cultural significance to a country or a group of people within a given country, thus setting it apart from (1) classical or art musics, which are (problematically) predicated on an aesthetics of timelessness and universality, and from (2) popular musics, which are (equally problematically) predicated on the market rationality of mass culture. “Folk music” at Ethno-World camps is also characterized by its “aural,” non-notation-based nature. Folk music is thus music that can be (and is) learned by ear within a relatively short period of time. The range of music qualifying as “traditional” today appears to be much broader than at the original 1990 Ethno camp associated with the Falun Folk Music Festival, which, judging from the YouTube feature on the camp, was decidedly narrower in its repertoire and more “traditional” in its concert presentation. By contrast, today’s camps emphasize highly arranged versions of the basic folk tune material, the end result of which resembles, in final concert presentations, the kind of transglobal roots fusion aesthetic common to many “world music” groups.

IMPACT

The extant research on and about Ethno-World camps suggests a strong sense of affinity within an Ethno *subculture*. Attendees are typically effusive in their praise for the Ethno experience, something backed up by the number of participants who attend more than once. It is not uncommon for some people to attend multiple Ethno camps. A few “die hard” fans appear to plan their year around Ethno camps, “hopping” from one Ethno to another. The passion expressed by the Ethno community is sustained on social media, the most notable example being the Facebook Ethnopia group, which currently has over 600 members. Given that many organizers are volunteers or paid minimally (an assumption made based on the low cost for attendance), it is likely that organizers are motivated more by altruism and personal satisfaction than monetary incentives, something that speaks highly of the positive nature of Ethno camps generally. Artistic leaders are the one constituency potentially motivated transactionally, insofar as they function as paid staff, and, depending on personal circumstances and ambitions, may stand to benefit professionally from working at Ethno camps. That there is apparently high demand to work as an Ethno artistic leader, however, reflects positively on the nature of the employment and working conditions.

Surprisingly little is known about localized and diasporic subcultural activity in relation to Ethno-World camps. While there are apparently efforts by some Ethno camps to interface with local communities, as the white paper authors witnessed at Ethno France 2020, existing knowledge operates only at the anecdotal level. Similarly, while there are anecdotal reports of how Ethno attendees have leveraged their Ethno experiences in service of cultural activities in their own localities, little evidence—scholarly or trade—was discovered in the writing of this report. It would be interesting to investigate, for example, the wider impact of the purported pedagogy (non-formal education) enacted at Ethno camps.

Despite the apparent popularity of Ethno-World camps, they are not, from what can be discerned, well-known in the wider world of ethnomusicology or much of the folk, traditional or world music scenes. Ethno camps have been studied or included as part of a broader study in a handful of theses and dissertations, but the writers of this report could find no peer-reviewed scholarship explicitly about Ethno-World camps, and Ethno-World does not appear to factor significantly amongst the curriculum and instructional practices at institutions specializing in folk, traditional and/or world musics. This may reflect the contrarian stance of Ethno camps themselves, which pride themselves on “non-formal” education and their embrace of “Ethno pedagogy,” an approach that claims to exist in opposition to formalized pedagogical practices. In terms of the folk, traditional and world music scenes, it is possible that the impact of Ethno-World is just beginning

to be noticed, thanks to efforts such as “Ethno on the Road” and the Världens Band, an ensemble made up primarily of Ethno-World alumni. It is notable, however, that very few “experts” in these music scenes are seemingly aware of Ethno-World.

EVALUATION

To the extent that Ethno-World has continued to expand the number of Ethno camps around the globe (up until the COVID-19 pandemic), available evidence to date suggests Ethno camps are built on a successful formula that leaves most attendees satisfied and seeking additional Ethno experiences. Although ethnographies conducted by the Ethno Research team in 2019 did identify a few attendees who expressed frustrations and negative experiences, these pale in comparison with the effusive praise expressed by the overwhelming majority, many of whom describe their Ethno experience as life-changing. Research observations at Ethno France 2020 corroborate a general sentiment that Ethno camps embody a shared utopian commitment on the part of organizers, attendees, and artistic leaders to a more compassionate, empathetic, humane world.

Intercultural Exchange

Part of the allure of Ethno camps would appear to be their sense of suspended reality, something catalyzed by the common age range of participants. Videos and images of Ethno camps give the impression of “emerging adults” who are mostly single, physically healthy, and full of energy, vitality, and optimism. Research observations and anecdotal reports suggest that many camps feature a party atmosphere where attendees are keen to test their mental and physical stamina through their socializing.

