(Hy-)Brazil, Celtic land? An Ethnomusicological Study of the Formation and Characteristics of the Irish-Celtic Music Scene in Brazil

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Abstract

This paper presents an ethnomusicological study of the formation and characteristics of a relatively new Irish-Celtic music scene in Brazil. Clustered in major urban centers, a musical community devoted to Irish-Celtic music has developed during the last fifteen years, assisted by the power of the internet and social networks, and supported by the effort of engaged Brazilian culture brokers that maintain a virtual Atlantic bridge between Brazil and Ireland. The Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene portrays a significant level of diversity in the practices and discourses of its participants, largely sprung about by the culture industry that boomed surrounding all things Irish during the Celtic Tiger period [mid-1990s to late-2000s], particularly Irish traditional music and Irish pubs. This diversity provides the foundation for my own analysis of issues of "authenticity" and tradition involved in the adoption of a non-native musical culture in a nation with meager historic ties to Ireland.

Keywords: Irish Traditional Music; Brazil; globalisation; Celtic music, music scenes.

Introduction: "*Irish music – this is still going to be big in Brazil*"

In the year 2009, Topper, a Brazilian sports clothing company famous for producing uniforms for various football clubs in the country launched a TV advertising campaign with the intention of promoting what was then a largely unknown sport in Brazil: rugby. With the marketing motto: "Rubgy – this is still going to be big in Brazil", it aimed to publicise the English sport throughout the country and to market its sponsorship of the Brazilian national rugby team. The witty sense of humor displayed in the advertisement piece thrived on issues such as the geographical region of origin of the sport and its diminutive magnitude in Brazil. These factors most likely explain why, years later, Brazilian uilleann piper Alex Navar, a central figure of the Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene, would humorously embrace the slogan, adapting it to a musical context: "Irish music – this is still going to be big in Brazil".

Although probably still less successful in its expansion than the aforementioned British sport, "Irish music" has indeed grown in the country over the past ten years. The emergence of such an interest for Irish traditional music (ITM) in Brazil can certainly be acknowledged as a consequence of the worldwide dissemination of Irish cultural traits that marked the Celtic Tiger period, a process in which the island's traditional music held a distinguished place, becoming the most prominent symbol of Irish national identity globally (Rapuano 2001). As noted by Rapuano, ITM has since become a global phenomenon enjoyed and practiced by people of different ethnic, national, class and heritage backgrounds; the possibility of "becoming Irish music" is, at least in theory, open for all (ibid. 103). A variety of agents have contributed to the current state of affairs of ITM in Brazil: the grassroots work of dedicated aficionados (musicians, dancers, fans), the financial interests of the drink and entertainment industries, and the political and economic interests of the Irish government in fostering

productive bilateral relations with Brazil – all of which have played a part in launching the country in the flowing tides of the (global) soundscape of ITM (ÓhAllmhuráin, 2016).

My personal involvement with ITM began as a musician with a professional performance interest, which later developed into academic research activity, instigating historical and ethnomusicological glances towards the milieu in which I occupied the twofold condition of enthusiast and scholar. In this paper, I will examine the formation of a nationwide community of Brazilian musicians devoted to ITM, from the first lonely pioneers up to the recent institutional crowning point, the creation of the first Comhaltas Ceoltóiri Éireann branch in the country: Comhaltas *Brasil* (CCÉBR). Such development spans a period of more than two decades [1994-2018] and is geographically centered in Brazil's largest urban centers: Rio de Janeiro (RJ) and São Paulo (SP). The findings hereafter discussed result from a tripod that encompasses different research methodologies: ethnographic fieldwork and interviews with musicians involved with ITM in RJ and SP, participation at Irish sessions and professional musical performances of ITM in multiple cities in Brazil, and netnographic observation in social networks.

This research trajectory and the support of ethnomusicological literature led me to describe this socio-musical phenomenon as the Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene. The concept of scene has been increasingly used in academic discourse since its first appearance in the work of cultural theorist Will Straw (1991). Its usage in the study of popular music commonly focuses on the way musicians, institutions and audiences "come together to collectively create music for their own enjoyment", frequently in an effort to "distinguish themselves from others" (Bennet and Peterson 2004: 1, 3). Through a comparative analysis of fieldwork data and Bennet and Peterson's tripartite classification of music scenes (local, translocal and virtual) I suggest the characterisation of the Brazilian ITM musical community as a translocal scene, where "widely scattered local scenes drawn into regular communication around a distinctive form of music and lifestyle" (ibid. 6). I will also try to highlight this translocal music scene's dual nature: the combination of face-to-face interaction (in sessions, shows, etc) with the translocal properties of music facilitated by communication technology in producing this affective community (ibid. 9).

One of the ways local music scenes become enmeshed in global cultural flows is when individuals or institutions use music as way of enhancing national or regional attractiveness to tourist audiences (ibid. 2). Such has been the case with Ireland: Kneafsey (2002: 123) has shown how Board Fáite's advertisement has frequently reinforced ITM as an essential component of a visit to Ireland (and an "authentic" asset of Irish identity), an association which has had impact within the setting in question. As I'll try to demonstrate, the context studied was impacted by such policies, and also serves as evidence to how "[c]ultural representation of the local Irish product within the global typically promotes geographical location and/or Celtic ethnicity" (Motherway, 2013: 177). In the Brazilian context, even participants who may be described as having a traditional orientation towards Irish music and a critical view of the Celtic tag (certainly a minority) do become enmeshed in such ambivalences - mainly when trying to develop professional activity with ITM. Finally, the adoption of the term Irish-Celtic in describing this music scene is an attempt at portraying a diversity of practices and relating it to "contemporary forms and practices of Irish music that are marketed, or otherwise considered as Celtic" (O'Flynn 2014: 233). In this analysis of the scene, the use of this concept aims to signal the coexistence of more clear-cut allegiances to ITM (as something distinct from Celtic music) and more open perspectives about the idea of Celtic music.

The article starts by examining some of the effects of the Celtic Tiger period in Brazil, and then proceeds to the introduction of the Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene, gradually evolving into a brief characterisation of its main features and historical development. As it consists of a very dispersed musical community in a country of continental dimensions, this research does not aim to speak for every participant of the Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene, it being certainly a more varied and complex phenomenon than the portrait hereby offered.

