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# Heritage as a weapon against polarisation: how the (Northern) Irish museum sector engages with the consequences of Brexit

As exemplified by the Cavan County Museum

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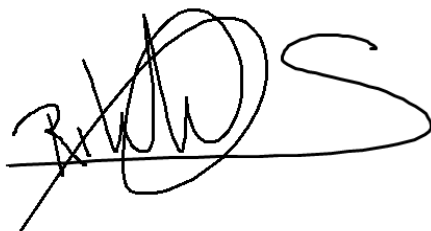
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# **Heritage as a weapon against polarisation: how the (Northern) Irish museum sector engages with the consequences of Brexit, as exemplified by the Cavan County Museum**

## **Abstract**

In this study the engagement of the (Northern) Irish museum sector with Brexit is analysed by centralizing the notion of heritage and taking Cavan County Museum in Ireland as a case study. The research question that will be explored in this thesis is: In what ways does the (Northern) Irish museum sector, as exemplified by The Cavan County Museum, employ heritage to engage with and reflect on the consequences of Brexit for the Irish border region? The answer to the research question will be explored by placing the (Northern) Irish museum sector in a British as well as European context. The study consists of an analysis of previously conducted research and three interviews held with two staff members of The Cavan County Museum as well as one registrar from the Dutch Kröller-Müller museum. From the analysis it has become evident that heritage is a cultural process that can change over time and in the context of different societies and communities. The way heritage is portrayed thus differs per border region community in (Northern) Ireland. Due to the long-lasting conflict regarding the border, polarising views from different communities are still noticeable today. The Cavan County Museum therefore employed heritage through the Connecting People, Places and Heritage project which allowed children and adults from both sides of the border to interact through workshops, booklets, guest speakers, heritage trails and a commemoration programme. The goal of The Cavan County Museum was to bring communities from different sides of the border together, to create a sense of respect and understanding for each community. The Cavan County Museum intends to keep on employing heritage in such a way especially in the wake of Brexit, even though issues regarding funding from the European Union may make it more difficult for the museum to develop projects the same way as they

did before Brexit.

Keywords: The Cavan County Museum, (Northern) Irish border region, heritage, Brexit, polarisation, othering, museum sector, social inclusion, cross-border.

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# 1. Introduction

On 23 June 2016 Brexit became a fact after an outcome of 51.9% Leave against 48.1% Remain on the Brexit referendum. On 31 January 2020 Britain formally left the EU and entered a transition period which will end 31 on December 2020. Various studies (Lim, 2018 & Schlanger, 2017) have attempted to predict possible economic and political consequences of Brexit after the transition period. Lim (2018) takes Brexit as a case study to “examine the impact of exiting a supranational union on the tourism industry” (p. 970). He explores different economic consequences of Brexit on the tourism industry from both a British and European perspective. Schlanger (2017) focuses specifically on archaeology and heritage management and discusses repercussions that mainly stem from a lack of funding or personnel due to Brexit (Schlanger, 2017).

While examples like these show that practical and economic consequences for the cultural sector are a focal point in the Brexit discussion, cultural and societal consequences have not yet been explored as extensively. The lack of research conducted on the cultural and societal impact on the tourism industry and its sub-sectors, like the museum sector, can be considered quite noteworthy since museums are, according to Hein (2005), an important “service to society” (p. 357). Museums serve an educational role with the main purpose of meaning-making, and facilitate an active learning process where citizens are not only informed but also influenced in their behaviour to positively influence society. It is a socio-political activity with the aim of enhancing the present-day society (Hein, 2005). Likewise, O’Neill (2006) Considers museums to act as social agents which can shape a city’s identity and even reach as far as constructing national or international identities.

Moving beyond local and national identities, William Blair (2019), chair of the Irish Museums Association states that museums could have the ability to act as overarching cultural institutions between different countries and cultures, focussing on and respecting both

the commonalities and the differences between them. The building of relationships between different communities through, for example, heritage projects is especially important in the border region of Ireland and Northern Ireland due to the long-lasting turbulent history of the (Northern) Irish border. In the wake of Brexit, the border is a highly discussed topic again, since polarisation of different communities on both sides of the border is still evident in contemporary society. Since other parts of Britain experience less border related issues this thesis will focus on the impact of Brexit on the (Northern) Irish museum sector contextualised by data from Europe and Britain. The Cavan County Museum in the Republic of Ireland will be examined as a case study to reflect on the ways in which (Northern) Irish museums employ heritage to deal polarisation issues regarding border region communities and how these issues are interwoven with the Brexit debate.

In doing so, it is relevant to consider the current European and British political climate and to what extent the (Northern) Irish museum sector should interact with political discussions. One could argue that museums, as educational institutions, should inform and educate the public on a political debate such as Brexit. On the other hand, however, museums could also purposely choose not to involve themselves in such a debate and take a neutral position that centralizes shared memories and pasts and respects cultural differences. As an example, several (Northern) Irish museums have proved it to be beneficial for border region communities to centre their exhibitions around shared heritages between different people. The outcome of such exhibitions will therefore be exemplified by an analysis of The Cavan County Museum (Blair, 2019, p. 3).

The concept of heritage particularly focusses on shared pasts and plays a key factor in the Brexit discussion as well as in the (Northern) Irish museum sector. Heritage can be defined as “the meanings attached in the present to the past” and is considered to be a type of knowledge that serves on cultural, social and political levels (Graham, 2002, p. 1003).



Heritage as a shared knowledge about the past can be projected onto the present to create a sense of belonging to a community or nation. This can lead to the construction of a national identity and pride, an attribute that Pendlebury and Veldpaus (2018) find quite evident in the Brexit debate. In accordance to this statement, Hobolt (2016) indeed found that people with a strong feeling of national identity have more Eurosceptic tendencies and are more likely to have voted Leave during the 2016 Brexit referendum.

Considering the fact that heritage plays such contradictory roles in the Brexit debate as opposed to the (Northern) Irish museum sector, it is revealing that heritage on the one hand is divisive in a debate such as Brexit, due to the creation of national pride. However, on the other hand it can bring people together through shared pasts and communal identities. Heritage can therefore be seen as working in different ways and having societal effects depending on the situation.

Up to now the consequences of Brexit on the museum sector have mostly been researched from an economic or political perspective and centred on Britain instead of (Northern) Ireland. Furthermore, the way (Northern) Irish museums use heritage as a tool to engage with the consequences of Brexit and conflict regarding the polarisation of border region communities has not yet been researched in depth. Therefore, this thesis will explore the contemporary situation of the (Northern) Ireland museum sector as exemplified by The Cavan County Museum.

## 2. Research question and hypothesis

This thesis aims to fill the current information gap in Brexit studies with the goal of expanding the current knowledge about the way the (Northern) Irish museum sector engages

with the consequences of Brexit by the employment of heritage. Therefore, this thesis will concentrate on the following research question:

In what ways does the (Northern) Irish museum sector, as exemplified by The Cavan County Museum, employ heritage to engage with and reflect on the consequences of Brexit for the Irish border region?

The research question will be answered by carrying out in-depth research on the notion of heritage and the functions of museums, since these aspects can shed light on the effects that Brexit may have on the (Northern) Irish museum sector and the Irish border region. The data from the (Northern) Irish museums will be contextualised by data from the British and European museum sector as exemplified by the Dutch Kröller-Müller Museum.

The following sub-questions are proposed to help answer the final research question:

- What is the importance of heritage to Britain and (Northern) Ireland, with regard to Brexit and the museum sector?
- What are some current functions of museums in society?
- What kinds of issues do (Northern) Irish museums face in response to Brexit?

By answering both the sub-questions and the research question it is expected that the (Northern) Irish museum sector will keep on employing heritage in their projects, especially in the border region, since heritage plays an important role in their daily lives. (Northern) Irish museums will utilize heritage as a tool to bring people together and to deal with the contentious nature of the Irish border. Furthermore, the (Northern) Irish museum sector may have to adapt itself once funding from the European Union will be lost as their main source of income. During and after Brexit (Northern) Irish museums are expected to play an even more important role in society, since they serve as safe and neutral places where communities from both sides of the border are free to explore their shared heritage and learn to respect their differences. To motivate such cross-border interaction (Northern) Irish museums portray

themselves as cultural institutions with an educational purpose that encourage openness and respect to all parties involved (Blair, 2019, p. 3). Their overarching and inter-cultural nature is one of the main characteristics with which these museums engage with Brexit and they will use it to create cultural links to the other side of the border. This connection also helps to keep cultural relationships between (Northern) Irish and European countries strong, to counterbalance possible Eurosceptic views that gained popularity during the Brexit discussion (Blair, 2019, p. 3).

In general the (Northern) Irish museum sector will face threats to their success due to Brexit, but opportunities for the sector to show their strength of maintaining cultural partnerships and cross-border relations will be visible too. Eventually museums will have to analyse and possibly redefine their purpose in society after Brexit to be able to keep their current influential status and success.

This Bachelor thesis thus aims to contribute to the field of Brexit studies by outlining the responses of (Northern) Irish museums to the consequences of Brexit on the (Northern) Irish museum sector as well as the Irish border region . Through an extensive analysis of the subject at hand this thesis may anticipate possible issues for (Northern) Irish museums in a post-Brexit future.

### 3. Methodology

This study will be carried out in the form of an extensive analysis of the contemporary (Northern) Irish museum sector, contextualised by data from Britain and Europe. The analysis will consist of data from previously conducted research and data from interviews with Savina Donohoe, curator at The Cavan County Museum; Michael Finnegan, historian, heritage expert and project developer at The Cavan County Museum; and Wobke Hooites, registrar for the Dutch Kröller-Müller Museum. The analysis will provide the reader with a detailed account of the aspects mentioned in the research question and sub-questions. This thesis will adopt a funnel method where three themes are discussed and contextualised by addressing the current situation of the European and British museum sector and a brief overview of the contentious history of (Northern) Ireland. The first theme will discuss some practical issues that museums face as a consequence of Brexit, the second will centre around the importance of heritage in society and the third theme will focus on the functions of museums in contemporary society.

The data from previously conducted research focuses on the analysis of sources regarding the importance of heritage and social inclusion to (Northern) Irish and British society and how this is projected onto the (Northern) Irish and British museum sector as well as the Brexit discussion. Specific museums and their objectives will be examined to determine their current position in society and how they engage with societal and political issues. This data will be utilised to create a context in which The Cavan County Museum can be examined as a case study. Eventually the effects of Brexit will be analysed to establish the impact it has on the (Northern) Irish museum sector and the Irish border region to scrutinise how these cultural institutions employ heritage to engage with possible consequences.

In the brochure *Bridges Over Brexit* from the Irish Museums Association nine case studies of museums are analysed that are impacted by Brexit either directly or indirectly (Blair, 2019, p. 3). From this brochure, the Connecting People, Places and Heritage project,

developed by The Cavan County Museum, was chosen as a case study, since the project focusses on the ways in which heritage can be used as a tool to engage with people from different sides of the Irish border. Savina Donohoe and Michael Finnegan, staff members of The Cavan County Museum were contacted for an interview via tools like LinkedIn and E-mail. To contextualise the current situation of the (Northern) Irish museum sector, Wobke Hooites, staff member of the Kröller-Müller museum, was contacted via LinkedIn and interviewed, with the goal of gaining insight into the way European museums perceive the consequences of Brexit. All interviews were held through video-call websites like Skype and Zoom depending on the preferences of both interviewee and interviewer, since the option of traveling overseas was deemed unsafe due to the outbreak of COVID-19. All interviews were recorded and transcribed with permission from the interviewees, to be able to analyse the questions and answers discussed. All questions and answers from the interviews are numbered in each transcription and will be referenced throughout the analysis when addressing a remark made in the interviews (see appendix 2 for transcribed interviews).

The questions asked in the interviews follow from the research question, the sub-questions and the data collected from previously conducted research to be able to synthesise the results of the two data-collecting methods (see appendix 1 for the interview questions). This research method was chosen to be able to create a complete image of the issue at hand, instead of merely relying on previously conducted research to eventually draw a conclusion. Once the data from the previously conducted research and the interviews were interwoven and facilitated to a complete analysis of the (Northern) Irish museum sector, it became possible to ascertain the ways in which the (Northern) Irish museum sector employs heritage to engage with and reflect on the consequences of Brexit.

## 4. The analysis

### 4.1 Practical issues for museums as a consequence of Brexit contextualised by the Dutch museum sector

Esther Addley (2019) explains in her article in *The Guardian* the doubts that European museums, and in this case specifically Dutch museums, have with loaning some of their artworks (like those of Van Gogh) to Britain and (Northern) Ireland in times of Brexit and in a post-Brexit future. Wobke Hooites, registrar of the Kröller-Müller Museum in Otterlo in The Netherlands, stated in this article that the Dutch museum sector wanted to be sure that all the information about what will happen with the artworks (of Van Gogh) is correct and clear, but that this is not possible given the current situation regarding Brexit (Addley, 2019). Other Dutch museums, which are not explicitly named in the article, expressed their concern about having to pay high taxes to be able to get back their artworks after Brexit.