When viewed as a “liminal” period or as a “limit experience,” the risk-taking aspects of Ethno attendance can be seen as part of personal and, in some cases, professional development. At the same time, there is some evidence to suggest a few attendees may be drawn into the suspension of reality as a way of avoiding it. The Ethno Research team heard reports of attendees who “Ethno hop” as a way of rent avoidance, for example (as the cost of camp attendance provides relatively inexpensive food and board compared to that of many countries). There are also anecdotal reports of some attendees largely oblivious to the realities of adult life (e.g., participants who have no idea how much rent costs or how much income one would need for basic subsistence).

Ethno-World certainly cannot be held responsible for ensuring people are not attending Ethnos as a way of avoiding the realities of adult life. At the same time, organizational claims to intercultural dialogue and understanding seem exaggerated. While there are reports that a small minority of Ethno camps attempt explicit dialogue on issues

beyond music, it would appear that in most cases the purported intercultural aspects are simply presumed on the basis of camp attendance. That songs are sung in Portuguese or Arabic, for example, would seem to be taken as sufficient for claiming intercultural experiences. While it might be unrealistic to expect Ethno-World camps to tackle the challenge of epistemological difference, it is highly problematic to proclaim intercultural understanding on the basis of music-making alone. Difficult topics, such as race, gender, class, sexuality, or disability inequalities, issues of consent, or even relatively simple topics, such as the comparative realities of living in countries outside the European Union, if they are discussed at all, occur informally between small groups of people, not as part of a common camp experience.

The European tradition of “intercultural competence” as a basic problem of knowledge in relation to the norm of European experience (“Global Westerners, local others”) would appear to provide the basis for Ethno-World’s conception of intercultural dialogue and understanding. The Ethno Research team observed and heard reports of clear differences between the experiences of those from the Global North, where, generally speaking, attendees were seeking “intercultural experiences,” and those from the Global South, where, generally speaking, attendees were seeking networking opportunities that might open doors to professional advancement. Although some camps (e.g., Ethno New Zealand) are apparently confronting difficult questions of colonialism, this appears to be the exception rather than the rule. As a result, it could be argued that, despite altruistic aims and the undeniably positive sentiments expressed by the majority of attendees, Ethno-World camps in fact participate in a form of European cultural colonialism.

Non-formal Learning

Peer-to-peer learning is touted by Ethno-World as central to the Ethno camp experience. To the extent attendees share musical selections with their peers during the first days of a camp, typically in a phrase-by-phrase, repeat-after-me fashion, peer-to-peer learning in a non-formal setting (i.e., outside traditional music teaching institutions) can be said to occur. Given that the majority of time at an Ethno camp is spent in rehearsals led by artistic leaders, however, claims to peer-to-peer learning appear exaggerated. While there is, in principle, much to be lauded about peer learning (and peer learning in music), it is in no way unique to Ethno camps. Moreover, no evidence has been uncovered that Ethno-World (and Ethnofonik) operate on the basis of any theoretical commitments or research evidence base. Although it undoubtedly reflects a sincere anti-institutional stance toward the hierarchical teacher-student relationship endemic to conservatory-based instruction, “peer-to-peer” appears to be more of a convenient slogan or catch-phrase than an informed approach to the problems of teaching and learning.

Claims to being “non-formal” are presumably based on Ethno camps operating outside the “formal” paradigm of music teaching and learning. While there is no doubt some flexibility and adaptation within a given Ethno camp, there are anecdotal reports and consistent indicators that, as part of its branding and institutional efforts, Ethno-World has codified and standardized many aspects of Ethno camps. Similar to other music camps, there is a clear plan and structure to Ethno camps; they are not spontaneous and emergent. Moreover, despite the short period of initial peer sharing of musical material, the lion’s share of a camp resembles the familiar structure of rehearsals (and performance) led by a “leader.” That Ethno hires people known as “artistic leaders” underscores the bald fact of traditional teacher-student hierarchies, even if these hierarchies are more muted and framed by an environment of mutual respect and support.

By many measures, Ethno camps provide a wonderful music learning experience for attendees. What is problematic is not necessarily what is enacted, but the claims and assumptions made in the name of Ethno camp learning. Artistic leaders appear to be highly competent musicians, hired on the basis of their reputation for successful music facilitation. At the same time, there is little evidence that Ethno-World, Ethnofonik, or artistic leaders operate on the basis of much beyond their own experience. By most definitions, this would qualify efforts as “non-professional” (where professions are defined as operating according to evidence and theory). That there are sentiments expressed amongst the Ethno subculture that they have invented or discovered some new way of teaching and learning (“Ethno pedagogy”) points to a potentially disturbing naiveté about all that is currently known about music teaching, learning, and facilitation. As much as one might admire the positive experiences of attendees and the anti-establishment values motivating the subculture, a more informed stance might help Ethno-World better frame and restrict its claims about music learning and teaching.