The Celtic Tiger's (musical) grip on Brazil and relations between Ireland and Brazil at the closing of the millennium

As many authors recall, the years close to the turn of the millennium saw an unprecedented rise in the popularity of Irish-Celtic music, a phenomenon related to the period of economic prosperity that earned Ireland the well-known epithet of Celtic Tiger [mid 1990s-late 2000s], intensifying the somewhat problematic conflation between ITM and Celtic music at the same time it reached new audiences (Motherway, 2013: 6-7; Reiss, 2003: 145; Williams, 2010: 124; Wilson and Hastings, 2006: 91-94). In Brazil, the main perceivable axes of this Irish cultural expansion were a significant surge in the number of Irish pubs, the ever-growing St. Patrick's Day celebrations, and the ascending position of Ireland as a travel, study and migration destination for Brazilians, a situation mostly common to the whole continent of Latin America (Murray, 2009: 239). One can safely affirm that most medium to large cities in Brazil have now at least one (so-called) Irish pub, a fact one easily associates with the diffusion of Irish pubs worldwide, the industrial reproduction of which was ironically described as the "pub in a box" phenomenon by Vallely (2011: 363). While I have heard complaints about a lack of interest in "real" ITM in local pubs by members of the scene, this type of venue is nonetheless an important setting for both its professional and social activities. Pubs are frequently the main promoters of St. Patrick's Day events. Luis de la Cerda Fitzpatrick, a Chilean-born uilleann piper of Irish and Spanish ancestry (a rare case in the Brazilian scenario), was himself for some years the owner of a pub in the city of Curitiba (Fitzpatrick's Pub), hosting many shows of Irish-Celtic music (including of his own pan-Celtic band, *Gaiteiros de Lume*, Galician for "Pipers of the Light"). In his view, most of the so-called Irish pubs lack in "authenticity" and true commitment to the tradition, being "party places, they play rock". He reinforced his personal dedication in creating a "real Irish pub" with sessions, Irish-Celtic music shows and cultural events: "we played Irish music every day" (Luis Fitzpatrick, interview).

In the last two decades, St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Brazil have been steadily growing in importance and scale, and for Brazilian Irish-Celtic musical groups it is the first and foremost gig of the year. Crowded pubs and bars, street parades and music festivals have been constantly employing, at an increasing rate, live Irish-Celtic music produced by Brazilian groups, with the occasional addition of diasporic Irish, Irish-American or other foreign musicians[i]. While dependent on this gig, some in the scene voice criticisms and confess ambivalent feelings towards the commercial character attached to the occasion by pubs and beer companies. The stereotyping and commodification of Irish culture as well as its reflections on repertoire and performance demands by contractors and audience are sometimes resented by those musicians most devoted to "authentic" representations of ITM. Commenting on St. Patrick's Day festivities, medieval reenactment events and the expectations surrounding Irish music in those events, Alex Navar lamented the common requests of a "lay" audience for Irish drinking songs, and the need for "catchy", well-known melodies such as the 'Kesh jig': "I see St. Patrick's Day and medieval festivals [in Brazil] almost like Celtic carnivals" (Alex Navar, interview).

One must also account for an institutional viewpoint, examining the direct involvement of the Irish government and bi-lateral relations between Ireland and Brazil and its possible effects in promoting ITM in the country. Diplomatic relations were inaugurated with the opening of the Irish Embassy in Brasília in 2001, ten years after its Brazilian counterpart in Ireland. Mary McAleese's 2004 state visit to Brazil, included a delegation included of high profile traditional musicians such as Martin O'Connor, Tommy Hayes and Cathal Hayden, providing an Irish soundscape at official occasions. Such an event points to the importance of the state as a cultural broker and to the role of ITM as national symbol and cultural product (O'Flynn, 2007: 37). Current president Michael D. Higgins continued to expand such policies, perpetuating cultural flows between Ireland and Brazil with the renovation of the W. B. Yeats Cathedra of Irish Studies at University of São Paulo in 2012. In 2013, a worldwide St.

Patrick's Day celebration action coordinated by Ireland's Foreign Affairs Ministry and Tourism Ireland, known as Global Greening initiative, used green light to illuminate several of the world's greatest monuments. This initiative was accompanied by diplomatic meetings: in Brazil, a green Christ the Redemptor was the main sight during a state visit by Northern Ireland's Deputy Prime Minister Martin McGuinness.[ii] Brazilian piper Alex Navar was hired to arrange two groups of Brazilian musicians to perform ITM at the PM's reception, providing Irish tunes and songs to a somewhat baffled audience of Irish and Brazilian authorities.

One cannot ignore Ireland's growing popularity as a destination for Brazilian tourists, students and migrants during the beginning of the millennium, a fact statistics endorse: the country's 2011 census showed an increase from 1,087 Brazilians living in Ireland in 2002, to 8,704 in 2011.[iii] Although this paper focuses on a vector of cultural flows originating in Ireland and affecting Brazil, it is in fact a two-way highway, as highlighted by Ó hAllmhuráin:

> At the height of the Celtic Tiger, Gort in south Galway welcomed a sizable immigrant community from Brazil, who staged an annual samba festival. In a heartland where the draíocht of Joe Cooley still lingered in the air, the Brazilians and their exotic sambas slowly edged the local toward the global, shrinking the soundscapes of the Atlantic rim in the process. (2016: 230-231).

While such movement has decreased due mainly to the demise of the Celtic Tiger period of prosperity and the current political and economic crisis in Brazil, a recent news article in *The Irish Times* further confirmed the continuing expansion of student interchange policies settled by both nations at the beginning of the 21st century.[iv] So have the links between Brazil and Ireland been nurtured by the growing of the Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene.

Música Irlandesa no Brasil ("Irish Music in Brazil") and the Brazilian Celtic-cyber diaspora: connecting with the Irish-Celtic music scene in Brazil

My personal involvement with ITM began in 2010, as a musician making an effort to distinguish himself in what was perceived as a music scene of little diversity in the city of Porto Alegre, capital of the southernmost state of Brazil, Rio Grande do Sul. The proliferation of Irish pubs in town and the absence of groups playing Irish music added up to what seemed like a unique professional opportunity, a vacant musical niche in which I could indulge my desire to musically distinguish myself and perhaps lapse into an unwitting exoticism that has been noted in other performances and representations of Irishness (Motherway 2013: 10; Ó hAllmhuráin, 2016: 218, 220; Scahill, 2009: 75). The need to learn more about ITM and seek people playing it in Brazil drove me to the Internet, where I encountered the Facebook group *Música Irlandesa no Brasil* ("Irish Music in Brazil," hereafter IMB).[v] In it were hundreds of Brazilians, amateur and professional musicians as well as fans of ITM, some of whom would later become research collaborators, musical partners and even friends. As of August 2018, its membership exceeds one thousand members, and its description (written by Danny Litwin, an Irish-American musician resident in SP and one of the few diasporic musicians participating in the scene) translates as follows: "A place where people with interests on Irish music, dance and culture may meet. You may share news, doubts and videos as well as opinions and jokes. Music is the best thing in life, let's share and have fun!" This online gathering place revealed itself to be a major site for the exchange and sharing of tunes, videos, information and discourses surrounding ITM, besides constituting a significant virtual space for the building of a sentiment of community – something that reinforces widespread arguments about the impact of the Internet on the diffusion and transmission of ITM, as underscored by Ó hAllmhuráin:

> While this virtual milieu often seems at odds with the physical or lived reality of the music, it has impacted the manner in which the music is collected and transmitted, as well as the morphology of norms and meanings within the traditional soundscape. […] Despite its clamorous and at times Babelian welter of discourse — from opinionated neophytes to passionate opinion leaders — the Internet has now become a ubiquitous forum for Irish musical discourse, as well as a potent marketing tool. (2016: 237).