In the interview with Wobke Hooites it became evident that she shared these feelings of hesitation. However, from the answer to question three it became clear that she felt that this would only be the case for artworks that they loaned during the transition period of Brexit and that would return after the transition period is over (A3). The hesitation of European museums to lend their works to (Northern) Irish and British museums could have a range of negative consequences for the Irish and British museum sector post-Brexit. The strength of the partnerships between the European, (Northern) Irish and British museum sector is therefore seen as crucial by both Hooites (A3, A4) and Donohoe (A6, A10), since it could help in maintaining a museum's influential and educational role in contemporary society. Savina Donohoe also addresses the fact that she feels that museums in the border region of (Northern) Ireland are disadvantaged, since tourists are less likely to visit the border region knowing that the conflict surrounding the border is still noticeable here (A10). Therefore, the support from other museums and funding coming from the European Union is seen as even

more important for the (Northern) Irish museum sector than for Europe or Britain (A10).

Despite many concerns about loaning Van Gogh's works to Tate Britain during the Brexit debate Hooites stated that the Kröller-Müller Museum "wanted to support Tate Britain in their Van Gogh exhibition" and that "[S]ometimes you just have to support [a fellow museum], and that was very important to us" (Addley, 2019). This positive attitude of the Kröller-Müller Museum towards its partner presents the overarching nature of museums and their goal of bringing people together by the attraction of art. Acts of collaboration and partnership like these can help the (Northern) Irish and British museum sector manage some negative economic consequences of Brexit. Journalists like Manual Charr (2019) and Joe Murphy (2018) have addressed these consequences by stating that (Northern) Irish and British museums will have more difficulty maintaining blockbuster exhibitions post-Brexit and that funding for museums as well as experienced staff will be harder to acquire after Brexit.

In the interview Hooites does address that she is not particularly worried about the collaboration with (Northern) Irish and British museums after Brexit. She seems to take quite a neutral position and explains in the interview that she feels that the partnerships with museums after Brexit will likely be the same as with those of other museums that are not part of the European Union like museums in the United States of America or Switzerland (A2). In terms of loaning artworks and (Northern) Irish museums receiving less funding, she feels that Dutch museums are not likely to loan fewer artworks to (Northern) Irish and British museums after Brexit and that it is indeed unfortunate that funding for (Northern) Irish museums will change (A2). When speaking of such issues, there is no noticeable worry in Hooites' tone of voice, contrary to the worries consistently voiced by Savina Donohoe in the interview held with her (A4, A7, A8, A9, A11) .

In accordance to Hooites' statements, Michiel van der Padt, mobility manager for the cultural organisation Dutch Culture, explained on Dutch Culture's website that the

organisation expects that the collaborations and partnerships with the United Kingdom, (Northern) Ireland and the Netherlands will not change after Brexit. The ties and relationships that have formed through the years will be maintained despite any inconveniences regarding mobility when there's effort to work together from both sides of the border. Van der Padt also suggests that the Dutch cultural sector is not that worried about the consequences of Brexit, since they do not see them as insurmountable, but mainly inconvenient (Van der Padt, 2019). This quite neutral attitude shows that the Dutch cultural sector thus engages with and reflects on Brexit from quite a practical and unconcerned perspective. In the interview with Savina Donohoe feelings of worry and concern are however quite evident. Donohoe consistently highlights the fact that funding is crucial for the overall existence of multiple (Northern) Irish museums, exhibitions and projects (A7, A8, A9, A10).

The difference in tone between the two interviewees can be explained through the notion of localism. Jonathan Stainer (2006) explains that the "invention of locally specific formations [...] has come to be seen as inherent characterizations" of a community residing in a certain location (p. 109). This means that local feelings or ideas attached to a certain place can develop into the identification of said place and the community residing there. Eventually, this can lead to a sense of belonging to a certain place, which will be reflected upon more extensively later in this analysis. O Dochartaigh's (2005) assumptions are in line with Stainer's (2006) account of localism: he states that conflicts and worries can be best understood when viewed locally. Following these statements it can be understood that Savina Donohoe voices more worry in the interview than Hooites, since Donohoe looks at the issue from a local level, whereas Hooites takes up a more neutral position as she is less connected to the local population and museums in the Irish border-region.



## 4.2 Heritage and Brexit in the British context

To contextualise the contemporary British, European and Irish museum sectors it is important to address the fact that the British museum sector engages with Brexit quite differently than the Dutch museum sector does. From the interview with Wobke Hooites it became evident that the Dutch museum sector tends to focus on practical issues related to import and export permits, art loans and taxes (A2, A3, A4, A5, A6), whereas the British museum sector tends to focus more on the notion of heritage and social inclusion, since according to Pendlebury & Veldpaus (2018), polarisation of groups in the wake of Brexit is an on-going issue. The concept of heritage does not just play a role in the Brexit debate, but it is also an evident concept in contemporary British society in general. This becomes clear from the many museums that create exhibitions around themes that are associated with British heritage.

In order to analyse the ways in which heritage is a tool that can be used in the (Northern) Irish museum sector, the notion of heritage should first be explained according to Harvey's paper about the meaning and scope of heritage and heritage studies (2001). Harvey (2001) portrays heritage as a concept that develops and changes over time in the context of contemporary society. It can thus be seen as a cultural process. People are able to engage with this process and alter it to their personal preferences. To specify, two polarising groups may commemorate the same event in history, though each group chooses to highlight different parts of that event. As a consequence, the way this event is represented and commemorated through heritage is different for each group. The consciousness of the power and influence of heritage only originated in the late nineteenth century and was fully developed in the second half of the twentieth century. Around this time the modern concept of heritage was created to "legitimate a 'national consciousness' or a communal memory akin to an early 'nation state'" (Harvey, 2001, p. 328). In other words, people became aware of the possibilities of using modern heritage as tool and as a result national identities emerged.

The utilization of heritage to portray certain images is noticeable in the cultural sector, and more specifically the museum sector. Savina Donohoe explained in the interview that heritage has a key role to play in the museum sector, since a sense of identity and where a person is rooted is, according to her, important to many people (A1, A5). To specify this importance, Donohoe addressed the fact that in (Northern) Ireland a community's traditions, music, and dances are crucial and that she hopes later generations will keep seeing the value of (Northern) Irish heritage (A10). Harvey's (2001) statements about heritage are in accordance with those of Donohoe, though he takes it one step further. In his paper *Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents: temporality, meaning and the scope of heritage studies* he states that modern heritage has now even become "an instrument of cultural power" p. 336). Following this statement Harvey (2001) explains that this instrument is utilized extensively, not only in the museum sector, but also in the present political climate of Britain.

Graham (2002) addresses in his study that by employing heritage certain 'imagined communities' are created as a consequence. By using their own imagination people are able to make connections with each other and imagine 'shared' experiences between different people. Such experiences can make people believe they are connected to one another on a cultural, political or economic level, which may lead to the creation of shared identities and eventually imagined communities. Imagined communities thus portray the ability of people to interact with each other beyond direct social structures (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). Graham (2002) explains that heritage "conveys an idea of unbroken narratives that embody what are perceived as timeless values" (Graham, 2002, p. 1008). These values are, according to him, projected onto the current national identity of Britain and may create a sense of belonging to distinct places.

Savina Donohoe agrees with the statements of Graham (2002) as she explains in the interview that among these values are specific dance forms, music, clothing and languages

that are highly treasured in different communities, since they feel connected to these aspects (A10). The importance both Donohoe and Finnegan consistently attribute to the fact that museums should focus on making heritage just as interesting for next generations shows the prominence of the notion of ‘timeless’ values as coined by Graham (2002) (Donohoe: A1, A10, Finnegan: A4). Each of the places where these communities reside may have an own national, regional or local identity and the diversity between the values of these different imagined communities can eventually clash due to societal, political or economic disagreements. The clashing of such values becomes evident not only in the Brexit debate, but in the discussion and conflict regarding the Irish border as well. The conflict between imagined communities can eventually lead to an us-vs-them perspective of the population and multiple scholars perceive this as one of the main reasons for the polarisation between ‘Leave’ and ‘Remain’ voters for Brexit. In accordance with this statement, Pendlebury and Veldpaus (2018) highlight that opposing views between different parties of the same nation can lead to othering of minorities or communities that are perceived as different. Othering as explained by Sune Qvotrup Jensen (2011) is a concept where minority groups are presented as uncivilised and are seen as divergent from a group that is portrayed as highly civilised when compared to one another. Othering of a certain group or community presents itself in both political discussions like the Brexit debate as well as social discussions like the conflict regarding the Irish border, which will be extended upon later in this analysis.

To contextualise the power that heritage and othering can have on communities, Henderson, Jeffery, Wincott and Wyn Jones’ (2017) study is taken as an example as they argue that the othering of Europeans by people with a strong English national identity is connected to a high rate of ‘Leave’ voters and that a strong sense of national identity leads to a higher rate in Eurosceptic views. Henderson et al. (2017) focus on England and its population as a single unit of analysis instead of taking Britain as a whole, since feelings of a

British national identity may not be the same in all parts of the United Kingdom. This bottom-up approach reveals that people prioritising English identity over British identity are more likely to have voted in favour of Brexit. Especially the English population seems to reminisce over their unique past, which shapes their modern conception of heritage to their own preferences (Henderson et al., 2017, Harvey, 2001). At the time of the Brexit referendum in 2016 a large part of the British population thus voted 'Leave' out of nostalgia and a wish to recover their beloved past that "celebrates a de-problematised 'great' British national identity" (Pendlebury and Veldpaus, 2018, p. 448).

Several British political parties and politicians picked up on this longing for an idealised past and used it in their campaigns to create a new sense of nationalism. Henderson et al. (2017) have shown that a strong sense of national identity and accumulated discontents about the European Union are related to support of British right-wing political parties like the Conservative Party and UK Independence Party (UKIP). David Cameron, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Conservative Party politician, used the "appeal to national sentiment in England" as a main focus in his 2015 election campaign (Henderson et al., 2017, p. 2) and Nigel Farage, former leader of UKIP and current leader of the Brexit Party, recognised "a rebirth of identity politics in this country" as early as 2013 (Henderson et al., 2017, p. 2).

It is issues like these that can alter the concept of heritage and turn it from a cultural commodity into a way of expanding political power to create a feeling of antagonism against the 'elite'. Pendlebury and Veldpaus (2018) therefore argue that negative feelings from working-class members of the British society towards more affluent communities were encouraged by political parties like UKIP and the Conservative party who employed heritage to stimulate a so called 'anti-vote' that lead to the high number of 'Leave' votes in working-class areas. Donohoe's statements are in this case not in accordance with Pendlebury and

Veldpaus' (2018) study. She believes that the government does not yet completely realise how powerful a tool heritage can be. Donohoe goes on to explain that she does feel that the government is slowly beginning to see how heritage could be of importance in contemporary society to bring people together (A5, A10). However, as Pendlebury and Veldpaus' (2018) have stated, heritage in the case of Brexit is employed by politicians to generate a sense of political power that may lead to divisiveness instead of a feeling of commonality.

The aforementioned aspects of heritage show that in political debates like Brexit the modern conception of heritage can generate common identity between individuals but at the same time it can be used as a device to create separation between populations. Pendlebury and Veldpaus (2018) state that the way in which heritage is often portrayed in political issues like Brexit shows the prominence of a distorted view of the British past, since inequalities and struggles of the past are, according to them, often not taken into consideration. The British population thus creates an imaginary idealised past to project onto contemporary and future societies and this has implications for how heritage may be defined and utilized in the future (Pendlebury & Veldpaus, 2018). Harvey (2001) relates to the statements of Pendlebury and Veldpaus (2018) and views heritage as a cultural process that can be changed by re-working the current perception of heritage. Following Harvey's (2001) comments on heritage, the contemporary conception of heritage could be contested and represented in a different way that generates more social inclusivity and takes the perspectives of multiple communities regarding (Northern) Irish and British heritage and the past in consideration.

#### 4.3 Societal functions of museums as contextualised by British museums

Museums are the cultural institutions that mainly engage with the modern perception of heritage and try to reflect different parts of the past onto contemporary society. One of the tasks of museums is to serve an educational role in society and to portray the past in a way that is as honest as possible (Hein, 2005). Both Savina Donohoe and Michael Finnegan feel

that museums should attempt to portray issues through exhibitions from different perspectives in a neutral way so that all communities feel connected to it (Donohoe: A2, A3, Finnegan: A3, A4). Donohoe explained that the role of a museum is to tell a story in a respectful manner and that it should always be aware of embracing different ideas of different people (A2). Hein's (2005) statements are in accordance with those of Donohoe and Finnegan as he illustrates in his study on the role of museums in society that museums are above all educational institutions and that "their influence on society, although often not fully recognized, is powerful" (p. 357). He also discusses the debate between the educational and aesthetic functions of museums, a contrast that comes forward in the interviews as well.

There is a noticeable difference between Donohoe and Finnegan who feel that museums should be educational and story-telling in a respectful way (A2, A3) and Hooites who expresses that one of the main roles of a museum is to exhibit works of art and show them to the general public (A1). Hooites feels that it is a benefit if visitors learn something from the displayed art while they are at the museum, but that she does not view it as the sole purpose of a museum (A1). This contrast follows from the difference mentioned earlier in the noticeable neutrality from the Dutch registrar in contrast to the more passionate and worried Irish curator and historian. However, overall there is a consensus amongst the interviewees that museums should be inclusive institutions that welcome every community. This belief of the interviewees follows general scholarship about the societal functions of museums, since academic Alice Wexler (2019) writes in the introduction of the book *Bridging Communities through Socially Engaged Art* that museums should carry "the spirit of a borderless community" (p. 1). Wexler (2019) expresses that art has an educational role in society and that it is crucial to bring art educators of different backgrounds together to develop a collaborative and socially inclusive community. One of the main goals of museums continuously expressed throughout Wexler and Sabbaghi's (2019) book is to "gather a society

of people who work toward greater understanding and respect for learners from all ethnic, racial and socio-cultural backgrounds” (p. 1). The two academics coin the term ‘socially engaged art’, which essentially covers all art that can provide a deeper understanding and realization of social dynamics in different communities (Wexler & Sabbaghi, 2019).