Traditional Music

Arguably, one of the most ambiguous aspects of Ethno-World camps relates to the expectation for attendees to bring to camp a “traditional music” selection that represents their home country or region. On the surface of this expectation lie a host of potentially problematic issues of cultural identity as national identity. For example, the Ethno-World model is striking in that the participants themselves are taken as informants or even de facto culture-bearers for musical traditions whose boundaries align with national borders—their inalienable authority guaranteed simply by fact of their national or regional origin.

The approach Ethno-World takes to traditional music would seem, on the surface, to align with an older, pre-globalization conception of the musical landscape as composed of discrete, bounded, “authentic” traditions. Ethno-World takes this model not as an underlying premise for ethnographic study, but rather as a launching point for intercultural musical exchange where musicians represent their own national heritage through “traditional music.” Through mutual musical sharing, participants join their voices to the musical heritage of other locales. Heritage in this sense is equal parts *raison d’être*, conversation starter, and existential challenge as attendees— typically in their early to mid-twenties with comparably little life experience—wrestle with the problem of national representation through music. As one artistic leader at Ethno France 2020 put it, “It gets people asking the questions.”

The claim that Ethno-World functions to “revive and keep alive global cultural heritage” is seemingly predicated upon a revivalist perspective that assumes cultural authority and stylistic authenticity. This, however, does not appear to be a primary motivator for attendance. Some participants have, in fact, reported disassociating Ethno camps outright from other musical scenes specializing in the folk or traditional music of a country or region. Indeed, Ethno-World does not necessarily target or attract young musicians who specialize in the folk/traditional music of their country or region. Many Ethno participants appear to come from classical, jazz, or popular music backgrounds. They may be interested in learning music from other countries, but they are seemingly unconcerned with issues of authenticity. Citing the example of a *polska*, one artistic leader at Ethno France admitted that you won’t learn about actual musical traditions at Ethno, “but you will get an insight or a window.”

Although the first Ethno camp (Sweden, 1990) may have reflected a genuine desire to revive and keep alive “global cultural heritage” (consistent with claims on the JMI website), today’s artistic leaders appear to be generalists rather than a cadre of specialists in individual musical genres or traditions. As a result, rehearsals (as observed by researchers to date) are focused on creating exciting musical arrangements—resulting in what is affectionately known as “the Ethno sound”—rather than teaching attendees specific stylistic nuances or performance practices. Ethno camps are less about heritage, stylistic fidelity, or even cultural identity than they are about a contemporary engagement with others seeking interesting performing and collaboration opportunities. To the extent Ethno-World has inspired alumni now working in the commodified folk, traditional, and world music scenes, it can be viewed as participating in cultural globalization and professionalization processes.

AREAS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION

In light of the conceptual framework and discussion presented in the full report, the following questions are forwarded as considerations for further research, organized according to various stakeholders.

Camp Attendees

- What are the discrete participant profiles of Ethno attendees in terms of self-reported motivations, sociodemographics, and musical backgrounds based on large-scale surveys?
- What are the motivations, backgrounds, and lived experiences of attendees from the Global South?
- What additional insights can be gleaned about Ethno attendees through large-scale data mining and fine-grained discourse analyses of Ethnopia and other social media related to Ethno?

Although some initial survey research has been conducted, “big data” is required to generate a more complete profile of Ethno attendees. A larger data set would help to shed additional light on the subpopulations that attend Ethno camps, allowing for greater elaboration on the potentially multifaceted nature of participant motives and their demographic statistics. This could provide data needed for strategic action.

Research to date suggests that attendees from the Global South may differ in important ways from those from the Global North. Claims to intercultural dialogue can be further problematized through sensitization to overshadowed voices.

Internet research is accessible and a potentially rich source of data and access to participants. Ethnopia, for example, with its 600+ members, is but one example of a social media site that could be mined and explored in order to generate participant perceptions and opinions, and further insights into participant profiles.

Artistic Leaders

- What are the discrete participant profiles of Ethno artistic leaders in terms of self-reported motivations, sociodemographics, and musical backgrounds based on large-scale surveys?
- What self-reported principles or beliefs guide or inform pedagogic action undertaken by artistic leaders? To what extent do they have familiarity with theory or practice outside Ethno contexts? (How do espoused values compare to enacted practices?)