Numerous other Portuguese-language communities exist on Facebook (membership numbers indicated in brackets): *Músicas Celtas* (“Celtic musics”) [11,798], *Cultura e Música Celta* (“Celtic Culture and Music”) [27,538], *Música New Age, Celta, Instrumental...* (“New Age, Celtic and Instrumental music...”) [11,929], *Eu amo gaita-de-fole* (“I love bagpipes”) [701]. This rise of a Brazilian section of the great Celtic-cyber diaspora (McCoy 2014) is suggestive of the growing popularity of what is generally perceived as Irish-Celtic music and culture among sectors of the Brazilian society. These online groups have been an important space for the development of the Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene. As debated by Sommers-Smith (2001: 123), it can be argued that online groups centered on ITM function as virtual music communities, providing some of the needs of its participants, such as setting up an audience base and harboring discussions over the boundaries of tradition in Irish music – features that netnographic observation has shown to be the case for IMB. What must be stressed, however, is that despite the importance of these online communities as facilitators to the dispersed population of Brazilian Irish-Celtic music enthusiasts, participants have been steadily strengthening real bonds and expanding social networks by engaging increasingly in “offline” activities such as sessions and performances.

With the intent of drawing a general profile of its membership, I conducted a small-scale online survey of IMB in 2015. The data gathered showed great similarity with my previous experience as a participating musician and also with subsequent fieldwork in the cities of RJ and SP, pointing to the average participant in the scene as a young, white, middle class and well-educated male from the economically developed southeastern region of the country. The profile of an urban middle class at the core of the scene (some of which can afford to travel abroad to festivals, camps and workshops) presents a similar picture to many contemporary Irish sessions around the world, evidencing how in spite of still carrying strong associations with a rural and working classes, ITM has been increasingly practiced in these contexts (Hillhouse 2013: 42-43). A notable difference with regard to sessions in Ireland (and countries of the Irish diaspora) would be the absence of older musicians, a fact easily explained by the very recent development of the scene - still very much a single-generation phenomenon. In terms of gender, women are a minority (although increasing in recent years), except when considering Irish dance practitioners, a province where Brazilians have recently achieved significant notoriety (see below). This aspect calls to the fore some of O'Shea's (2008: 59) considerations about the continuity of established "discourses that construct Irish music as a 'male genre'", with commonly expected female participation mainly as singers and dancers. While this is certainly not an utter reality nowadays - O'Shea reminds us of the female majority among young people learning ITM - disseminated ideas about the suitability of certain instruments still influence female musical performers in Ireland (ibid. 56). In Brazil, however, besides dancers and singers, the female body of practitioners displays a significant number of bódhran players, fiddlers and flutists, in proportion to the totality of women in the scene.

A meaningful percentage of fifty-percent claimed to study Irish-Celtic music and develop some sort of professional musical activity within the style. When asked to describe the musical profile of their musical groups (more than thirty were cited), participant answers disclosed an interesting variety of practices: Scottish pipe bands, Irish punk combos, “Irish trad” ensembles, folk metal groups, new age, medieval, etc. In an open question that asked for general descriptors of what participants associated with the notion of “Celtic Music,” a wide range of views about Celticity manifested itself, ranging from a technical and fairly tradition-oriented perspective to the pagan and mystical end of the spectrum: tradition; ornamentation; bagpipes; Irish; reels; pubs; St. Patrick; session; beer; dance; folklore; poetry; roots; happiness; nature; forest; myths; medieval; harp; peace of mind; magic; paganism. Rejection and dispute over the suitability of the “Celtic” tag is also part of members’ discourses:

> There is a confusion between the Celtic tribes, pagans nearly exterminated by the Romans, which survived only in Ireland, converting to Christianity centuries later. So-called ‘Celtic’ music

> is Irish music, developed from the Middle Ages and onwards. In this sense, it is not Celtic in the strict sense of the word, neither pagan. (Carlos Crestana, IMB survey).

As previously mentioned, the conflating of the terms Celtic and Irish has proven to be an important feature of participants discourses within the Irish music scene in Brazil - defended by some and firmly eschewed by others. The development of what may be described as a purist view (concerned with issues of "authenticity" and tradition) inside the scene can be thought of as a bit of a paradox in a context characterised by an absence of noteworthy historical ties or a significant Irish diaspora, yet it is a nodal point of the scene. It was mainly within the boundaries of this more "tradition-centered" environment that I conducted fieldwork and interviews, and this reflects to an extent my inclinations as a musician studying ITM. In the following sections, brief chronicles of the cases of RJ and SP will be outlined, and insights into the views and histories of some of its main characters presented.

Uilleann pipes in the land of Carnival: Alex Navar and the "carioca" Irish Session Rio

"*Where do you come from?* From Brazil, I answered. Very surprised, he replied: *Oh, you've come a long way. And why have you come?* To learn the uilleann pipes. *I see…and what other instruments you play?* Not one, I said. Looking completely astonished, his comeback was: *Well you must be out of your mind!*" This is the typical ending of an account I have heard many times since I met Alexandre Gracindo Marques de Assis Bentes, better known in the Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene as Alex Navar, one of the few uilleann pipers in the country and the first Brazilian to study ITM in Ireland. But how does a Rio de Janeiro-born surfer, graphic designer and former trash metal vocalist end up in Cork, enrolled at uilleann piping classes at the Cumann na bPiobairí Corcaigh?

Alex's narrative about his trajectory is a source for understanding not only his own peculiar encounter with Irish-Celtic music but also a perspective from which it is possible to understand the formation and characteristics of the current Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene. As a young man in his twenties at the beginning of the 1990s, Alex began a journey of self-discovery through the religious philosophy of Kardecist Spiritism. While searching for his true spiritual self, Alex sought out soothing and calming music, no longer feeling attracted to heavy metal. At a record store, he eventually bought a CD entitled *Celtic graces: Best of Ireland*, one of the many collections of Irish and Celtic musics that inhabited "World Music" counters during those days. As soon as the first track began, Alex found himself at a turning point in his life: "Midnight Walker", by Irish piper Davy Spillanne's, triggered an unprecedented sonic and spiritual connection – "It was a shock, I was completely snatched" (Alex Navar, interview).