Following the scholarship from Wexler and Sabbaghi (2019), it is understandable that all museum staff members interviewed agree that museums should serve as safe places where people from every community are welcome to explore communities’ commonalities and differences (Hooites: A1, Donohoe: A1, Finnegan: A4) Museums can thus, according to scholarship and the interviews be defined as some of the most fitting cultural institutions to further develop the current concept of heritage with the goal of making it more inclusive and to recognise the struggles of the past instead of idealising them, since that seems to be a recurring issue in the portrayal of heritage according to Pendlebury and Veldpaus (2018). Stimulating social inclusion and representing minorities by according importance to these groups in exhibitions and community development projects are therefore some of the main goals of museums to redefine the way heritage is viewed in society today.

Newman and McLean (2006) particularly focus on the role of social inclusion in the British museum sector in a study that examines how the UK government uses museums as “agents of social inclusion and as a focus for change within society” (p. 49). Before specifying the current (Northern) Irish museum sector and its employment of heritage and social inclusion it is of importance to contextualise the way museums incorporate heritage and social inclusion in their projects and exhibitions more generally. This will be done by briefly explaining the study of Newman and Mclean (2006) who centred their research around these concepts. They examined two museum exhibitions and two museum-based community development projects in terms of social inclusion as part of a project that investigated the role of the UK government in the British museum sector.

The four projects researched were: The Great City Exhibition (Newcastle upon Tyne), the Museum of Transport Exhibition (Glasgow), the Making History Community Development Project (Newcastle upon Tyne) and the Greater Pollok Kist Community Development Project (Glasgow). All four of the projects focussed on engaging with people who feel excluded from museums and galleries or find them “irrelevant or possibly intimidating” (Newman & McLean, 2006, p. 52). These people often have a working-class background or have difficulties to keep up with contemporary society due to physical and or mental disabilities. Each of the exhibitions and community development projects served a clear social role, namely to create social inclusion for these minority groups who feel out of place in museums. This seems to be a recurring theme in the general museum sector as both Donohoe and Finnegan addressed the importance of social inclusion and drawing people who feel excluded from museums to such cultural institutions by the means of heritage projects (Donohoe: A3, A5, A6, Finnegan: A4).

The unified goal of paying more importance to the need of the audience appears to be a recurring theme in the general museum sector as well, since Wexler (2019) has stated that responding to the needs of a community surrounding a museum is crucial in creating a connection with that community. This goal of keeping the needs of the audience in mind was pursued by each exhibition or project in Newman and Mclean’s (2006) project in a different way and seems to be of importance to Michael Finnegan as well. In the interview it became evident that Finnegan agrees with Newman and McLean (2006) and Wexler and Sabbaghi (2019) in that the audience should feel connected to the museum they are visiting (A4). He explained that he asked multiple visitors “if they could see themselves in the museum” (M. Finnegan, personal communication, 22 May 2020) they were visiting and especially younger visitors tended to feel disconnected from the museum and its artefacts (A4). It is therefore one of the main goals of museums to create a connection or bond with the visitors they are



drawing to their exhibitions.

The first exhibition Newman and Mclean (2006) discuss in their study is The Great City Exhibition in Newcastle upon Tyne. It focuses mainly on the West End of the city which had experienced economic losses due to a decline of the industry sector and is characterised by a low museum-using population. This exhibition intends to tell the history of the working-class people of Newcastle upon Tyne to stimulate them to visit museums more often and decrease social exclusion in the process.

The second project, The Museum of Transport Exhibition in Glasgow, displays the history of transportation on both land and sea around Glasgow. This exhibition focuses especially on representing certain communities and to represent Glasgow and its history in transport from their perspective. The Museum of Transport Exhibition can therefore be seen as creating “narratives of time and space” (Newman & McLean, 2006, p. 58) to include especially working-class groups who mostly feel left out when visiting exhibitions. The creation of narratives of time and space is an attribute that is often featured in museum exhibitions according to Michael Finnegan. The idea of many museums that engage with and reflect on the history and heritage of a community is to leave a legacy behind for other generations that tells a story of the past of the communities involved in a respectful way (A1).

The Making History Community Development Project centred in and around Newcastle Upon Tyne. It is a “creative collecting project” (Newman & McLean, 2006, p. 52) that intended to collect items from 200 people all with different lives and backgrounds. Especially people who rarely engage with museums were asked to donate 5 items that are of importance to them. The Making History Project took the time to build personal relationships with each participant to make them feel included and encouraged to donate personal items. Most of the participants involved identified themselves as feeling socially excluded and expressed that they felt more positive about themselves after taking part in the project.

The Greater Pollok Kist Community development Project, developed by the Open Museum in Glasgow, is a social history exhibition housed in a local community centre. The focus of the project mainly lies on representing the history of Pollok, an area with severe social deprivation and poor living conditions. The main goal of the Greater Pollok Kist Community Development project was to create “a representation that provided residents with a positive community identity that they could be proud of” (Newman & McLean, 2006, p. 62).

The examples from Newman and McLean’s (2006) study show that the means by which heritage is portrayed in exhibitions or community development projects may lead to a higher rate of social inclusion in various communities and a more positive image of a community’s past as well as the representation and commemoration of that past.

Michael Finnegan and Savina Donohoe share the idea that Newman and McLean (2006) attempt to portray in their study, as they see commemoration and representation of different communities’ history as crucial for developing respect for commonalities as well as differences in people’s past and beliefs (Donohoe: A1, A2, Finnegan: A1, A7) . Furthermore, social inclusion and heritage are notions that are able to interact with one another. The way heritage is represented in a museum may encourage social inclusion and social inclusion may alter the way a person views the modern concept of heritage by the representation of different communities. The ways in which social inclusion and heritage interact in Newman and McLean’s (2006) study are on the level of local and regional identities. The same goes for The Cavan County Museum and the projects that they develop with the goal of bringing people from different border communities together. The interaction between the notions of social inclusion and heritage evident in Newman and McLean’s (2006) study can therefore to some extent be regarded as working similarly to the heritage projects developed at The Cavan County Museum.

#### 4.5 The Northern Irish conflict

The concepts of social inclusion and heritage appear to be even more important in the (Northern) Irish museum sector than in the British museum sector, due to the contentious history of the (Northern) Irish border region. This conflict is of even greater importance in the wake of Brexit, since the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland may close again. To be able to reflect on the aftereffects of the conflict between The Irish Republic and Northern Ireland in the contemporary border region in the wake of Brexit, a brief overview of The Troubles will be provided.

The quarrelsome relationship many (Northern) Irish have with the border originated mainly between the late 1960s and 1990s, three decades that have been labelled as The Troubles. This violent sectarian conflict mainly occurred between Protestant unionists, and the Catholic nationalists. Niall O Dochartaigh (2005) claims in his book that “conflict is intrinsically concerned with space and with the staking-out of territory” and that at the heart of every conflict lies the desire of a group to secure certain areas (p. 2). The importance of one’s territory and defending that against intrusion of opposing groups also played a key role in the Northern-Irish conflict, since the unionists intended on Northern Ireland remaining a part of the United Kingdom whereas the nationalists desired a united Ireland. The conflict began during a Catholic civil rights campaign with the goal of ending discrimination and segregation of the Catholic population in a mainly Protestant Northern Ireland.

According to O Dochartaigh (2005), sectarian discrimination of local governments predominated the discontent of the situation in Northern Ireland. He goes on to explain that it is precisely at such a local level that conflict between different parties can be understood best. This may therefore also explain Donohoe’s passionate reaction when discussing the troubles and the consequences of the conflict that are still noticeable in the border region as well as the (Northern) Irish museum sector today. The civil rights movement of the Catholic nationalists

was met with police brutality and violence from Protestant unionists in an attempt to suppress the protests. The sectarian violence eventually led to riots in 1969, an outbreak of political violence that is often seen as the start of The Troubles.

During this period the British army was deployed as a neutral force to stop the ongoing conflict between the two groups. Peace walls were built shortly after the deployment of the British troops with the goal of separating Catholics and Protestants. The British troops' reputation changed from neutral to biased especially after Bloody Sunday in 1972 when British soldiers shot 26 civilians of which 14 died. The nationalists felt that the British troops did not do enough to ensure their safety and with the loss of trust in the British army several armed paramilitary organisations arose. Among these were nationalist paramilitary forces like the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), and unionist paramilitaries like Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA). The Nationalist paramilitary forces started a guerrilla war against the British army and carried out a long-lasting series of bombings where many civilians, soldiers, unionists and nationalists lost their lives.

In the thirty year-long conflict multiple ceasefires were attempted and broken and it was only with the establishment of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 that the violence between unionists and nationalists finally came to an end. However, divisive feelings between Irish and Northern Irish communities are still visible in contemporary (Northern) Irish society.

According to Savina Donohoe, who grew up in the border region of the Republic of Ireland, communities living in the border region never went across the border, since that was something that was seen as unnatural or impossible and these feelings have been largely carried on from parents to children (A1). O Dochartaigh (2005) cites John Whyte in his book, who explains that "Areas only a few miles from each other can differ enormously – in religious mix, in economic circumstances, in the level of violence, in political attitude".

Michael Finnegan states that he agrees with these remarks to some extent. However, he feels that, even though communities in such areas claim to be completely different, their past, passion and commemoration of events from the past is to a certain extent the same (A7, A8, A9). Savina Donohoe follows Finnegan's line of thought as she proclaimed that practical things seemed to differ on each side of the border whereas the communities themselves were actually much alike in their way of acting and thinking (A1).

To show the commonalities between different Irish and Northern Irish communities, the (Northern) Irish museum sector tends to focus on the shared heritage of these communities with the goal of bringing people together. This is however harder in the wake of Brexit, since tensions in the border region are on the rise again. The possibility of a closed border seems to worry both Irish and Northern Irish communities according to Savina Donohoe, since The Cavan County museum and The Fermanagh County Museum have worked together so hard to create relationships that might be broken again due to the revival of border conflict as a consequence of Brexit (A4, A9, A10).

#### 4.6 Analysing heritage in the (Northern) Irish museum sector as exemplified by Cavan County Museum

The Irish Museums Association has attempted to discuss issues regarding (Northern) Irish border region conflict in general and as a consequences of Brexit by publishing a brochure called *Bridges over Brexit* (2019). This brochure features 9 case studies of (Northern) Irish museums that directly or indirectly engage with the consequences of Brexit for (Northern) Irish communities and museums (Blair, 2019, p. 3). With the brochure the Irish Museums Association presents museums that pay tribute to the commonalities between people's shared pasts while respecting their differences. They view these aspects as crucial for museums to be able to prevent or decrease polarisation between communities and to protect the valued collaboration between the Irish and Northern Irish museums

(Blair, 2019, p. 3). The importance the Irish Museums Association pays to utilizing art as a tool to bring people together in the wake of Brexit can be justified by Wexler and Sabbaghi (2019) who address that “in times of unrest, contemporary art practices are transformed to meet, address, and possibly solve urgent problems and to challenge social and political conventions” (p. 1).

The museums and their projects mentioned in the brochure engage with contemporary social and political discussions like Brexit and the Irish border conflict in the same way as Wexler and Sabbaghi (2019) stated. Therefore, several of these museums will be shortly explained and analysed to create a context for The Cavan County Museum and its project Connecting People, Places and Heritage with the goal of showing how the (Northern) Irish museum sector is engaging in the fight against the divisive nature of Brexit.

The F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio and the Highlanes Gallery is a cross-border partnership that aims to “provide major cultural and tourism resources for the East Border Region and increasing cross-border cooperation through arts and culture” (Irish Museums Association, 2019, p. 11). Their collaboration was enabled by the European Union and the Ireland/Northern Ireland INTERREG IIIA Programme, which provided capital funding. In part, this essential funding gave the galleries the possibility to share their resources and expertise to support cross-border partnerships and engage with communities on both sides of the border (Irish Museums Association, 2019, p. 11). Recently the galleries started a project called Crossing Lines as a response to the challenges that Brexit poses for the British museum sector. The project engages with the contemporary global environment where polarisation is continuously stimulated. According to the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio, public protest against societal issues as a consequence of political turbulence is one of the main reasons for the increase of polarisation (Irish Museums Association, 2019, p. 11). The Irish Museums Association (2019) states that the Crossing Lines project is a

response from the F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio and the Highlanes Gallery “for whom Brexit threatens the very basis upon which both institutions were founded” (p. 11).

Another programme that engages with Brexit is the Making The Future programme. It is a cross-border cultural programme that takes place over the course of three years and is funded by the European Commission’s PEACE IV Programme. The programme started in 2018 and is expected to end in 2021, which means that the Making The Future programme engages with Brexit at several stages of the debate. The programme views museum collections and archives as “powerful tools to explore the past and empower people to create a vision for future change” (Irish Museums Association, 2019, p. 14). Their goal is to examine the current state of society and use the outcome to boost positive relations between Northern Ireland and its border counties.

