

Title of case study: Improving the Gaelic cultural economy

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

The primary beneficiaries of Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) research into the Gaelic cultural economy are Gaelic-speaking communities in Scotland. Additional beneficiaries are the Scottish broadcast media and their Gaelic-speaking viewing public. The research has:

- Improved the quality of life of those speaking Gaelic, with a new perception of the relevance and forward-looking focus of Gaelic language, arts and culture, previously seen in public discourse as backward or of declining relevance to modern Scotland
- Led policy makers to explicitly state their support for Gaelic language, arts and culture as a key element underpinning social and economic development
- Contributed to the decision to launch the BBC Gaelic-language channel BBC Alba in 2008

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

The research underpinning these impacts has been carried out since 1998 by two members of GCU's Culture, Consumption and Communication (CCC) Research Group – Douglas Chalmers (GCU employment December 1995-) and Hugh O'Donnell (January 1977-) – and a now retired member of the Department of Economics, Alan Sproull (September 1973-December 2009).

Before this research was carried out, approaches to the relationship between Gaelic language, arts and culture on the one hand and social and economic development and regeneration on the other had tended to see the former as an obstacle to economic progress. However, prescriptions for economic and social development in Gaelic-speaking areas through industrialisation and the development of growth poles or technological clusters did not halt the decline of the population, or the use of the language, in peripheral communities where Gaelic was prevalent. The first longitudinal report by Chalmers and Sproull, published in 1998 – *The Demand for Gaelic Artistic and Cultural Products and Services* (Reference 1 below) – challenged these assumptions and initiated a change in attitude to this question, placing Gaelic language, arts and culture at the centre of economic regeneration and progress. The second report published in 2006 – *The demand for Gaelic Goods and Services in the Western Isles and Skye and Lochalsh—a 10 year Longitudinal Study* – developed the analysis further by focusing on artistic and cultural activity related to the Gaelic language as a motor for economic development within the framework of a more internally driven approach to sub-regional economic development, at the same time establishing the concept of the “Gaelic Economy” as the accepted approach to conceptualising work in this area.

More recent research has examined in depth the successful implementation of this approach by the Highland Council, the main local council in the Gaelic-speaking area, highlighting the need for a recognised mechanism for assessing both the language revitalisation and the economic regeneration impact of potential projects (Reference 2) and showed a novel

connection between the *Gàidhealtachd* – the traditional geographically-based Western Isles Gaelic heartland dealt with in the first report – and a revised conception of the *Gàidhealtachd* based on cities and labour markets outside of the Islands, where Gaelic language and culture were now becoming embedded within the creative sector thereby allowing increasing connectivity across these island and mainland geographies (References 3 and 4). This expanded focus has also revealed how evidence appears to exist that the presence of an (albeit dispersed) Gaelic-speaking community in Glasgow has enabled a particular cultural dynamic in the Gaelic arts and cultural sector there which is not matched in the English-language arts and cultural sector, allowing the analysis in the 1998 report to be further applied to urban areas (Reference 5). On-going research has further extended the framework of analysis to include the impact of recent developments in the Gaelic-language media landscape and has supplied evidence of how the launch of the BBC Alba Gaelic-language television channel in 2008 – one outcome of the processes illustrated in the 1998 report – also contributed to reinforcing diversity through a strengthening of the language itself (Reference 6).

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 1) Chalmers, D. and Sproull, A (1998) *The Demand for Gaelic Artistic and Cultural Products and Services*. Proiseact nan Ealan: Inverness.
- 2) Chalmers, D. and Danson, M. (2006) “Language and Economic Development: Complementary or Antagonistic?” In McLeod, W. (Ed.) *Revitalising Gaelic in Scotland*. Dunedin Academic Press: Edinburgh. ISBN. 903765-59-5.
- 3) Chalmers, D. (2009) “The Promotion of Arts and Culture as a Tool of Economic Regeneration: An opportunity or a Threat to Minority Language Development? The Case of Gaelic in Scotland”. In Pertot, S. (Ed.) *Rights, Promotion and Integration Issues for Minority Languages in Europe*. Palgrave: London. ISBN 978-1-4039-3732-2.
- 4) Chalmers, D. and Danson, M. (2013) “The role of different agencies and investments in Gaelic Arts and Cultural Activities – Labour market impacts for Gaelic speakers”. *International Journal of Research into Island Cultures*. Available on-line at www.sicri-network.org/archives/insic8/
- 5) Chalmers, D. and Danson, M. (2011) “The Economic Impact of Gaelic Arts and Culture within Glasgow” in Lorentzen, A. (Ed.) *The Cultural Political Economy of Small Cities*. Routledge: London. ISBN 978-0-415-58950-5.
- 6) Chalmers, D., Danson, M., Lang, A, and Milligan, L. (2013) “The Contribution of BBC Alba to Gaelic: A Social and Economic Review” in Jones, E. (Ed.) *Social Media and Minority Languages: Convergence and the Creative Industries*. Multilingual Matters ISBN 978-1-84769-904-6.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