From there on, Alex undertook a lengthy and difficult search to learn more about the instrument. In pre-Internet times, thousands of miles away from Ireland, his salvation turned out to be the small Irish and Scottish expatriate communities in the city. Frequenting ceilidh dance lessons promoted by the Scottish St. Andrew Society of Rio de Janeiro, Alex met Peter O'Neill, an Irish immigrant long established in Brazil. Seen retrospectively, Peter's help to a very inquisitive Alex was of paramount importance in the development of an Irish-Celtic music scene in Brazil. Through Peter, Alex met Padráig Flavin, another Irishman expatriate from Rio de Janeiro (henceforth RJ), who opened the first Irish pub in the city, called Shamrock, and later on Paddy Fla. When the time came that Alex decided he could no longer postpone learning to play the pipes, he asked for Flavin's help. Activating his networks and connections to Ireland, Padráig got Alex in touch with the Cork Pipers Club and uilleann piper John Mitchell, who would later become his teacher.

In April 2000, he departed for Ireland, where he studied the pipes and worked for a year in Cork and Dublin. Alex's descriptions of this period are filled with joy and the wonders of learning ITM "from the wellspring of the tradition", accounts of the endurance needed for learning such a difficult instrument, and memories of the great fun he had playing at sessions, dancing at ceilidhs and frequenting the Willie Clancy Week. Alex's conception of

ITM was profoundly influenced by the traditional atmosphere he experienced and sensed in Cork: learning from a teacher from a family with piping tradition (Mitchell's father and sister were also pipers), having lessons in the kitchen, learning about Irish customs, and frequenting the oldest pipers club in the world [Figure 1]. Coming back to Brazil, he committed himself to preserving and passing on that tradition with a keen consideration regarding "authenticity". However, at that time in RJ he had no one to play with, and for years Alex played by himself or in the odd opportunity of a foreign musician's visit to RJ.

Figure 1 - Session at the Cork Pipers Club (2000). From left to right: Johnny Mitchell, Alex Navar, John Murphy, two unidentified pipers and accordionist Pat Moynihan. [Source: Alex Navar's personal archive]

Things really began to change after the appearance of social networks. Through his profile on Orkut, Alex created a community named "Tin whistle *Brasil*", soon to be followed by another collective entitled "Irish Jam Session RJ" created by engineering student and musician Daniel Sinivirta, also from RJ. The conversations enabled by those online communities began to engender real-life connections among people from RJ who were searching for an opportunity to play, exchange and learn Irish-Celtic music. According to most testimonies, they came from a variety of musical taste backgrounds: folk/Celtic metal fans, Irish punk fans, new age and medieval music enthusiasts. Alex's small apartment in the famous Copacabana neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro became a local ITM hub, where he hosted sessions and helped beginners to learn the music. Alex sought to replicate in Brazil the manner he had learned in Ireland, through aural transmission, and even decided to pass on the same tunes (ex.: 'The Blarney Pilgrim', 'Britches Full of Stitches', and 'John Ryan's Polka'). Led by Daniel Sinivirta, a handful of these young enthusiasts then started the group *Café Irlanda* (approximately "Irish Coffee") in 2009, a musical project which also aimed to inflect a distinct Brazilian accent in the Irish repertoire. Still one of main bands in the RJ Irish-Celtic scene, its members also take an active role in promoting ITM in the city: from 2012 onwards, guitarist, bouzouki and tenor banjoist Kevin Shortall (a Dublin-born Irish-Brazilian musician) acts as host for Irish Session Rio (ISR), the main monthly session in the city - one of the three Irish sessions currently happening in RJ.

Since 2012, the ISR has migrated from venue to venue, with Irish pubs being the most common setting, but also taking place in typically-Brazilian bars (called *botecos*) and even pool bars. It constitutes a significant and thriving example of a grassroots pathway that engenders sociability through music-making in a collective environment centered on a non-native musical culture. Since it harbors an expressive contingent of beginner and amateur musicians, for Kevin the ISR must have a slightly different character than sessions in Ireland

(which he has experienced many times, one of which in occasion of Café Irlanda's participation in the Brazil Celtic Festival, Dublin, 2011). As a session in Brazil, it should be more flexible and inclusive, open to different levels of musicians (with different understandings of Irish-Celtic music) and a neutral space not associated with specific local Irish-Celtic bands. Its goal is not the display of high levels of mastery of ITM. As Kevin said in interview: “we’re not in the Cobblestone”, referring to Dublin’s most well-known ITM venue.

> The goal of the session is to create a meeting point for the people who play Irish music, or that want to start playing Irish music. So, the aim is to bring these people and put them all in the same place. And it should be a social event too, that people can come to watch as well. And the session cannot be owned by Café Irlanda. The session is a neutral space. (Kevin Shortall, interview).

However prominent the leadership parts played by more experienced musicians such as Alex and Kevin are, my ethnographic experience at ISR has indeed confirmed it as a welcoming space for Irish-Celtic enthusiasts of all levels. Usually formed in a circle, it frequently starts with a slow session where group leaders or more experienced musicians attend to musical or melodic doubts and teach new tunes – which may be suggested by anyone on the session’s Facebook group. An increasingly growing number of Irish pub songs and tunes constitute the local repertoire (and shows some relation to the local bands’ repertoires), played by an ensemble of instruments that usually includes tin whistles, mandolins, fiddles, banjos, guitars, bouzouki, uilleann pipes, flutes, bódhrans and spoons. Audience size varies, from a handful of friends to a few dozen people. At various occasions, I witnessed people wearing items that related to Irish music and culture, such as bands jerseys (The Dropkick Murphys, The Pogues, and even of local bands such as Café Irlanda and Tailten), shamrock pins, instrument cases loaded with Irish flag stickers, etc. In the more exciting musical moments the audience would frequently engage in singing, dancing and even boisterous behavior (usually the ones drinking beer). Overall, the musicians and the music were respected, and although rare, solo performances of more calm and introspective music (such as a slow air on the uilleann pipes) did occur from time to time.[vi]

Figure 2 - Irish Session Rio (2014-2015): (from left to right, top line) Alex Navar, Kevin Shortall, Rique Meirelles, Davi Paladini and Karl Georges; (bottom line) Christine Doher, Daniel Sinivirta and unidentified guitarist. [Source: Alex Navar’s personal archive]

A final noteworthy aspect of the Irish-Celtic scene in RJ (which can be extrapolated to the Brazilian case as a whole) is its relationship with medieval and Celtic reenactment events.