The Making The Future programme engages with participants from different communities, religious and cultural backgrounds and ages and motivates them to share their stories, speak their minds and be creative. By gaining new skills the participants positively change themselves and have the possibility to make a beneficial contribution to future society. The programme thus engages with and reflects on Brexit by examining cross-border partnerships that respect and celebrate different cultures and traditions “in an environment free from prejudice, intolerance and hate” thereby actively standing against the polarisation that this political debate may cause according to several scholars (Irish Museums Association, 2019, p. 14).

Both programmes mentioned above engage with Brexit by articulating the importance of cross-border partnership and collaboration to stimulate social inclusion within the (Northern) Irish museum sector as well as the border region. Throughout the border region heritage and social inclusion thus seem to be recurring themes in museums. The Cavan County Museum appears to fit neatly into the context of the museums discussed, as it has

been running a cross-border project with the Northern Irish Fermanagh County Museum called Connecting People, Places and Heritage since 2004. The aim of the project was to bring different communities from both sides of the border together by creating art-related activities in both museums.

According to Savina Donohoe, who grew up in the border region, most people did not know much about the North. The groups they worked with did not know any people or places there, which made the step to travel across the border difficult for them (A1). The goal of the Connecting People project was thus to get people from both sides of the border to talk to each other in a casual way. The Cavan County Museum and The Fermanagh County Museum therefore collaborated on creating heritage trails and workshops that could be explored by children and adults from both sides of the border.

Michael Finnegan, developer of the Connecting People, Places and Heritage project was especially keen on working with children, since they do not yet have any knowledge of the border's conflicted and polarising past (A4). The Cavan County Museum therefore brought groups of children across the border so that they could explore The Fermanagh County Museum, meet children from a different community and get to know their heritage and vice versa. Finnegan addressed in the interview that the children voiced the fact that they had a hard time relating themselves to the museum and its exhibitions and Finnegan therefore choose to incorporate a new aspect in the Connecting People project where children were asked to leave a (personal) object behind when they left the museum (A4). As a result, the children proclaimed to feel more connected to the museum and some even returned as adults (A4). This action of incorporating people who feel excluded or disconnected from museums is in line with Newman and McLean's (2006) study where they analysed The Making History Community Development Project. Newman and McLean's (2006) results are very much like the effect Finnegan described in the interview



as people explained they felt more connected to the museum sector after they left 5 personal objects behind. In this way museums provide a possibility for social inclusion in both the museum sector and the border region community as people feeling excluded have the possibility of creating their own connection to a certain place.

Savina Donohoe addresses the fact that it was through the creation of heritage trails that the communities noticed how much they had in common. She went on to explain that simple things such as the colour of telephone boxes or the shapes or road signs differed, but that apart from that the communities were very alike (A1). However, those communities did appear to believe in different things and therefore the basis of the Connecting People project became respecting the differences between people. During the project, The Cavan County Museum found that especially for adults the goal was to learn to respect each other's different beliefs, since that was something they did not grow up with in the time of The Troubles. According to Donohoe most of the adults had lived through some part of The Troubles and were therefore more uncertain about crossing the border than children (A1). Donohoe addressed in the interview that she herself felt the polarisation between the Catholics in The Republic of Ireland and the Protestants in Northern Ireland growing up and that it felt as if the opposing community was off-limits and not worth communicating with (A1). O Dochartaigh (2005) points out in his book *From Civil Rights to Armalites: Derry and the birth of the Irish Troubles* that even though terms as 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' were continuously used to identify different groups during and after The Troubles, the conflict between those groups was, in his conception, not one of religion but one with an ethnic background. O Dochartaigh (2005) follows this statement by commenting that when compared to other ethnic conflicts The Troubles can, in terms of the importance of origin, personal beliefs, language and background of opposing groups, be seen as an ethnic conflict as well. He elaborates on this by explaining

that ethnic conflicts from the past are “intimately linked to modernisation and the expansion of the modern state” (p. 7). The suggestion that O Dochartaigh (2005) makes recurs in Wexler and Sabbaghi’s (2019) book on socially engaged art. They revealed that the aftereffects of past conflict are often visible in present-day communities. This was the result of an analysis of a case study that narrates the story of hurricane Sandy in 2012 and the aftermath of the hurricane that followed in the surrounding the communities. The statement that effects of past conflict often last for years after the conflict itself has ended explains why feelings of divisiveness and polarisation are still visible in the contemporary Irish border region. It also reveals the reason for the passionate feelings Donohoe expressed in the interview. Feelings that are also still evident in the Irish border region today.

From the interviews it has become clear that feelings of polarisation are still deeply entwined in contemporary (Northern) Irish society. As mentioned earlier, Pendlebury and Veldpaus (2018) point out that opposing views between polarised groups may lead to the othering of minorities. This practice has a long-lasting history in the border region as othering of Catholics by Protestants was common until the late 1990s. In contemporary (Northern) Irish society the notion of othering may seem less evident. However, as was addressed in the interviews, polarising views between different communities are still very much present and an us-vs-them perspective, as the result of othering in the past, is still noticeable amongst different communities today. Savina Donohoe expressed that she noticed the us-vs-them way of thinking in the Irish border region when growing up herself. Coming from a catholic family, Donohoe explained that she had learned that “if someone was a protestant, well they were mad, they were damned, they were surely going to hell” (Savina Donohoe, personal communication, 18 May 2020, A1).

Many people who grew up during The Troubles still tend to relate to such a view. To

weaken such polarising ideas of border region communities The Cavan County Museum created exhibitions, produced booklets, organised workshops and invited guest speakers together with the groups of adults to create a sense of unity between the different communities. The ultimate goal of these practices was to develop an understanding and respect for both sides of the border among the border region communities.

The Connecting People, Places and Heritage Project has been running for years in The Cavan County Museum and out of its essence and success several other projects have been created to further develop the relationships between Irish and Northern Irish communities in the border region. With funding coming from the EU The Cavan County Museum has created an exhibition that exhibits an artificial recreation of the trenches from World War One. Donohoe explained that during the development of the exhibition the museum wanted to stay balanced and respectful and to be aware of other people's beliefs. Their goal when developing the exhibition was to create a space where groups from many different communities could come together (A1, A9). From such examples it thus becomes evident that bringing people together is a recurring theme in the (Northern) Irish museum sector and more specifically in The Cavan County Museum.

Another way in which The Cavan County Museum attempts to reach its goal of bringing border-communities together through art and heritage is by the means of a commemoration project that focusses on exploring the commemoration of historic events on a cross-border basis. Michael Finnegan is one of the developers of the new project and explained that it has initially come out of the Connecting People, Places and Heritage project (A7, A8). The project is a collaboration between The Fermanagh County Museum and The Cavan County Museum just like Connecting People, Places and Heritage. Finnegan explained that one of the focal points of the collaboration between the two museums is to highlight that historic events are commemorated in a different way in each

community on either side of the border. As an example he addressed World War One, which is primarily commemorated in Fermanagh, but only in a few communities in Cavan. The same holds for the Irish War of Independence which is openly commemorated in Cavan county, but more strictly commemorated in county Fermanagh, because there are two different political communities represented (A9).

These issues of commemoration can relate back to Harvey's (2001) notion of heritage being a cultural process. Finnegan's statements regarding the diversity in commemoration of events by different communities is in line with Harvey's (2001) ideas about heritage, in that it can change in the context of certain communities and that heritage can be altered to a community's preferences as they engage with it. It is therefore understandable why border communities see themselves as different from the opposite community, since their portrayal of heritage is adjusted to their specific beliefs

## 5. Conclusion

This thesis used The Cavan County Museum as a case study to reflect on the ways in which (Northern) Irish museums employ heritage in their fight against polarisation as a consequence of Brexit. Heritage seems to play an important role in both the Brexit debate as well as the contemporary (Northern) Irish border region due to the strong connections people feel to the contentious past of the border. As has become evident from this thesis, heritage is a process that can change over time and in different contexts. This explains why heritage can on the one hand bring people together through shared pasts and common identities, and on the other hand it can divide people due to polarising opinions regarding a political debate such as Brexit or polarising views between communities in the Irish border region. In the context of Britain and Europe, and more specifically the Netherlands, issues regarding heritage have proven to be more prevalent in the Northern Irish museum sector than elsewhere. And due to a sense of localism, more worries regarding Brexit exist among (Northern) Irish museum staff-members than in the Dutch museum sector. This can thus be regarded as one of the main reasons why heritage is utilized in many exhibitions in the (Northern) Irish museum sector.

The Cavan County Museum uses heritage to create and develop relationships between communities on different sides of the border, by working with groups of adults and groups of children. From the interviews it became clear that adults found it more difficult to overcome their polarising feelings regarding the border. According to Donohoe the adults experienced more difficulties crossing the border and interacting with other communities than children (A1). This reaction can for the most part be attributed to the fact that these adults lived through parts of The Troubles and still relate to polarising views taught to them in their childhood.

To decrease these polarising beliefs and to bring people together, heritage was utilized in Connecting People, Places and Heritage to show these communities how much they are

actually alike. This was done by creating workshops, booklets, inviting guest speakers and creating heritage trails, which eventually resulted in the groups creating close relationships with each another. One of the main worries voiced by Finnegan and Donohoe was therefore the uncertainty as to what might happen once the border would close again as a consequence of Brexit (Donohoe: A3, A4, Finnegan: A6, A7, A12). Since the border is still a highly sensitive subject to many border region communities, The Cavan County Museum views it as crucial to keep on employing heritage in their projects to bring people together and learn to respect people's differences. The way in which this is done may however change after Brexit, since practical issues like lack of funding, difficulties with loaning artworks and doubts from foreign museum sectors are on the rise due to Brexit. The Cavan County Museum regards funding from the European Union as crucial for maintaining heritage-driven projects like Connecting People, Places and Heritage. It is thus quite paradoxical to realize that the (Northern) Irish museum sector is using heritage as a tool to fight against polarisation, but that this is precisely this notion that works divisive in relation to Brexit. On top of that, multiple scholars (Pendlebury & Veldpaus, 2018, Henderson et al., 2017) have deemed Brexit to be a polarising political debate in itself, which is the exact opposite of what the (Northern) Irish museum sector has been working towards with projects like Connecting People, Places and Heritage.

To elaborate on the ways (Northern) Irish museums engage with Brexit and its consequences, more in-depth research will have to be carried out. Other ways in which the (Northern) Irish museum sector engages with and reflects on Brexit will therefore have to be explored in order to create a complete image of the contemporary (Northern) Irish museum sector and the changes it will face in a post-Brexit future.

This thesis has contributed to the field of Brexit studies by having established a foundation regarding the current situation of the (Northern) Irish museum sector in the wake

of Brexit. From this study it has become clear that the (Northern) Irish Museum sector, as exemplified by The Cavan County Museum, utilizes heritage as a tool to oppose polarising views of border region communities with the goal of bringing people together and respecting one's differences through heritage-driven projects like Connecting People, Places and Heritage and commemoration programmes.

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## 7. Appendices

### Appendix 1: General Interview questions

1. What do you believe to be some functions of museums and community projects/programmes as cultural institutions in contemporary society?
2. Do you think these functions could possibly change once Brexit becomes a fact in the near future? And how? Are some of these functions now more important than ever during and after Brexit?
- 3a. Currently European and British/ (Northern) Irish art and museum associations work closely together. One could say they transcend borders and create some sort of greater understanding in and appreciation for cultural diversity. Taking this current relationship in consideration, what do you feel would be the biggest shift or change in British-European relationships between museum associations in a post-Brexit future?
- 3b Assuming the cultural relationships between (Northern) Irish and European museums will be transformed by Brexit, what do you think would be some impactful consequences for (Northern) Irish museums once these relations have changed?
- 4a. According to several studies a strong sense of localism as well as rootedness and the feeling of belonging to a certain place make up quite a large part of (Northern) Irish heritage. However the term ‘othering’ is considered to be connected with such feelings in some ways. (Some scholars even say that heritage is one of the the main causes for Brexit). Do you feel ‘othering’ of the British and (Northern) Irish populations towards Europeans and border region communities could cause a split between British, (Northern) Irish and European cultural institutions and/or (Northern) Irish border regions and how?
- 4b. given the turbulent nature of the relationship with the Irish border. What do you think some consequences for cross-border partnerships between museums could be after Brexit?

5. Considering the interest of the (Northern) Irish population in their shared heritage and history, do you think it would be advisable for (Northern) Irish museums and associations to engage with this general interest and why?

6a. Do you believe that museums as cultural institutions should engage with contemporary (political) debates such as Brexit, or do you feel that they should take on a more neutral position in society and why?

6b. How does your specific project/exhibition/museum engage with and reflect on Brexit?

7. Taking all previous answers into consideration, what do you feel the future of the (Northern) Irish museum sector will look like (after Brexit)?