- To what extent are artistic leaders aware of the degree to which they may be participating in the shaping of culture through music at local, regional, and global levels?
- To what extent do artistic leaders feel obligated to or responsible for introducing and/or facilitating discussions of cultural issues, and to what extent do they report doing so (and how)?

Although Ethno organizers arguably exert the greatest influence over the direction and impact of individual Ethno camps, artistic leaders influence the moment-to-moment Ethno experience of attendees through their *in situ* decision-making and artistic judgements. Not enough is understood about the profiles of artistic leaders (social and musical backgrounds, formal and informal training, etc.). Neither is there a developed understanding of the implicit and explicit operating principles that guide pedagogical action over the course of an Ethno camp. Given JMI/Ethno-World's stated aims and objectives in relation to reviving and preserving folk and traditional musics, it seems imperative to better understand how artistic leaders view such issues (e.g., how much fidelity to "authenticity" is deemed important and how tensions over authenticity are dealt with), and how they regard their role in the negotiation of cultural difference and interculturality, especially with respect to nationalism and colonialism.

Organizers

- What are the self-reported motives of Ethno camp organizers?
- In what ways do organizers conceptualize and enact their relationships and obligations to their local communities? To what extent do organizers make ethical and pragmatic decisions in response to local conditions and expectations?
- In what ways do organizers conceptualize and enact their obligations to attendees and artistic leaders? To what extent do considerations of race, gender, class, and geopolitical representation factor into decision-making?
- In what ways are local decision-making processes constrained or influenced by JMI and Ethno-World?

Despite the fact that they arguably have the greatest impact on all aspects of an Ethno camp experience, very little is known about the organizers of Ethno-World camps or the economic models of individual camps. Little is also known about the

relationships (which one Ethno organizer described in terms of a symbiotic system) between the organizers and the administrative apparatus of JMI and Ethno-World. While it appears there are efforts, through “organizer trainings,” to create (or even impose) a degree of standardization upon camps in terms of such things as branding, structure, and the hiring of qualified artistic leaders, it would be interesting to better understand the degree of congruence between the espoused values of JMI/Ethno-World and the enacted values of the organizers.

JMI/Ethno-World

- In what ways do JMI and Ethno-World conceptualize and enact their obligations to organizers, artistic leaders, and attendees? To what extent do considerations of race, gender, class, and geopolitical representation factor into decision-making?
- To what extent do JMI and Ethno-World make ethical and pragmatic decisions in response to localized conditions and expectations? To what extent do JMI and Ethno-World expect local Ethnos to adhere to top-down guidelines and protocols?
- What are the guiding ethical, philosophical, and pragmatic principles that inform organizer trainings?
- What are the guiding ethical, philosophical, and pragmatic principles that inform Ethnofonik? To what extent does it attempt to be a research-informed or evidence-informed practice? To what extent do race, gender, class, and geopolitical representation factor into an awareness of the importance of access and inclusion in artistic leader training?
- To what extent do “unofficial” Ethnos challenge the identity and viability of Ethno-World?

It is possible that some administrative decision-making may need to be kept behind closed doors. Nevertheless, there is still much to be learned about the perspectives of the official organizations (the INGOs) on the history, current operation, and future plans for Ethno-World, especially in light of the development of artistic leader and organizer trainings. The views of JMI/Ethno-World toward what are known as “unofficial Ethnos,” for example, could shed additional light on the complexities of INGOs operating in the cultural sphere.

Beyond Ethno-World

- In what ways and to what extent do Ethno-World events impact surrounding communities? How do camp organizers and Ethno-World document and describe these impacts? How do other stakeholders in the local community (organizations, individuals) describe these impacts?
- What indicators (metrics, measures) can be developed, beyond self-report, to assess the impact of Ethno on longer-term career and life choices of attendees, both musical and non-musical?
- In what ways and to what extent are participants actively engaged in traditional music?
- In what ways and to what extent do participants continue to embody the ideals of intercultural harmony espoused by Ethno-World even after “aging out” of the camps?
- In what ways and to what extent has Ethno-World impacted the European and worldwide folk/traditional musical ecosystem? What musical collaborations have grown out of Ethno experiences and how present are they on world and folk/traditional music stages?
- In what ways and to what extent are Ethno-World’s approaches to pedagogy recognized, understood, or regarded by those beyond the Ethno ecosystem?

To date, most Ethno Research has focussed on camp attendees, generating a good deal of knowledge on their perceptions and opinions. Research on the stakeholders in the communities in which individual Ethno camps take place, however, could help shed additional light on local, regional, and global impact. Similarly, the extent to which Ethno has any impact on the wider folk or traditional music scene or the pedagogical world of folk and traditional musics is currently unknown.

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