This fact draws attention to a widespread perception among some participants (musicians and non-musicians) that links Celticity to spirituality, ancestry, magic, and nature, a connection that Kneafsey has shown to be also promoted by official government tourism instances in Ireland and Brittany (Kneafsey, 2002). Musically, it undergoes a process of adaptation of local traditions (mainly of those countries associated with the idea of Celtic nations but mostly from Ireland) into more globalised sonic aesthetics (Celtic music), further confirming Reiss' indication of the simultaneous separation and overlapping of ITM and Celtic music (Reiss, 2003: 146). Beyond St. Patrick's Day, medieval and Celtic reenactment festivals throughout the country constitute one of the main arenas where this imaginary soundscape is performed, negotiated and lived. Tailten, another Irish-Celtic band from Rio, is a fine example of the agency of participants of this music scene in maintaining and promoting the aforementioned association. The band is a reunion of the people involved with the "Oenach na Tailtiu" Celtic reenactment event, which takes place in a rural area in the nearby city of Magé (RJ). Described as a "Celtic-themed party" with intentions to reenact the old costumes of the Lughnasadh fair in Ireland, it draws on ITM as an authentic soundscape for the celebration of Celtic ancestry, mythology and traditions: the group's website highlights the fact that many of its members had the opportunity to play Irish music in distinguished "strongholds of tradition" in Ireland, such as Doolin, Co. Clare.[vii]

On the other side of the coin, despite also participating in reenactment events as hired musicians, some members of the local scene also demonstrate some degree of disagreement with the use of ITM in the context of such events. Alex Navar, for instance, recognizes a type of "authentic" dimension in local reenactment events, which he interprets not only as a "fashion" but as a search for an inner true self, according to his beliefs a spiritist. As a musician with a significant knowledge about ITM, however, he sees a harmful side to these "Celtic carnivals:" playing in such occasions one must frequently let go of ideal musicianship standards and proper consideration and respect to the roots of ITM - falling short of the musical "authenticity" of the tradition. Repertoire must be adapted to "catchy" and widely known tunes, TV series themes (ex.: HBO's Game of Thrones), or famous songs such as "Whisky in the Jar": common references which are connected to the influence of the entertainment industry, and connect with the musical expectation of the audience.

Even though this brief description seems to agree with most scholars' (slightly romantic, one might say) view about the enacting of an ideal community through the performance of ITM (O'Shea 2006-7), differences and tensions do make part of the experience, suggesting how also in Brazil the practice of ITM is as much about engaging with difference (through acceptance or rejection) as it is about the pursuit of sameness (ibid: 17). As briefly presented in the context of RJ, the next section will describe how in the experience of my interviewees from SP, the same tensions (regarding "authenticity" and tradition on one side, and commercial interests and commodification in the other) are intertwined within local musical practices and discourses.

Session at Olivo and step-dancing: Irish-Celtic connections at the São Paulo hub

Fiddler and mandolinist Ricardo Dias (a.k.a. Rik Dias), woke up with a telephone call in the middle of the night in July 2001. His friend Rodrigo, a bluegrass banjoist, had an urgent message: "Turn on the TV, there's a guy from Rio playing Irish music on the bagpipes!". Rik turned on the TV and saw Alex Navar for the first time. Still a beginner with a practice set of pipes and having just recently returned from Ireland, Alex appeared on television thanks to the effort of an honorary Irish councilman in RJ, Brian McComish, surprised that a Brazilian was playing the uilleann pipes. Rik eventually got in touch with Alex through the social network of Orkut, where a few Brazilian communities dedicated to Irish-Celtic music existed, fostering a musical partnership and friendship that still thrives and strengthens contact between RJ and SP.

As in RJ, at the beginning of the twenty-first century Irish-Celtic musicians and enthusiasts in SP – the country's biggest city and financial center – were not aware of each other, with the occasional exception. One of the first people to start creating the networks that would later open the way for the formation of a local scene was Ricardo (a.k.a. Rik) Dias. In his early teens, he was an electric guitar student who favored heavy metal and instrumental rock music. Rik's first contact with ITM was through a record store that specialised in world music, called Waterloo, where he heard first heard The Chieftains. Through the same record shop, Rik developed a taste for bluegrass and the five-string banjo – a musical genre association that marks Rik's musical identity to the present day and that would assert its mark on the first years of the city's Irish-Celtic scene. While impressed by the energy and technical dexterity evident in the group's music, it took two trips to England (1995 and 1998) to become completely hooked by ITM, due to the experience of attending sessions in various London pubs, including the famous one held in The Swan, on Stockwell Road.

Back in Brazil, Rik engaged in the formation of various musical groups, experimenting with ITM and bluegrass on the mandolin, fiddle, banjo and occasionally the tin whistle. In 2005, missing the "craic" of London sessions, Rik decided it was time to start one in SP. According to his testimony, he had the intent of gathering the largest crowd possible, and, as a host, he felt that the session should be open enough to include both bluegrass and ITM, two genres he feels share much in common: tunes, instruments, and not-so-distant historical connections (although acknowledging important differences as well). The session found welcoming quarters at Olivo, a *boteco*: "it really didn't look like a pub, but the owners and audience were really welcoming" (Ricardo Dias, interview). From 2006 to 2013, the regular sessions at Olivo gathered many enthusiasts and musicians, both Brazilians and foreigners [Figure 3]. Gradually building up, the session reached a pinnacle in 2010, rising to an average of twenty musicians per session, bringing together many of the participants of the SP Irish-Celtic music scene. It also worked as a national hub, for it was there that many musicians from other parts of Brazil met for the first time (including Alex Navar and Elcio Oliveira, a member of the Brazilian Celtic rock band, Terra Celta). Rik feels proud of the part he played in the formation of this social network through music-making – and the important friendships and bonds he developed – perhaps his main contribution to the Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene.

The Olivo session was of utmost importance for the creation of Irish-Celtic bands in the local scenario, such as Tunas and Oran. In the present, with the management of members of the group Oran, a monthly session takes place at Deep Bar, a pub in the Barra Funda neighborhood.[viii] In spite of the fact that bluegrass tunes are not heard anymore and that Oran's repertoire constitutes to a degree the cornerstone of the session, it continues to attract old figures and newcomers in a friendly atmosphere, helping the local scene grow by gathering listeners, enthusiasts and professional and amateur musicians alike.