## Appendix 2: Transcribed Interviews

- S. R. refers to: Sophie Rikken
- W. H. refers to: Wobke Hooites
- S. D. refers to: Savina Donohoe
- M. F. refers to: Michael Finnegan
- 'Q' is used as an abbreviation for the word question
- 'A' is used as an abbreviation for the word answer

### 2.1 Interview Wobke Hooites

S. R., Q1: Dan begin ik heel even met een beetje een algemene vraag. Je kunt zeggen dat musea worden gezien alsof ze een soort sociale rol hebben naar de maatschappij toe om een soort educatie en algemene kennis te geven. Wat denk jij dat een aantal belangrijke functies zijn van musea in de hedendaagse maatschappij? Waarvoor kunnen ze het beste worden ingezet?

W.H., A1: Nou ja kijk, als je puur kijkt naar ons museum dan is het zo dat het Kröller-Müller museum is een voormalig rijksmuseum. Dat betekent dat zij een rijks collectie beheren. En een van die kerntaken is die collectie laten zien. Dat is vastgelegd in afspraken met het rijk. Dat klinkt bijna heel saai, want het is natuurlijk ook geweldig om in een museum te werken en met een mooie collectie. Je bent natuurlijk ook gewoon blij als je dat kan laten zien. Maar het is ook gewoon echt wel een van die kerntaken. Kerntaken zijn het bewaren van die collectie voor de toekomst, maar ook het tonen van de collectie. En goed ik zit helemaal aan die collectie kant in het museum ik hou me verder niet bezig met educatie of andere werkzaamheden op dat vlak of met promotie van kunst of wat musea moeten bieden aan mensen. Maar ik denk dat dat basis belang wat zo'n museum heeft om die collectie te tonen ja dat zit verankerd in alles. Dus dat is denk ik toch voor mij het belangrijkste.

S. R.: ja precies om eigenlijk die collectie en de historische waarde die eigenlijk vast zit aan zo'n collectie te kunnen laten zien aan het publiek als het ware.

W. H. A1: Ja en dan daarbij worden heel veel mensen blij van kunst en die zien er iets uit of leren er iets uit. Nou ook als je er niks van begrijpt dan neem je er toch wel weer wat van mee. Dus ja dat is wel een belangrijk aspect denk ik.

S. R.: Ja precies. Dus eigenlijk wat ik zo hoor is het eigenlijk een beetje het bewaren en tentoonstellen van die collecties. Maar uiteindelijk zullen door die tentoonstellingen die werken ook een soort invloed hebben op het publiek. Voor elk persoon is dat natuurlijk anders.

W. H.: Ja.

S. R. Q2: Brexit dat is natuurlijk een enorm politiek fenomeen wat momenteel gaande is. Eigenlijk zitten we nu dus in die transitie periode dat het er officieel doorheen is maar dus alle afspraken aan het bekijken zijn. Ja we hebben net eigenlijk een beetje de functies van musea in het algemeen benoemd. Denk je dat die functies zouden kunnen gaan veranderen of dat de rollen van musea zouden kunnen gaan veranderen wanneer zo'n lang bestaande band tussen Britse en Nederlandse musea, misschien wel verbroken wordt door Brexit.

W. H. A2: ik denk het eigenlijk niet. We hebben gaan er eigenlijk vanuit dat het Verenigd Koninkrijk dat daar regels voor gaan gelden die nu ook gaan gelden voor Amerika en Zwitserland. En alles buiten Europa zeg maar. En het is niet zo dat wij minder uit zullen lenen

aan Engelse musea omdat het meer werk kost en meer formaliteiten. Er zullen meer formaliteiten nodig zijn, maar ik verwacht niet dat dat zal opleveren dat wij die tentoonstellingen niet meer zullen uitlenen. Ik denk eigenlijk niet dat er wat zal veranderen op dat gebied.

S. R.: Oké, ja dat is natuurlijk ook alleen maar positief voor de samenwerking tussen die verschillende musea. Zo heb ik ook wat al contact gehad met een Iers museum en die waren toch wel bezorgd wat er nou na die transitie periode zou gebeuren, mocht het zo zijn dat er wat regels of wetten of enzovoort veranderen. Of zij misschien de kans niet meer zullen hebben om bepaalde blockbuster exposities naar hun musea te kunnen halen.

W. H. A2: Ik denk dat dat ook voornamelijk te maken heeft met kosten.

S. R.: ja. Dat is inderdaad ook een groot deel ervan. Want ik ben momenteel een aantal exposities van musea aan het bekijken voor mijn scriptie en daaruit blijkt dat toch een erg groot deel nog steeds de fondsen krijgt van de EU en dat verandert natuurlijk ook nu Groot Brittannië ervoor hebben gekozen daar geen deel meer van uit te maken. Dus ik denk het inderdaad een groot deel met de kosten en het geld te maken zal hebben.

W. H. A2: ja niet alleen maar met fondsen, maar ook met het feit dat je toch extra formaliteiten hebt, douane formaliteiten er komen tijd en formulieren bij er komen dingen bij die geld kosten, dus administratie. En het gaat meer tijd kosten om douane afhandelingen te doen bij het binnen komen van het land of het uitgaan van het land. En tijd is geld dus dat zal ook extra kosten met zich meebrengen. Naast de bijdrage aan tentoonstellingen is het ook gewoon de directe kosten van transporten die zullen verhoogd worden.



S. R.: Ja inderdaad. Dat is natuurlijk ook heel begrijpelijk dat dat dan allemaal gebeurd.

W. H.: Ja dat is gewoon jammer.

S. R.: Ja dat vind ik dus ook.

S. R. Q3: Momenteel werken die Britse en Europese dus eigenlijk erg close samen er is bijna geen grens te herkennen tussen waar de ene tentoonstelling dan begint en de andere weer eindigt, omdat alles heel vaak uitgewisseld wordt. En dat zag ik ook een klein beetje naar voren komen in het artikel met jou en *The Guardian*. Waar een aantal musea toch vrij bezorgd waren over het uitlenen van hun werken aan Groot-Brittannië tijdens de Brexit tijd. Toen gaf jij eigenlijk heel mooi aan dat je dat museum in dit soort tijden juist wilde steunen en er daarom toch voor koos om die tentoonstelling van Van Gogh toen der tijd uit te lenen. Denk je dat die relaties tussen musea zo twijfelachtig zullen blijven of dat na de chaos van Brexit alles weer een beetje terug naar normaal gaat?

W. H. A3: Nou dat denk ik eigenlijk. Want het grote probleem zat hem, en dan vooral in die Van Gogh tentoonstelling toen, in dat die tentoonstelling twee dagen voor dat Brexit in zou gaan toen zou openen. Van Gogh is natuurlijk een belangrijk onderdeel van onze collectie en het zijn ook niet de minste werken. En dat zou betekenen dat je een collectie in een land hebt dan op eens niet meer Europa is en waarvan de export en import regels veranderen terwijl die objecten daar zijn. En daar was geen enkele duidelijkheid op dat moment over hoe daarmee omgegaan zou worden. Want er was bekend dat de douane in Engeland rond die periode een nieuw computer systeem zou invoeren, dat was toevallig. Maar ja dat geeft vaak chaos. De

werken werden uitgevoerd zonder exportvergunning maar moesten wel weer ingevoerd worden met een importvergunning. Maar normaal voor als je naar Amerika gaat dan vraag je een tijdelijke exportvergunning aan en dat kan maar voor een bepaalde tijd en daarna wordt het een definitieve exportvergunning als je het niet op tijd terug haalt. Maar ja als je helemaal niks hebt, je hebt geen papiertje om aan te tonen van hé dit is van ons, we hebben het geëxporteerd voor die tentoonstelling. Natuurlijk hebben we wel een bruikleencontract maar zolang die garantie er niet was van de overheden dat dat geen extra kosten of geen extra tijd geeft. Want ja het is zo dat wij die Van Goghs ook graag zelf ophangen of we lenen ze uit. Het zijn geen werken die lang ergens in een kist staan te wachten tot ze weer verder mogen reizen. Dus dat zijn allemaal risico's. Plus dat hoe langer je zoiets niet op een veilige plek in je museum hebt hangen of in een ander museum hebt hangen, ja dat is gewoon een risico. Je wilt die risico's zo beperkt mogelijk houden en het was echt in die periode dat die onduidelijkheid nog heel groot was. We zitten nu natuurlijk nog steeds in een periode waarin niks veranderd is ten opzichte van hiervoor, maar die periode eindigt op een gegeven moment. En als het stof dan weer wat gedaald is dan wennen we er wel aan. Dan is het gewoon wat extra werk, wat extra gedoe, dan kost het wat extra tijd, maar dan is het niet anders dan dat ze naar Amerika gaan of Zwitserland.

S. R.: Nee precies. Dus het zit nou eigenlijk een beetje zo in die onduidelijke tussen periode, waar alles heel even anders loopt. En als we, ik noem maar wat, twee jaar verder zijn en we allemaal weer een beetje terug naar het nieuwe normaal zijn gegaan.

W. H. A3: Kijk bij musea zit het probleem echt in de werken die zonder vergunning erheen zijn gegaan en met een vergunning terug moeten komen. En op het moment dat alles is veranderd dan is het alleen nog maar een probleem voor die werken. Voor alle werken die er

daarna heen gaan daar is dat allemaal niet meer mee aan de hand. Behalve dat dat misschien door wat grotere drukte de eerste paar maanden met een ander systeem ook niet helemaal goed loopt. Maar het gaat dus echt om die overgangswerken en de rest ja daarvan denk ik wel dat het goed komt.

S. R. Q4: In ieder geval hartstikke fijne. Dan gaan we door naar een iets andere vraag. Deze is echt iets meer op Brexit gespecificeerd. Het is namelijk zo dat je eigenlijk momenteel in Groot-Brittannië twee fronten hebt namelijk Remain en Leave nog steeds. En vooral onder die Leave voters maar ook de Britse en soms Ierse bevolking in het algemeen. Ik weet niet of u bekend bent met de term ‘heritage’? Dat is eigenlijk een soort voorliefde voor de gedeelde historie die je hebt. En daaruit kan dan weer een soort vaderlands liefde ontstaan. Maar met dat soort gevoelens ontstaan er bij de Leave voters eigenlijk voor ook een term die ‘othering’ heet. Othering is een term die wordt gebruikt in de literatuur om aan te geven dat een bepaalde groep met bijvoorbeeld een sterke voorliefde voor het eigen land een andere groep dus ziet als minderwaardig of savage terwijl zij zichzelf als hoogwaardig zien. En dat is eigenlijk een beetje wat momenteel aan het gebeuren is bij die leave voters ten opzichte van de Europese Unie en daarmee ook vaak Europa in het algemeen. Denkt u dat dat soort ons tegen hen gevoelens invloed zouden kunnen hebben op de manieren waarop die musea samenwerken. Of denkt u dat die musea zichzelf daar eigenlijk zoveel mogelijk buiten proberen te houden en puur op het professionele gebied proberen te kijken naar die internationale samenwerking?

W. H. A4: Als ik tot nu toe kijk wie ik gesproken heb en naar musea die bij ons bruikleen aanvragen doen, waarmee je contact hebt. Ik heb de indruk dat waar die internationale samenwerking vrij groot is dat daar die angst voor het andere of het afstand nemen van de

ander die niet is zoals jij of die een andere cultuur heeft, dat dat daar niet zo aanwezig is. Ik weet het eigenlijk niet, ik denk dat het wel mee zal vallen. In de culturele sector zou het me verbazen als dit ook heel erg een ding is. Maar het kan natuurlijk wel zo zijn dat onder invloed van wat mensen willen zien, bezoekers van musea, dat zij hun programmering al dan niet op aan sluiten. Dat gaat wel ver maar het zou me niks verbazen, want het is natuurlijk wel zo dat het gros, ook in Nederland, van de bezoekers aan musea toch in de leeftijdscategorie zit die in Engeland veelal voor Leave hebben gestemd. Dus ja ik vind het wat ver gaan hoor, ik weet niet hoe die psychologie in elkaar zit. Maar ik zou me kunnen voorstellen dat musea onbewust misschien wel toch andere keuzes maken in hun programmering. En daarmee wellicht bepaalde tentoonstellingen niet meer zullen maken of bepaalde objecten niet zullen tonen. Maar ja dan komt er wel wat anders voor in de plaats.

S. R. : Ja, daar heeft u inderdaad gelijk in. Dat verwacht ik zelf ook een beetje, wat u zojuist heeft gezegd. Nou is het natuurlijk zo dat de culturele sector, waaronder musea, en culturele projecten uit verschillende communities ingezet worden als het ware. Die zijn toch al gauw overbruggend en die zijn vaak enthousiaster over culturele diversiteit dan bepaalde andere, sectoren. Dus ik hoop inderdaad dat dat ook het geval is. Maar wat ik een beetje merk is dat meerdere Britse en Ierse musea zichzelf toch proberen te focussen op dingen die echt Brits of Iers zijn en met Britse of Ierse historie te maken hebben. En het zou nu in die transitie periode van Brexit dus ook niet verbazen als musea ervoor kiezen om momenteel daarop te focussen. Hoogstwaarschijnlijk om dat dat dus gewoon goed loopt.