In 1998 Gaelic support organisations and Scottish Government policy-makers on Gaelic were only beginning to question previous language policy which saw English as the utilitarian language of business, and Gaelic as the language of church and home. Our research has played a key role in changing this perception and leading to new policy initiatives in this field. This can be seen in clear pronouncements within subsequent policy documents from both the Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) Economic and Development Agency and others stressing the benefit of investment in Gaelic language arts and culture for wider economic and social development. As the Chair of the Gaelic Language Board put it six years ago, when the impact of the research was making itself clearly felt: "Some of the best research in Gaelic is now coming from Glasgow Caledonian" (West Highland Free Press, 16th February 2007).

In 2007 Chalmers was invited to contribute to seminars held by the Gaelic television funding agency MG Alba on the relationship between Gaelic arts and culture and the economy. The argument stressing the link between the two subsequently featured in the debates leading up to the establishment of BBC Alba. The relevance of this research also led to the involvement of Chalmers and O'Donnell in the Framework 6 EU Integrated Project *DYLAN – Language Dynamics and the management of diversity* – which brought in £160k to GCU over 5 years (October 2005 - September 2010). The work of this IP was described as "exemplary" by the European Commission and a resultant summary which included the explicit approach of Chalmers and Sproull in relation to Scotland was disseminated throughout Europe in popular form in six languages to policy makers working at the interface between language and the economy. The project also featured in news reports on BBC Alba (20th November 2009) and on the BBC's Gaelic-language radio station Radio nan Gàidheal, whose reach is 80 percent of Gaelic speakers in Scotland.

The 1998 and 2006 reports have also been quoted in the background documents against which the Glasgow Gaelic Language Plan was constructed in 2008, with Chalmers being invited to be part of the underpinning design team: one result is that in recent years there has been a notable increase in the demand for places at Gaelic-speaking schools in Glasgow and other parts of the geographical area covered by the reports. The approach of identifying the Gaelic Economy and its link to arts and culture was key to a further report, of which Chalmers was also co-author, commissioned by the Gaelic Language Board: the Hecla/Chalmers /Danson/McLeod report on *Measuring the Gaelic Labour Market – Current and Future Potential* (2008).

The publication of this last report led to a seminar on the Gaelic Labour Market and Skills Development hosted by Highland and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and Comunn na Gàidhlig (the Gaelic Language Society) in November 2011, where opening remarks were given by the Government Minister for Learning and Skills, and keynote introductions given by Hecla Consulting (principal author of the report) and by the Scottish Government Employability, Skills and Lifelong Learning Analysis team. The seminar was attended by representatives of the Scottish Government; HIE; Highland Council; Skills Development Scotland; Creative Scotland;

MG Alba; the Social Enterprise Academy and BBC Scotland. A follow up working party was agreed, which is continuing its work to identify skills gaps and subsequent possible action.

The holistic approach championed by the reports and their underpinning research is currently mirrored in documents produced by different policy and government agencies: for example HIE's "Strengthening the Gaelic language" (2009) focuses on young people, broadcasting, cultural tourism and the arts as a priority, working with partners including Comunn na Gàidhlig, the Gaelic Festival Society and the Gaelic Arts Agency. An Lochran's "Gaelic Arts Strategy" (2005) focuses on "core, strategic and project activities to develop a Gaelic arts infrastructure in Glasgow".

At the public launch of Chalmers and Sproull's second research report in 2006 the Chair of HIE said in its praise: "Investing in ... the native language and cultural traditions of the region will ... lead to business creation and ultimately higher GDP. Quite simply we at HIE believe there is a direct link between levels of confidence [in language and culture] and levels of economic activity and economic growth. Our investment in Gaelic language and Gaelic arts and culture not only brings about the direct creation of employment in the Gaelic sector, jobs which are largely based in the Highlands and Islands [but also] increased cultural vibrancy and nurturing creativity make the area more attractive, driving economic growth".

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

The following sources can be contacted to corroborate the impact:

1. CEO, Gaelic Language Board (on how these reports changed attitudes to language arts and culture).
2. Chair, Comunn na Gàidhlig, (on how the work on the Gaelic labour market is now becoming more detailed and practical following these and the subsequent Hecla report).
3. CEO Highlands and Islands Enterprise (on the integration of Gaelic Language Arts and Culture with economic strategy following the reports).
4. Head of Gaelic Development, Glasgow City Council (on how these insights were subsequently applied to Gaelic development in urban areas such as Glasgow and how they were integrated into Glasgow's Gaelic Language Plan).
5. CEO Fèisean nan Gàidheal (on how these reports impacted positively on aid to artistic and cultural organisations)
6. Director, Gaelic Arts Agency (on how these reports impacted positively on aid to the Gaelic artistic cultural sector).
7. Director of the Dylan Project on the Gaelic dimension of the EU Integrated Project