Figure 3 - Session at Olivo, (late-2000s). From left to right: Rik Dias (mandolin), Arrigo "Terra Celta" (accordion) and Elcio Oliveira (fiddle). [Source: Ricardo Dias' personal archive]

Oran has been actively performing since its creation in 2012 with various formations, alternating mostly between members of the local Irish-Celtic music scene. The band represented Brazil in the Lorient Interceltique Festival in 2013, and since 2014 has been closely involved with another significant feature of the local scene: a strong presence of Irish dancers. Although not exclusive to this state, Irish step-dancing has a considerably strong following in SP, and many Brazilian dancers have had the opportunity to study in Ireland. *Cia Celta Brasil* ("Celtic Brazil Company"), a branch of dance studio Banana Broadway based on the nearby city of Campinas, has even achieved national and international recognition – it was hired to perform in Rock in Rio 2013 and was the runner-up at "Mixed figure dance" at the World Irish Dancing Championships 2017 edition in Dublin (the first instance in the history of the competition that a South American delegation won a prize) [Figure 4].[ix]

Group leader and choreographer Fernanda Faez, who holds a Bachelor's degree in Dance from the University of Campinas, is an important agent in the promotion of Irish dance (and culture) in Brazil. Initially a professional American tap-dancer and researcher of traditional Brazilian dances, Fernanda encountered Irish dance in 1998. Following a thirst for knowledge about the Irish immigrants' influence on American tap dancing, as well as the human and cultural aspects of Irish dance after seeing a "Lord of the Dance" DVD, she went to Ireland for the first of many times in 2003. Fernanda studied for a year in Dublin, winning local prizes and earning TCRG certification as Irish dance instructor from Án Coimisiún le Rincí Gaelacha (CLRG). In Brazil, Fernanda has propagated Irish dancing in multiple ways: she has trained a great number of dancers (some of whom have also become certified teachers), organised Riverdance-inspired dance spectacles with local Irish-Celtic groups such as Oran, engineered and co-founded the South American Irish Dance Association (with teachers from other South American countries such as Argentina) and sponsored its first official competition, besides participating in many events related to Irish culture in Brazil (some promoted by the Irish Consulate-General in SP). At the moment, Fernanda initiates the pursuit of an old dream: to find a common ground between the dancing cultures of Ireland and Brazil, and to bring together the two cultures she loves through dance.

Figure 4 - The Brazilian national team and Fernanda Faez (with trophy) on the 2017 World Irish Dance Championships, Dublin. [Source: Fernanda Faez's personal archive]

From Rock in Rio to Comhaltas Brazil (a.k.a. "it's a long way from Clare to Rio"): the institutionalisation of the Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene

In 2013, Rio de Janeiro was to host again the most famous Brazilian musical festival internationally: Rock in Rio. Its seventh edition on Brazilian soil had the peculiarity of selecting the British Isles and Ireland as the theme for Rock Street, the smallest of the festival's stages. Contacted by its musical producer, who was seeking local Irish music groups, Alex Navar decided to assemble friends and musical partners from all over the country and create a special musical project, which he called Sensessional [Figure 5]. With the intent to present ITM as faithfully as possible and in a "session atmosphere", his choices were based on musical affinities with the more "trad-oriented" participants of the Irish-Celtic musical scene in Brazil.[x] Musicians from five states formed the ensemble (including the author), which was scheduled to play tunes and pub songs thrice a day for a frequently bewildered audience who in its majority had never heard ITM before. Activities also included a Riverdance-inspired Irish dance act with live music at Rock Street's main stage, with the participation of Cia Celta Brasil.[xi]

Figure 5 - Sensessional at Rock Street, Rock in Rio (2013). [Source: Sensessional Facebook page]

The Sensessional group represented the first and main attempt to unite musicians who played Irish-Celtic music from all over the country. Whilst Alex's idea was to continue the project after Rock in Rio, financial and logistical obstacles involved in assembling its members brought an end to the group. A few years later in 2016, with the help of other musicians such as Rik, Alex would go a step further: he envisioned a session with the objective of gathering a nationwide scope of participants, to be held in SP at the end of the year. Called *Session Brasil* it was organised mainly through the IMB Facebook group, where the event's description, written by Alex himself, read:

> Who would have thought that the interest for Irish Traditional Music would grow to the stage of having talented musicians in the style spread throughout many cities in the country? Who could imagine that St. Patrick's could harbor the shows of so many bands in the countless pubs in this country and with parties that don't stop getting bigger?! Well! I think it's time we cheer to that! The good music, the friendships and the unique opportunity to gather in this epic meeting, where we'll celebrate the music we all learned to love!

Starting with a slow session for beginners, it also featured step-dancing. The session went until the wee hours of the morning, and testimonies of participants on the event's page in Facebook abounded with the joy of the feeling of (musical) community. Fiddler Elcio Oliveira expressed his feelings in the following manner: "The amalgamation of all that happened yesterday was LOVE…everyone's love for music, for dance, for art, for culture" (testimony at the event's Facebook page). As can be attested, the increasing connections between musicians devoted to Irish-Celtic music from various parts of Brazil was growing steadily into a concrete reality (importantly mediated through communication technology), and nurturing a sentiment of camaraderie and community that was the result of the social activity of group music-making.[xii] The event had a second edition in 2017, with an equally significant degree of success in connecting Brazilian ITM enthusiasts.

As the Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene became increasingly a veritable socio-musical phenomenon, another individual turning point took place which would affect its status, and, according to this author's view, inaugurate a new stage in the development of this scene: Alex Navar's return to Ireland in 2017, a dream long-postponed. After seventeen years studying the uilleann pipes, struggling with the challenges of learning the instrument while progressing from practice set to the half and three-quarter set, Alex had reached a final stage in the instrument's learning curve, and ordered the construction of a full set of pipes.[xiii] This return to Ireland acquired the unique contours of a sacred (musical) pilgrimage: the beginner that had left in 2001 with a practice set now returned to enter the final stage in the

road to become a piper, playing a full set of pipes. Alex was starving for new tunes, lessons, and the kind of atmosphere that only the "wellspring of tradition" could offer. While in Ireland, Alex dedicated himself to attend multiple sessions, shows and ITM festivals such as the Willie Kennedy Piping Festival at Armagh, Co. Armagh and the Ennis Trad Festival at Ennis, Co. Clare. Alex's discourse about the return to Clare continuously reinforced the link between tradition, "authenticity" and music-making in the locality: to be in Clare was, for Alex, to "drink from the source", something to which he identified as an active defensor of ITM in Brazil (Alex Navar, interview). Ethnomusicologist Gearóid ÓhAllmhuráin has elegantly described the entanglement of this local soundscape with global cultural flows, a scenario that echoes Alex's experience and many others':

> The packaging and dissemination of Clare's traditional soundscape by the music industry, media, tourists, and emigrants has created another Clare for musicians across the globe, most of whom have no ethnic connection with the region. For some, Clare is a virtual place, a mediascape they identify with and access on Facebook and a plethora of other digital sites, from YouTube to thesession.org. For others, it is a vicarious or prosthetic place, constantly present and constantly absent, that they claim as their own musical topography. Generating chronotopes and lifeworlds outside of "real" time and place, these virtual, vicarious, and prosthetic intertextualities have created vast heterotopias of musical belonging to Clare. (2016: 235).