W. H. A4: Plus dat ik denk dat je dit eigenlijk dit effect niet meer zal kunnen meten straks, want door die corona crisis nu heeft opeens heel museum land/wereld of de wereldwijde museum community opeens geen geld meer. Musea hebben nu al weken en weken geen

inkomsten. Musea hebben vaak veel inkomsten van toeristen in ieder geval in de grote steden zoals, London, Amsterdam, wij ook in Otterlo bij het Kröller-Müller. Wij krijgen zo'n veertig tot vijftig procent van de bezoekers zijn toeristen uit het buitenland. Dus ik kan me ook voorstellen dat nu door die corona crisis je meer gaat kijken naar je eigen collectie. Je gaat meer tentoonstellingen maken die minder geld kosten. Dus dan zal er eerder bruikleen afvallen uit het buitenland. Daarmee helpt het niet meer dat er onzekerheid is over de afspraken rondom Brexit. Hoewel ik denk dat iedereen wel redelijk denkt dat als het voorbij is dat het dan allemaal wel weer gaat lopen. Maar ik denk dat men zich daardoor ook wel inhoudt met bruikleen aanvragen. En dat die grote blockbusters op dit moment on hold gaan en dan kan je de staat niet meer afmeten aan Brexit. Nu dat corona daar een heel groot onderdeel in speelt en dat echt de komende twee drie jaar corona dat zal doen in de tentoonstellingsprogrammering.

S. R.: Ja dat denk ik inderdaad ook.

W. H. A4: Ja dat is eigenlijk wel jammer, want je zou wel willen zien wat het effect is van Brexit. Het zou best kunnen zijn dat het hele corona gebeuren juist nu die reactie versterkt van het tonen van de eigen Britse geschiedenis met eigen collectie of vanuit musea binnen het land, omdat dat simpelweg makkelijker en goedkoper is.

S. R.: Precies. Ja het is heel interessant dat dat daardoor beïnvloed wordt en als je hier later weer een case study over zou willen doen dat je eigenlijk nooit die cijfers duidelijk zal gaan krijgen wat nu waardoor gekomen is. Dus dat is eigenlijk wel interessante samenvatting.

W. H. A4: het is natuurlijk wel een beetje eng, omdat het die reactie dus versterkt en nou ja ik

vind het een beetje beangstigend dat hele nationalistische gebeuren.

S. R.: Ja, ik merk dat die gevoelens in Groot-Brittannië en (Noord) Ierland nu dus ook steeds sterker aanwezig zijn.

W. H. A4: het schoot me nu te binnen het is even een zijstraatje. Maar wij kwamen op de dag dat de uitslag van Brexit bekend werd, dus 2 of 3 jaar geleden, op de eerste dag van onze vakantie aan in Engeland. We arriveerden op de Isle of White en die mevrouw van het huisje dat we gehuurd hadden die ontving ons en die zei echt: Het spijt me zo! Sorry Sorry. Die was helemaal in de war en had echt zoiets van ja hier op het eiland wonen haast alleen maar zestig plussers en iedereen heeft voor vertrekken gestemd, maar jullie zijn toeristen en ik ben gek op jullie en jullie moeten gewoon blijven. Dat sentiment blijft zo.

S. R.: het is heel apart want je hebt echt die polarisatie tussen twee groepen.

W. H. A4: Ja en het wordt steeds meer, want hoe langer het duurt hoe groter het wordt. Het is akelig hoor.

S. R. Q5: Ja het is heel akelig, maar gelukkig heb je dan bepaalde projecten of exposities of museums. Vooral uit Ierland die ik heb gecontacteerd, want daar zijn natuurlijk die moeilijkheden rondom de grens zijn nog polariserender dan wat je bijvoorbeeld tussen Engeland en Wales hebt. En die zijn momenteel heel erg bezig met het opzetten projecten die dus cross-border samenwerking heel erg stimuleren. En dat zijn allemaal projecten waarin heel veel verschillende communities eigenlijk samenkomen om via kunst dus die grens te overbruggen en dat vind ik wel heel mooi om te zien. Dat de culturele sector eigenlijk een

soort tegengas biedt. En op die manier zijn er dus natuurlijk ook heel veel musea die toch, al is het niet direct, zich wel bezig houden met Brexit en daar wilde ook nog een vraag over stellen. Hoe denkt u erover dat musea zichzelf zo bezig houden met zo'n politiek fenomeen? Denkt u dat het juist een sociale rol van musea is om zichzelf bezig te houden met zo'n hedendaags politiek fenomeen of ook andere discussies als je het algemener bekijkt. Of is het meer aan een musea om zichzelf neutraler op te stellen richting de bevolking?

W. H. A5: Ik vind dat wel lastig. Ik heb daar natuurlijk wel een mening over, maar die mening is natuurlijk helemaal niet gerelateerd binnen het museum. Ik houd me helemaal niet bezig met dit soort onderwerpen. Ik denk dat het verschilt per museum. Ik denk zeker dat er een rol weggelegd is voor culturele instellingen om hier een rol in te spelen, maar het zal beter passen bij de een dan bij de ander. Het is niet voor iedereen mogelijk, niet elke collectie, niet elk doel van een museum zal daar gemaakt voor zijn. Om maar eens een mooie aan te halen, de zwarte pieten discussie in Nederland. Ik weet wel dat het rijksmuseum bijvoorbeeld, die toch een hele grote speler zijn in kunst historische ontwikkeling van de Nederlander. Ik kan me nog wel herinneren dat zij op een gegeven moment zoiets hadden van we gaan daar geen hard standpunt in nemen en dat geldt voor veel musea. Die zullen niet zozeer een heel direct standpunt innemen. Ze hebben toen wel een keer een tentoonstelling gemaakt, waarin ze de ontwikkeling van zwarte piet door de eeuwen heen hebben laten zien. Dus toch op een neutrale wijze te proberen mensen iets te vertellen over de geschiedenis van het onderwerp. Maar er zijn natuurlijk ook weer andere instellingen zoals de wat meer experimentele of de wat meer modernere collecties of kunsthallen of projecten. Die zullen daar veel makkelijker een rol in kunnen spelen. Die zijn er ook veel meer voor gemaakt om die discussie aan te gaan. Die hebben dan ook de mogelijkheid daar een podium voor te bieden, dus het verschilt heel erg. Ik zie het de grote musea in Nederland nog niet zo snel doen. Ik weet het niet het

verschilt.

S. R.: het is inderdaad wel begrijpelijk, want zo'n enorm grote instelling zoals het rijksmuseum, dat ook erg veel invloed heeft op nationaal en internationaal gebied, heeft eigenlijk toch de functie om zichzelf redelijk neutraal op te stellen richting het publiek. Dan kan je wel bepaalde educatie geven over een sociaal fenomeen wat momenteel speelt, maar dan hoeft je niet direct de ene of andere te kiezen. En ik denk dat dat wel een mooie manier is voor musea om zichzelf toch bezig te houden met hedendaagse aspecten.

W. H. A5: Wat je ook niet moet vergeten, een tentoonstelling maken kost veel tijd. Zeker die grote tentoonstellingen die grote musea maken zoals het rijksmuseum en het Kröller-Müller. Meestal starten ze twee jaar van te voren met het maken van zo'n tentoonstelling. En ja kan natuurlijk kleinere presentaties maken die kan je in een paar maanden opzetten. Dus het is ook heel lastig om in te kunnen spelen op het moment, omdat je gewoon trajecten hebt van tentoonstellingsplanningen van een jaar of twee jaar van te voren. En bij het Rijksmuseum was er bijvoorbeeld twee of drie jaar geleden een tentoonstelling over Zuid-Afrika, over de geschiedenis tussen Nederland en Zuid-Afrika. En toen was er best veel protest. Er waren een aantal groeperingen die vonden dat het Rijksmuseum niet genoeg tot uitdrukking bracht wat dat wat er gebeurd was in de geschiedenis was dat dat fout was. Terwijl het Rijksmuseum zoiets had van wij willen de hele geschiedenis laten zien en het was heus niet zo dat ze zeiden het is goed wat er gebeurd is. Ik werkte er toen en toen heb ik voor die tentoonstelling ook al die bruiklenen gedaan en al die contacten gehad. Ik merkte toen zelf dat ik weinig wist van die geschiedenis maar door die tentoonstelling leerde ik heel veel over die geschiedenis en dat zette mij ook aan het denken. Zo'n neutrale rol was voor mij genoeg. Tegen mij hoefde je niet te vertellen dat er wat mis was met wat er gebeurd was, dat was voor mij duidelijk. Het hoeft



er dus niet altijd te zijn, het kost soms heeft veel tijd om zoiets te maken.

S. R.: En dan is het inderdaad ook lastiger om in te haken op bijvoorbeeld een debat wat nu heel populair is, maar misschien over nog geen half jaar alweer opgelost is. En dan is weer iets anders hip. Dus dan is het inderdaad erg lastig voor een groot museum om daar direct op in te kunnen spelen.

W. H. A5: Je moet soms ook een beetje geluk hebben, zoals museum Boerhave nu die een tentoonstelling hebben over virussen. Het is voor die grote instellingen is het gewoon lastig.

S. R.: Ja dan zijn dat soort dingen misschien eerder weggelegd voor programma's of community projecten die zichzelf echt specifiek bezig houden met één ding dat binnen een korte periode door heel veel mensen kan worden opgezet en dan tentoongesteld. Daar ben ik het helemaal mee eens.

S. R. Q6: We hebben eigenlijk het grootste deel al wel besproken van de punten die ik graag wilde aanstippen. Dan wil ik het eigenlijk een beetje afsluiten met een iets algemenere vraag. We hebben nu dus besproken hoe musea engageren met en reflecteren op dat politiek debat wat momenteel gaande is en de keuze die is gemaakt. En wat voor invloeden dat heeft op musea. Als u gaat kijken naar de vrij nabije toekomst, hoe zal die toekomst musea en internationale samenwerking van musea er dan in komende paar jaar?

W. H. A6: om toch weer die corona aan te halen. Het is nu totaal onvoorspelbaar geworden. Waar we het met alleen Brexit al lastig genoeg hebben om het allemaal duidelijk te krijgen. Alhoewel ik denk dat het voor de musea wel redelijk duidelijk is en voor de overgangsperiode

is het al vrij goed geregeld. In principe weten we gewoon nu dat we het met het goed documenteren van gegevens geen problemen zullen hoeven verwachten op het gebied van export en import van objecten. Het staat nu allemaal wel op zijn kop door het hele corona gebeuren. Dus ik weet zeker dat de komende paar jaren het veld er heel anders uit zal zien dan de afgelopen paar jaar, maar dat zal meer denk ik komen door corona dan door Brexit.

S. R.: dat is natuurlijk helemaal begrijpelijk. Het is een samenvall van twee hele aparte gebeurtenissen die je in de verste verte niet had kunnen zien aankomen.

W. H. A6: Ja daarom schreef ik je dus ook van ja ik ben eigenlijk helemaal niet meer bezig met Brexit. Het is echt helemaal verdwenen.

S. R.: Bij krantenkoppen is het nu alleen nog maar corona dit corona dat en tot een paar maanden geleden was dat eigenlijk nog steeds Brexit is er net doorheen, we zitten in die transitieperiode en hoe gaat het daar nu mee. En eigenlijk zorgt het feit dat die twee met elkaar samenvallen voor een hele aparte periode. Al helemaal voor culturele instellingen denk ik. Want er wordt natuurlijk wel vanuit de regering heel veel nagedacht over de praktische dingen en oplossingen, zzp'ers enzovoort. Maar toch heb ik dan het idee dat voor culturele instellingen dat dat net misschien ietsje lager op de ladder van belangen staat. Dat vind ik zelf heel jammer.

W. H. A6: Het is heel ingewikkeld. Want bij een groot bedrijf is redelijk makkelijk te meten wat de gevolgen zijn. Maar Nederland is natuurlijk een land met de grootste musea dichtheid ter wereld geloof ik. Daar zitten kleintjes en hele grote bij. Waar Kröller-Müller museum een vrij grote is en wij natuurlijk ook overheidssubsidie hebben en altijd wel veel bezoekers

hebben gehad en op zich wel in een goede situatie zitten, zijn er ook zat musea op dit moment voor wie de wereld op zijn kop staan. Ze zijn gewoon beperkt door regelgeving. En in de afgelopen jaren in Nederlands zijn die steeds meer afhankelijk geworden van eigen gegenereerde inkomsten en die zijn nu totaal weggevallen. Maar ja we zullen het zien. Het ligt er ook aan hoelang dit nog door emmert. Het zijn natuurlijk niet de laatste acht weken. Voorlopig zijn we nog niet op het juiste niveau.

S. R.: Nee dat merk ik een beetje aan mensen in mijn omgeving. Dat tegen het einde van de schoolvakantie bijvoorbeeld alles wel weer terug naar normaal is. Maar ik denk dat wij de komende twee of drie jaar echt nog niet terug zijn naar waar we hiervoor waren.

W. H. A6: Nee, ik ben daar ook bang voor.

S. R.: En hoe ik erg dat ook vind dan zullen op bepaalde manieren toch aanpassingen moeten gaan maken. Ook voor museums om dingen weer op te kunnen gaan gooien. Maar dat is echt een kwestie van afwachten.

W. H.: Ja we zullen het gaan meemaken.

S. R.: Nou, in ieder geval, hartstikke bedankt dat je dit interview met mij wilde doen. Ik ga deze antwoorden gewoon analyseren en in het perspectief plaatsen van wat ik nu allemaal aan het schrijven ben. Wanneer ik al die antwoorden heb uitgewerkt zal ik ze naar je terugsturen om te laten zien wat eruit is gekomen. Mocht je het interessant vinden dan zou ik ook een deel van mijn scriptie op kunnen sturen wanneer hij helemaal af is om te laten zien wat daar nu eigenlijk uit is gekomen. Dat zal hoogstwaarschijnlijk pas in Juli zijn want al die deadlines

zijn nu natuurlijk ook veranderd. Dus ik ga het helemaal uitwerken en hartstikke bedankt voor je tijd.

W. H.: Graag gedaan en heel veel succes. En we houden contact.

## 2.2 Interview Savina Donohoe

S. R. Q1: What do you feel is the main goal or are the powers of the Connecting people places and heritage project?

S. D. A1: I myself am from the border region, so I was born and raised here. And I suppose as a young person growing up as a child, we were never brought as children across the border. So for us to go across the border from where I lived would have been about 10 miles, maybe 15 kilometres. And yet we were often brought to Dublin which is way further. But we just didn't go across the border. Why I don't know, well there was trouble, I know there was trouble at that time. But we did never really talk about Northern Ireland. And my story is like that of a lot of people. For some reason and I always wondered about that, it was so near and yet so far. This project is going since 2004. Which is very good really. We worked very closely with Fermanagh, which was at the time a great idea. It was a good idea but we didn't think that it would last. But it did last. so my personal background is that I didn't know the North, I didn't know any people there and that was both ways. So that kind of gave us the idea to bring people together. Let's get people talking in a very casual way. Because when we started our workshops we started to work with children and adults. And the first time we started the project in 2004 we got funding from the department of education here in Ireland. We got a lot of funding and we worked a lot with children and we developed heritage trails in Cavan and Fermanagh. So we brought children from Cavan to Fermanagh and to explore their

heritage trails. And we brought people from Fermanagh to Cavan to explore ours. So we shared. And what we noticed was how much we had in common. Some things were different like the colour of the telephone boxes and the road signs and you know kilometres and miles. We noticed that we're actually very alike. We're not that much different. We might believe in different things. So the basis of our project then became, respecting difference. You respect my difference and I respect yours. It doesn't matter if we believe in different things that really doesn't matter. Just respect. Of course when you say the word border you kind of think trouble. It usually associates with that. And then we worked with adult groups. We find the children really good. Adult groups were more reserved. They didn't speak out as much, because they had experiences. They had inbuilt, just like I had. Why didn't we ever go down across the border. And my father at that time we had a car, we got the gas, but we didn't do it. We had this inherent something in us that we just didn't do it. We didn't really talk about it. And then of course I am a catholic myself and I thought if someone was a protestant well they were mad, they were damned, they were surely going to hell. So we have done tremendous work in exploring different ways of thinking. Our adult groups were really good, but then we didn't get funding to work with adult groups anymore. The first time we got funding was to work with school groups and we noticed from the children that it was their parents who were a bit nervous of them crossing the border. So the next time we applied for funding we really wanted to work with adults, because we had noticed this. We got the funding and we worked with adults and that was amazing work. And we did exhibitions, we produced booklets, we did all kinds of things, well they did, the adults did. We had workshops and we had people speaking. We then realised we used to give a lot of time to the speakers, but then we realised that we should give more time to the tea breaks. Because people were more relaxed and mixing more and chatting more and that's when the most work is done. I could talk forever about it, but we have done a lot of work on it. We've brought people together and then we

developed outdoor exhibitions here on the world war one trenches. While the World War One trenches would be seen as British, 1916 was Irish. The battle of the Somme. We have all these exhibitions side by side on the one side. And they're very balanced and very respectful and very aware of other people's believes and we think that's what makes them successful. Because now so many groups have come in to visit us.

S. R.: Of course, it's very beautiful that you this growing among different communities from different sides of the border. And I think that's also maybe the strength that heritage has is to bring people together.

S. D. A1: Absolutely. I would think, and that's something personal I'll share with you, it's a safe environment. You come here and you have baggage and you have been affected by The Troubles, and the environment of a museum or heritage lends itself to sharing, I think so.

S. R. Q2: That actually what my next question is about, so you see the general functions of museums and such cultural community projects as yours as a safe place where everyone can come together and celebrate cultural diversity? Or do you maybe also think that museums should take a stand in social or political debates that are going in on?

S. D. A2: I think the first for me. I've worked in this area for over 20 years and no I think museums are places of culture and learning and embracing difference and embracing different forms of art and music, drama, history and then to weave it all together. I don't think it's our role to take a stand and say this or that. We just tell it as it is in a respectful manner. That's what I believe. My colleague Michael Finnigan (who I will put you in touch with too) he's committed to this and he's ran the project and we have a book which I'll share with you as

well. In that book we have recordings of people we recorded, adults. Great stuff, great simple stuff, in terms of their sharing. So I believe that any sense of culture has a great ability to bring people together. In a very non-contentious way.

S. R. Q3: I completely agree with that, because I feel that museums should take on a kind of neutral position, so that all kinds of communities can in some way relate to the exhibitions and projects that they set up. So you say that it should not only be for one community or for one side of the border, It should be connected?

S. D. A3: No, Jesus no, absolutely it should not. Well that's me. And I'm always so aware of embracing different ideas no matter what they are. Because I think that is really important. So in terms of the border and where we live, interestingly I would say 33% of our visitors come from Northern Ireland and that is all because of this project.

S. R.: That's very beautiful, to see that it has evolved like this.

S. D. A3: Yeah. You understand me completely. Since the good Friday agreement we have come a long way and that's why Brexit was such a worry to us and still is. Because we don't want to start trouble again

S. R. Q4: I completely understand that! Do you feel that the relationships that you've built right now with different communities across the border could be in some sense endangered or threatened by Brexit? Could they change?

S. D. A4: I think over the last 20 years, especially since 2004, I have worked tremendously

with the museums in Northern Ireland. They have been so good in loaning for exhibitions, artifacts, memorabilia, and their knowledge. The many museums in the South have excellent relationships with museums in the North so we were worried. And that was one thing we were worried about, the sharing of artifacts. Getting them over and back across the border, that was a big issue for us. And lots of things like that worried us. Things we've worked so hard for. Because we had built up relationships with what you talked about, Fermanagh, who we started. And they would have a different way of working than we have. At first we were colleagues working together, now we're very much friends. And we've worked on other projects and we're working on one at the minute and yea we've become friends and that's just a long stand in a working relationship. So we were very nervous and last year the museum heritage council gave us the funding to run a conference call. So I will send you some information about that. So that conference was specifically to deal with that. That's what we did because we were so worried and we had it in Dundork. Which is one of the border museums.

S. R.: So I think that is a great way for museums their importance to such communities and show that they are massively effected by Brexit and important to keep them.

S. D. A4: We were very worried and we still would be. Because we've come a long way and we were worried about the trouble again and starting to have checkpoints again. That straightaway causes trouble.

S. R. Q5: Yes I agree with that. So there are some scholars that state that Brexit is also very much a heritage issue. So that there are people with a very strong national identity who kind of feel a feeling of belonging and rootedness to their own country and therefore decided to



vote Leave. How do you feel about these kind of contradictory functions of heritage? Because on the one hand it can be very divisive as we have seen, but on the other hand heritage can really bring people together.

S. D. A5: I believe heritage really has a key role to play. I don't know if the government realises how important the role we have is. They are beginning to see, how important it is. This sense of belonging that you talked about is very important to us all. I understand how people are very passionate about that. Our sense of identity, we deal a lot with that in the project, and our sense of place and where we're rooted that is very important in people's lives. We see that maybe through this COVID-19 thing too. People come back to more to the people they care about, so this sense of belonging is very important. I understand why that is important and I think in the work we do we can be very sensitive towards that. We can understand each other. I might believe in Brexit or staying or whatever but I think we have to respect each other's religion. We have to respect each other's beliefs and take that on. I think that in the museum sector that could be programmes and workshops or different things done to take that on board.

S. R. Q6: so considering the importance that people pay to heritage you think it is quite advisable and you would motivate other museums to also think about heritage to have it play a role in their exhibitions and programmes?

S. D. A6: I think that our sense of history, our sense of where we're from, a sense of our past is important to people. And I think in the context of a museum setting that can be explored in a reflective way and yet a non-threatening or a non-political way. I think that's where we could come in.

S. R.: I think the same, because, as you've stated earlier, museums should be a safe place and with issues like this it should be appealing to everybody to kind of find their way and their place in a museum.

S. D. A6: You must know I'm not a historian, so I'm curator here and some people may think I'm kind of a bluff, but I'm not. I'm just very passionate about it.

S. R.: I understand that! I just find it very interesting to get a kind of different perspective on this whole situation. For example a few days ago I had an interview with a Dutch registrar for a Dutch museum and how they are affected by Brexit. And how they see European-Irish and European-British relationships change through Brexit. I'm trying to get different perspectives to create a reflection this situation and how different communities and museums engage with Brexit.

S. D. A6: I think it's very important that whatever you believe in, that we don't reflect only that, but that we reflect the whole story.

When we opened the battle of the Somme exhibitions we got the first minister of Northern Ireland, Arleen Foster, to come here and talk. And it was a beautiful evening, but it was a beautiful warm evening. People are good really, it's to nurture that. And that's what museums and heritage do. I love arts, music and all of these mediums and everyone working together is amazing to explore contentious issues.

S. R.: I think that's also the strength of cultural institutions because they have the power and the freedom to explore these different mediums and give them to the people so they can

reflect their own story and their own personal feelings onto that. That's what I feel is the strength of art, museums and heritage.

S. D. A6: I personally, totally agree with you.

S. R.: Thank you so much.

S. D. A6: You know, well, our collection is extremely important and our exhibitions, but it has to be more. You have to hold more, you have to deliver more. By doing more we're engaging with all different peoples. Young, old, from different communities, and we're very aware of different communities living here at the minute. And running events to welcome them into our space is very important to us.

S. R. Q7: One other question that I had, is I saw on the website of your museum, that part of Connecting People, Places and Heritage project was funded EU? Am I correct about this?

S. D. A7: Yes, sorry I should have said that. That was a big worry we had about Brexit. We get a lot of EU funding because we are a border community. And that was a big concern that that might stop. We're told it's not going to. But we've just build a fabulous new room at the back of our museum here. That was funded through our peace programme. And that was because we got so many groups coming, I needed somewhere to accommodate them. SEUPB and the EU without them we couldn't run these projects. They're a 100% funded.

S. R. Q8: So how do you feel such projects like yours and also others in Ireland and Northern Ireland would be affected by Brexit once this funding is gone?

S. D. A8: It's just terrible! That's a massive worry. Because we couldn't do the work we're doing and we couldn't bring people together and we couldn't deliver what we're delivering without that funding. And that funding has made a difference. It has opened people's minds, it has brought people together. There is still a lot of work to be done and I know that. But you can look forward or you can look back and there is loads to be done, but there's an awful lot that has been done. And it couldn't have been done without that funding. That funding had been crucial. Absolutely crucial.

S. R.: considering the fact that this will probably all change especially after the transition period...

S. D. A8: Yes it could do. When we started in 2004 the museums were running it themselves, but now the museum's owned by Cavan County Council. And now they have their own peace programme and we are part of that programme now. And we still held onto Connecting People, Places and Heritage. We work with Fermanagh but we're not funded together anymore. We used to be funded. But we still work closely together. But we're not securing funding jointly as much. In answer to your question that EU funding is crucial.

S. R. Q9: Just hypothetically speaking, if this funding would not be possible anymore after this transition period, what do you think that projects such as yours would look like in the future? Would they still have the same impact on people, would they still have the same possibilities to become just as big as they are now, or would everything be different?

S. D. A9: The funding we got we kind of created a legacy. Like the trenches are a legacy. The

trenches were mostly funded by Cavan County Council and they opened in 2014 to celebrate World War One. And then we got other funding to do 1916. So a lot of the funding we have in this museum we have made physical exhibitions from the funding. Which is good. We would hopefully if all funding was to end from EU. We would still try to maintain the projects. Well we wouldn't be able to do as much, but because we have them in place we would try. Because the trenches for us were the gamechanger. Going outdoors with exhibitions was the gamechanger for us and they're all PEACE related exhibitions.

S. R.: So generally speaking Brexit would not only have very practical consequences in terms of funding, but it would also influence people and their relationships and collaboration with each other. The way I see it Brexit has consequences from basically every perspective. An economic perspective, a social perspective, a political one.

S. D. A9: I know it's very important the economy and all that, but I'm not talking from that end of things. I'm more from the heritage end. I don't know how it would go Sophie it is just a big worry I would have. And I think I like a lot of other museums from both sides we all have the same worry. And we all want to work together and we all want to continue working in partnerships together. But it might not be as easy with Brexit.

S. R. Q10: So, like you said, you feel that these different museums and museum associations from both sides of the border are really keen on working together after Brexit. So do you feel that these relationships would really change after Brexit?

S. D. A10: I don't know if they would change, because I think when you build up a relationship with people you know especially working partnerships, now the lack of funding

might cause a change. But I hope that would stay. I suppose unfortunately money dictates a lot. But it's not everything. You know a good heart is everything. You have to be practical too. But there are just different ways of doing things

S. R.: It's also the effort people would want to put in to continue these partnerships, collaborations.

S. D. A10: And unfortunately without funding it is harder.

S. R.: It really is a shame because I feel like maybe the government or parliament isn't really paying attention to or seeing how much work these communities museums are really doing.