Besides its immense importance on an individual level, Alex's return to Ireland had further implications that regard the institutionalisation of ITM in Brazil. While visiting Dublin, Alex arranged a meeting with CCÉ's project manager Bernard O'Sullivan, at the institution's headquarters in Monkstown [Figure 6]. His goal was to create the first branch of CCÉ in Brazil. Alex had already engaged in efforts of the institutionalisation of Irish-Celtic music in Brazil before, creating the annual pan-Celtic piping event "Rionium" and the "Hy-Brazil" piping club, which in 2014 entered Brazil for the first time in the International Uilleann Piping Day celebrations promoted by Na Píobairí Uilleann. Counting on CCÉ's official support and also with the assistance of the Irish Consulate-General in SP, in April 2018, Comhaltas *Brasil* was launched. Its inauguration at the Consulate-General's quarters was marked by the participation of Irish diplomatic officials, whose speeches emphasised the strengthening of the bonds between the two nations (remembering the Brazilian immigrant communities in Górt and Bray), and stressed the significance of the creation of such a prominent institution related to the preservation and promotion of Irish culture. As most rituals entail, CCÉBR's creation was marked by two musical events: a masterclass with Irish uilleann piper and flutist James Mahon (a member from band Kíla) and a "Grand opening session" at Deep Bar. In virtue of James Mahon's affiliation with the Comhaltas branch in Bray, Co. Wicklow (Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Bhré, BRAYCCÉ), he not only helped the newly-appointed board members with administrative tasks, but also engineered the twinning of the two branches. In virtue of his part in the creation of CCÉBR, James was granted the role of honorary president of the newborn branch.

Figure 6 - "It's a new dawn, it's a new day, it's a new life for Irish traditional music in Brazil:" Alex and O'Sullivan shake hands for the creation of the first Comhaltas branch in Brazil (2017). [Source: screencapture of Alex Navar's post on Facebook]

Apart from the honorary president, the board composition of CCÉBR was formed from musicians of the Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene and other important individuals with links to Irish culture in Brazil, according to the judgment of president Alex Navar: Peter O'Neill (Vice-president), Kevin Shortall (Secretary), Daniel Sinivirta (Treasurer), myself (Auditor), Thadeu Farias (Youth officer), Rik Dias (Public relations officer), Jill Henneberry (Public relations officer), Fernanda Faez (Board member) and Luis de la Cerda Fitzpatrick (Board member). As he made public in his invitation to take part in the organisation, Alex aimed at musical partners and friends in which he sensed true interest in and commitment to ITM and culture, recognising representativeness in a local dimension and efforts in "carrying the tradition" (Alex Navar, Comhaltas board member invitation). Some of the initial objectives set up by the board included the promotion of sessions in the home cities of board members, the setting-up of virtual interactive events between BRAYCCÉ and CCÉBR, and the creation of a Céilí Band. The ensuing "grand opening session" at Deep Bar provided a singular moment to celebrate the achievement in a "typical" Irish socio-musical frolic, gathering a couple dozen musicians from various Brazilian states.[xiv]

The May 2018 edition of CCÉ's quarterly journal, Treoir, issues an article by CCÉBR's Hononary president James Mahon, documenting the foundation of CCÉ's newest international branch (*From Bray to Brazil: a dream come true*). After narrating the beginning of his relationship with Alex through the internet and the peculiar development of what seemed like an unforeseeable future trip to Brazil into the concrete achievement of establishing CCÉBR, Mahon acknowledges his surprise and fulfillment with the dedication of Brazilian ITM enthusiasts, and hints at CCÉ's plans for the future of the Brazilian branch:

> Meeting the musicians in Brazil on my first visit showed me that a branch of Comhaltas is exactly what was needed for the community of Irish musicians, singers, dancers and enthusiasts in Brazil. There were about thirty people at the launch of Comhaltas Brasil and afterwards we had the master class followed by a session. I was amazed to see their progress

> over the last two years. They were playing more tunes and having vibrant sessions. The future dream for Comhaltas Brasil is to develop to a point when beginner lessons can be provided for young enthusiasts and that events can be held promoting and facilitating for the playing and learning of traditional music, song and dance. We hope to bring musicians back and forwards between Brazil and Ireland on exchanges to build on the traditional music community there. (Mahon 2018: 53).

The establishment of CCÉBR brings up a series of issues regarding the transplantation of ITM to new contexts through an institution whose history is bound up in a nationalist agenda (Kearney 2007). Kearney, a former member of Comhaltas, has analysed a few of the paradoxes of this institution. Founded out of the desire to preserve and promote ITM in the mid-twentieth century, it played a crucial part in its institutionalisation, and was from its inception strongly influenced by nationalist and republican agendas, promoting a vision of national culture firmly based in rural Ireland (ibid. 2007: 5; Kearney 2013: 75, 91). As Stoebel points out, however, the years after the turn of the millennium saw an addition to the institution's official mission, the objective of globally promoting Irish music, dance and culture (2015: 161-162). Its expansion in a globalized world offers the possibility to examine its role and effects in the complex and different realities of global practices of ITM, and its importance in the promotion of Irish music and culture abroad. It remains to be seen how the Brazilian division will develop its activities in an environment with a diverse range of conceptions about ITM.

Figure 7 - Comhaltas Brasil inauguration at the Irish Consulate-General in São Paulo, (April 2018): (top row, left to right) Jill Henneberry, Luis de la Cerda Fitzpatrick, Fernanda Faez, Thadeu Farias, Peter O'Neill; (middle row, left to right) Rik Dias, Daniel Sinivirta, Kevin Shortall and the author; (bottom row, left to right) Alex Navar and James Mahon. [Source: Comhaltas Brasil Facebook page]

The creation of CCÉBR marked a distinct moment for the Brazilian Irish-Celtic community, and like many Irish branches it represented "a ground-up phenomenon based on local activity and not a structure that is imposed by the organisation" (Kearney, 2013: 79). While still largely getting on its feet, for those directly involved and for other Brazilian ITM enthusiasts, the organisation represents a possibility by which to continue to broaden the scope of the scene, to learn and develop musical and dancing skills through an official and institutionalised mediation, not unlike the feeling reported by Stoebel among North-American Irish traditional musicians when of the establishment of the country's first branches (2015: 166). Though largely a vision and undertaking of Alex Navar, through participant observation and netnographic observation conducted within different segments of the Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene I was able to verify an interest in intensifying these musical connections

between Brazil and Ireland through the construction of an institutionalised official pathway - one in which participants may satiate a desire of learning ITM in a “traditional” and “authentic” way.

Conclusions

Hy-Brasail, I Brhresail, Ó-Brasil are the Gaelic names of a mythical island to the west of Ireland, present in many world maps up to the 19th century. According to Hurtley et al, a possibly apocryphal legend recounts that explorers, when faced with the American continent’s coast, believed to have encountered the legendary island and named it Brazil. (1996: 148-149). If historically one sees no vital ties between Ireland and Brazil besides such tales, the end of the twentieth century saw the forging of new links between the two nations. Notwithstanding the enormous importance of structural factors such as the global cultural economy, progress in communication technology and in bi-lateral political relations, I have tried to demonstrate the grassroots musical dimension and the details of the formation of this music scene that connects Brazil to Ireland. Its effectiveness, maintenance and multiplication are no doubt the product of both the individual and collective agency of local social actors, who dedicate considerable time, finances and efforts to the construction of this virtual Atlantic bridge. As Slobin elegantly described the evolution of folk music itself, “it wells up from internal needs and desires as much as from external pressures and possibilities” (2000: 86). The Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene is scattered in major urban clusters throughout the national territory, and its existence and formation is, to a large extent, tied to the power of the Internet and social networks. However, it moves from the virtual space to the actual daily living of its participants, who engage in the creation of sociability and community awareness through music-making. This music scene simultaneously broadens and fills the demand of a small niche in the national musical market, manifested in St. Patrick’s Day celebrations, in the musical activities of local Irish pubs (attending pub owners who seek an “authentic” soundscape) and Celtic or medieval reenactment events.

Locally and nationally, sessions continue to be the main musical event through which this music scene materialises, at least in the sense that they provide a path that engenders real life sociability, something participants deem proper and "authentic" of ITM and important to its development in Brazil. Similar to what Reiss suggests in a general remark, in the Brazilian case it is also “a ritual of sharing in which the values of the community are enacted” (Reiss, 2003: 148). Compared with descriptions of the environment of rigidity in some sessions in the USA (Williams 2010: 125), Brazilian sessions most definitely differ, cultivating a climate of inclusiveness, something desirable if one is to consider the significant presence of neophytes. Even so, ideas about "authenticity" and musical identity also inform its functioning and musical practices through participants’ agency and discourse, showing how language, concrete actions and aural symbols may define the boundaries of the community (Reiss, 2003: 148). Beyond the sessions, it also materialises in diverse activities: music and dance workshops, gigs, theater shows, CD and DVD production, video clips, podcasts, webpages, individual and collective trips to Ireland (and other countries closely related with Irish-Celtic music), the collecting of memorabilia, attire and a general involvement with Irish (or Celtic) cultural tropes.

My research has also led to the verification, to a degree, of a polarisation between a tradition-oriented ethos and a more open Celtic perspective, influenced by the promotion of Celticism and Irish-Celtic music as commodities in world markets, a status which may be affected by the ongoing process of institutionalisation through CCÉBR. Central figures such as Alex Navar acknowledge a responsibility to the preservation, promotion and rightful representation of ITM informed by aesthetic, cultural and ideological judgments. The promotion of local sessions by many of the most dedicated participants of the scene also attests to this general observance of central tenets of the “tradition”, as it has been practiced since mid-twentieth century. As a way to fulfill a self-imposed duty, Alex turned to an institution that, although entwined with modern Irish nationalism and globalisation, promotes

“authentic Irish Music, straight from the source”, and inaugurated Comhaltas’ first Brazilian branch with the help of representatives of the Irish professional traditional music scene and Irish government officials. Though this may appear to be a local manifestation of the recurrent “tradition versus innovation” debate (which may in some ways be true), when examined closely the case in Brazil reveals an amalgamation of innovative effects of modernity and ideologies of tradition, since even the more traditional participants often incorporate newly composed tunes, experiment with the crossing of musical boundaries, and in most cases began their discovery of Irish-Celtic music under the influence of the globalisation of Celtic music in the end of the twentieth century.

The CCÉBR initiative received a very exciting response from participants within the scene, gathering musicians, dancers and enthusiasts from multiple Brazilian states in the event of its foundation. Concomitantly, amateur and professional musicians who perform Irish-Celtic music in groups or solo in Brazil have to deal with the commodification of Irish culture and music. St. Patrick’s Day, reenactment events and pub audiences provide for most of the professional engagements of local groups, and in these events public expectation usually revolves around items widely associated with the music and entertainment industry representation of Irish-Celtic music. For these “Celtic carnivals,”, one must keep it simple and keep it rowdy. That being so, one may interpret the warm reception of CCÉBR between the Brazilian Irish-Celtic music scene as evidence of a desire to develop a more roots-oriented apprenticeship, to immerse oneself even further in ITM through a validated institutional pathway.

As a final (unresolved) query, a personal anxiety-laden issue: what are the duties of a (native) ethnomusicologist in this context? Alex’s invitation to be a part of CCÉBR triggered in me many doubts as a scholar: does ITM in Brazil need “preserving”? Is the benefit of its promotion of wider interest to the Brazilian society? Will it be possible to maintain an independent ethnomusicological stance or will Comhaltas’ strict guidelines become a source of conflict with (mine or others') participation in the scene? My musical inclination as a performer and scholar of ITM has always leaned more to the "tradition-centered" ethos, and as a researcher and musician with an academic affiliation, participants’ perceptions always seemed to stress those elements as a source of authenticity and even authority. But as an ethnomusicologist I must consider the tropes of tradition and authenticity (and its associated discourses) in a critical light, and be open to the diversity of opinions and the social and historical conditions of this translocal music scene and its formation. While still engaging in the reflection of these issues, I wholeheartedly accept the challenge, and consider it a unique chance to exercise an ethnomusicological mediation within a grassroots initiative of Brazilian musicians and enthusiasts, with the intent of including the discipline’s tradition of critical and ethical reflection about music to the Irish-Celtic music scene in Brazil.

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[ii] <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-21732901>. Last accessed: 15 January 18.
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[vi] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAMyjH_4wzw&list=UUrkuy22YKRi7MB4ue7VUzxA&index=31> Last accessed: 11 April 18.
[vii] <https://www.bandatailten.com.br/>. Last accessed: 24 August 18.
[viii] A session hosted by Oran in a different venue can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRBx8kbgklg>. Last accessed: 11 April 18.
[ix] A documentary on Cia Celta Brasil's participation is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=oGdyu7Jc64M>. Last accessed: 11 April 18.
[x] A performance of Sensessional can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=poX2mMEPeV8>. Last accessed: 11 April 18.
[xi] An excerpt from such presentations can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRMZTBH37m8>. Last accessed: 11 April 18.
[xii] Videos and photos from *Session Brasil* are available at the event's page on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1005906469447148/>. Last accessed: 11 April 18.
[xiii] Uilleann pipes is the name for the bellows-blown bagpipe most used and associated within the realm Irish traditional music. Considered the most complex bagpipe in the world, it is composed by a bag, bellows, chanter, three drones and three regulators, being capable of providing harmony simultaneous with the melody. By and large, the learning process usually involves three distinct phases, defined by a progressive complexity in the instrument's configuration: 1) the practice set, consisting of bag, bellows and chanter; 2) half set, with the addition of the three drones; 3) full set, completed with the addition of the three regulators. It is the craftwork of *luthiers* usually known as pipemakers, and it is a considerably expensive instrument, due to the complexity of its construction and to the cost of its material components.
[xiv] Videos and photos from the official launch of CCEBR are available at its page on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/comhaltasbrasil/. Last accessed: 11 April 18.

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