S. D. A10: That's a problem we have. How important we are that people at the top don't always see that. That's not always their fault they just have a different way of thinking. But we have a tremendous opportunity of helping them to see things like 'oh well museums they could do this or they could do that and maybe we have a better way of doing that and we're not exploring that. Like in Ireland our heritage, our traditions, our music, our dances it's crucial and yet very underfunded. So you have to hope maybe people are changing. That the younger people coming forward are seeing the value.

S. R.: yeah and I really think that projects like yours and other projects that have also been named in the brochure 'Bridges over Brexit' (which mentions projects that directly or indirectly engage with Brexit) are mostly cross-border projects that focus on the younger generation to bring people together. And I think that's something that museums should definitely keep on doing because that is probably what would save this sector of the inevitable

changes of Brexit

S. D. A10: We have fantastic work done with children. We have the garden, we have body benches, we have weather veins and we have all kinds of things colourful that the children have done. They're leaving something in the museum, we always ask them to leave something. I agree there is so much we can do.

S. R.: I think it's very interesting to see the difference between how passionately you speak about your heritage and your culture, your dances, your music. Because personally in the Netherlands we don't pay that much attention to different aspects of culture. Of course we find our artists like Van Gogh and Rembrandt very important, but the passionate feeling towards your own culture I think is way less noticeable in the Netherlands than it is in Ireland and Britain.

S. D. A10: We are very strong. Well I am. And Cavan County Museum is, and I am from Cavan. And I simply love Cavan. And I would do anything for Cavan. When you're a border county your disadvantaged, because for years visitors coming to Ireland would go down south, they wouldn't come up because they were afraid. So that's why we are disadvantaged. And that's why we got the funding.

S. R. Q11: Taking everything we've talked about and your answers in consideration, what do you feel would be a general image of the future of border region museums after Brexit? What do you feel would definitely change or stay the same?

S. D. A11: I think our visitor numbers would be very much affected. Because as I told you 33 percent of our visitors are from across the border. Financially it would also be big for us. So

that would be one thing. Our tremendous work we've built up over the years would people engage with that? I don't know. Would we be able to borrow from other museums in Northern Ireland and share collections? Pair exhibitions, traveling exhibitions. It is very worrying because we've come so far. So there is a lot of worries. It is going to be difficult for people to travel down here and they're just not going to come. We would still get on and all that, but we have to be practical.

S. R.: yea and such practical issues will completely change the way museums work once the transition period for Brexit is over.

S. D. A11: Yes, and I don't think money is the important thing. But it's not all, like money is not important, but it's a handy thing to go shopping with you know. I would have a lot of worries and concerns. And I suppose, to be honest Sophie, with all of this happening since march with COVID-19. I suppose my mind is elsewhere and not on Brexit as much.

S. R.: That is exactly the thing that Dutch registrar from a well-known Dutch museum also told me. Everything is focussed COVID-19 right now and Brexit has kind of faded into the background.

S. D. A11: Yes I'm just being honest. I've been as honest as I can and I hope it's been of some help to you.

### 2.3 Interview Michael Finnegan

S. R. Q1: What do you think is the main function or power of a project such as Connecting People, Places and Heritage?



M. F A1: definitely to explore and engage with difficult aspects of history and heritage. And also share certain aspects of that heritage between different communities. To leave a legacy behind was kind of the whole idea of the project. That something will be left behind for the future. We didn't just want to use the funding and then to run something for a few years and after that there would be nothing left of it. So the whole idea was to have a legacy. And essentially what was done was a series of resources were created out of the project. And in terms of the peace garden, the museum itself, the education programme in The Cavan County Museum is essentially a legacy of that project. And then some of the workshops and so on that were created. We published those as well.

S. R. Q2: And this legacy that you're talking about, is that meant for later generation in border region, where your museum is located?

M. F. A2: It is in terms of Ireland going through what is termed a decade of centenaries. Because it is the hundredth anniversary this whole series and its really formed a dent in Irish history. There are also very divisive events. Of course one of the main things coming towards us is partition itself and the establishment of the border. And it seems to me, because I was the person sort of designing this and how it would work, that one of the goals that we should have is to work towards that establishment of the border. Because it's the defining moment particularly in this area. So the idea was to look at ways of exploring history that would make it possible to come along and look at the commemoration of the establishment of the border. And it was to share commemorations and that sort of thing. And to acknowledge difference. That was the sort of overall goal of the project.

S. R. Q3: And do you think that this sharing and celebrating of differences and cultural

diversity as well as heritage kind of having the power to bring people together in a sense is something that is a general role or function of a museum in society? So should museums in general focus on this?

M. F. A3: well to me, because my interest is in education, in terms of what the museum was doing it seemed to me that it is an ideal space to look at something contentious. And when you come to a border region where there has been lots of conflict and lots contentious history and the thing about the museum was that it was an opportunity to use that space. To bring people together in a safe space to share explorations of that history. It's not that people were going to agree on the reasons for it or what should be commemorated or how it should be commemorated. You just begin to start to look at that sort of thing. The museum was an ideal space to do that.

S. R. Q4: So you kind of see museums as these safe places where people can come together and share their personal experiences and thoughts?

M. F. A4: Cavan County Museum certainly does that sort of thing. It is one of the things that's guided everything that has happened in the museum. Is this notion of shared space. For instance one aspect of the children's programme that I ran was to ask children if they could see themselves in the museum. And many of them said they couldn't. There was nothing of their life in the museum. So the idea was to try and create space in the museum where they could leave something behind. So every time a group of children took part in the project the idea was that in a few months they would create some piece of work that was left in the museum as an artefact that said they'd been there. But it also put their experience in the museum. It made the museum part of their life.

S. R.: that's a very beautiful way to incorporate this new generation and to start their love for museums in the future. So they can identify themselves with museums.

M. F. A4: Yea the idea was that they could see themselves. So that they didn't just come into the museum and see old stuff you know. But they actually saw themselves and some of the exhibits they created are still here. The general goal of the project is that they become artefacts in the museum it wasn't simply something we told them. Some of the things they created are still there now 10 years afterwards. And they are still to this day part of anyone who visits the museum. The artefacts they left behind, the things they created about their relationships are still told today.

S. R.: that a great way to make young people enthusiastic about the cultural sector and about museums. And I think by having the opportunity to leave something of yourself behind you kind of maybe even become one with that museum. There's always this sort of connection between that person and the museum.

M. F. A4: for instance we created a peace garden outside. There was a project outside and the project completely took over the garden and created a very large peace garden. It left behind physical structures in the garden that were actually genuinely built by children. And that's almost 10 to 12 years ago now. I've had some of those children come back as adults, as teachers for instance and they pointed out to the school children what they did in those sculptures. It really did create a connection.

S. R. Q5: talking about connection, I feel like heritage really is something that can connect

people by looking at the commonalities between people, looking at their shared past. And do you think this sense of heritage is very important in the cultural sector in Ireland?

M. F. A5: well certainly in the border region history and heritage is profoundly important, because so much of our identity is tied up in the past. You know tied up in interpretations of the past and commemorating the past. I'm sure you've heard of the 12<sup>th</sup> of July and there are all sorts of marches and parades that go on, which are all based around interpreting history, interpreting heritage. Sort of repackaging it to say something about today. Museums are really important in that, because they deal with history and heritage. And they certainly have a role to play to me in the border region.

S. R. Q6: Yes I agree with that. So heritage is like you already stated very important, because people can project their feelings of the past and what they've learned from the past onto the present and maybe even onto the future. Do you think, talking about Brexit, that Brexit can influence the way people view their heritage? So could one's heritage or one's past mean something different to them after Brexit?

M. F. A6: You know Brexit to me has the power to sort of give new emphasis to nationalistic feelings particularly in the ideas of British identity and so on. You know Brexit has played so much on that. And it sort of reanimated it an awful lot and it has the potential to do that in the future and certainly create a lot of issues around identity that are going to have to be explored in the border region. Because of the notion of how much Brexit is going to define Northern Ireland as a separate space and a space apart we are forced onto that notion of the border, so it is going to impact this heritage and how it is interpreted.

S. R. Q7: So you think that heritage is a going to play quite a large role in redefining this relationship between these border communities again after Brexit?

M. F. A7: I think it certainly has its fair role to play. For instance, a lot of the debate around Brexit particularly in the border region has been very divisive, but heritage has the potential to explore what's coming even when people don't share a history. There are aspects of that history that are shared and aspects of all our heritages that are shared. And for instance I have been developing a commemoration programme in The Cavan County Museum and that explores a role of commemoration and particularly the notion that different events get commemorated. In Ireland history is seen as sort of separate paths and two different communities have two different histories, but the one thing they all share, and this is emphasised in the programme in the museum, is that with all conflict there is loss. And that loss is a shared experience in all heritage, which explores conflict. The loss is shared no matter what side you're on. So that has been central to the programme that is now running in the museum. That programme has essentially come out of Connecting People.

S. R. Q8: That's so great! Yea so because Savina Donohoe already told me that this programme started around 2004?

M. F. A8: Yea connecting people started in 2004 , and then I took over the running of it in 2006 until 2013. It stopped then for 2 years and then it started again

S. R.: It's very beautiful that that programme has kind of been a stepping stone for other programmes to grow out of it and to keep evolving these different relationships between communities from different sides of the border.

M. F. A8: well in terms of museums themselves I just had a meeting yesterday with the staff in Fermanagh county museum, because originally Connecting People was a partnership between the two museums. And I used to work in both offices and both museums and then over time it focussed in Cavan because that's the way that funding went, but out of that programme we just started a new project and with a partnership with Fermanagh museum which explores heritage and explores commemoration on a cross border basis. It looks at what gets commemorated in County Cavan and what gets commemorated in County Fermanagh. We are sort of exploring that with community groups in both Cavan and Fermanagh, but that has come out of Connecting People Places and Heritage.

S. R. Q9: So talking about commemoration, what kind of differences do you see between the commemoration in Cavan and Fermanagh, is it an opposite or is there a general kind of thing that is commemorated in both museums, but just in a different way?

M. F. A9: it is probably that things get commemorated in a different way. But also different things and different events. Things like the first world war for instance is primarily commemorated in Fermanagh, but yea it is commemorated only within certain communities in Cavan County, because I know that particular communities would see itself linked to the first world war. And the same is true for The War of Independence, it is openly commemorated in County Cavan, but much more strictly commemorated in county Fermanagh. Because there are two different political communities represented

S. R. Q10: that is very understandable. So this project that's running right now is there any indication for how long this will run? Because of course it is in the middle of the transition

period of Brexit. So would it be impacted by for example funding?

M. F. A10: in terms of funding it may well be impacted. It is only a pilot at the moment, and the idea was to make a project of commemoration as a means of exploring the border and the establishment of the border. And I have no doubt that it will be funded, but a lot of the things that we have done in the last few years were not completely dependent on PEACE funding, from Europe. And quite a bit of funding has gone to the Irish government and the department of foreign affairs. And then Fermanagh County Museum has been able to access lottery funding and it is because of that that we didn't spend much peace funding. So I think probably the COVID – 19 crisis is going to have more of an impact on what we're trying to do than Brexit.

S. R.: Yea I have already heard that before, because I did two other interviews before this one and both also said that the COVID-19 crisis is probably going to influence the cultural sector quite a bit more than Brexit will directly.

M. F. A10: It will create all sorts of problems in terms of interacting with groups, bringing groups together, the central plank of what we're doing is to bring people together, because it is one of the things that spin off the Connecting People Project. It has attracted a lot of groups who wanted to work together, cross-community groups. Now they are not going to be coming together for a while. So how that would work is a question.

S. R. Q11: So basically the essence of this project is kind of challenged by COVID-19 then, because the essence is bringing people together?

M. F. A11: yes definitely

S. R.: it is all very difficult right now because initially I had the idea to actually travel to Ireland and do some interviews face to face, but unfortunately that was cancelled when this whole COVID crisis started.

S. R. Q12: do you think that projects like Connecting People in the future, like this project about commemoration, will have the capability to be just as successful as Connecting People, now that Brexit and COVID 19 are actually happening? So will it be more difficult for museum to gain that sense of collaboration between different communities?

M. F. A12: Personally, I think a lot of the success of Connecting people had to do with the attitudes of the two county museums. And the attitudes of the management of both museums in terms of wanting to work together. And then the individuals themselves who worked together, I think that that played a very big role in making it something that had gone on so long as it has. And in terms of the impact of Brexit, I think Brexit creates even more reason to run a project like this. And precisely of what I said earlier. The way in which it has been very divisive and the way in which it seems to me it is working towards either reinforcing the border or creating a impetus to take that border away. In which sense it is going to create an awful lot of need for people to interact with each other and discuss the issues with the border. A way of discussing is to use history and heritage. It is a way to start a discussion in terms of understanding where it came from in the first plays and why it's there and what its function has been in the past. It is a starting point if nothing else for people to talk to each other.

S. R.: Yes. I agree with you completely. I guess we'll just have to see where it takes us.

Anyway thank you so much for taking the time to do this interview with me! It really helps



me out a lot. I think we are almost out of time. And let me see. Just looking over my question, I think that we answered almost every one of them. I will just transcribe the talk we just had and I will e-mail my results to you so you can read over them and see if you want to add anything.

M. F.: That's completely fine with me Sophie. I wish you the best of luck and we will speak soon.

S. R.: Yes thank you so much!