



Dungarvan Harbour and Quay (Source: Goggle Images)

NEGOTIATING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH DIASPORA TOURISM:

The case of The Gathering 2013 and Ireland

Tourism Master's Thesis

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the concept of diaspora tourism in relation to The Gathering 2013, a diaspora tourism campaign implemented by the nation of Ireland. The legacy of The Gathering will be of primary concern in which issues of diasporic relationships, socio-cultural transitions, and the Irish tourism product will be central discussion topics. Diaspora tourism refers to a tourism practice in which members of a diasporic group return to their ancestral homelands in search of personal cultural heritage. This is accomplished in a manner which reflects a sense of personalised belonging and connectivity. Mobility studies help to nourish an environment of construction in which the Irish diaspora are deemed to be active participants in the negotiation of Irishness. Pertinent to this is the sentiment that globalisation has weakened the control of nation states over the identity of its population, encouraging a conference of identities amongst Irish populations home and abroad. The spaces occupied by returning diaspora members interplay between tourist and local, a notion which commands tourism studies to investigate the circumstances which draws groups to their ancestral homelands. Diaspora tourism demonstrates a unique touristic practice in which strong ties to destinations appear to be existent prior to visitation. This connectivity can manifest itself through affinity for culture, people, or history, with the notion that through visitation these connections will be further strengthened. The Gathering, a tourism proposal by the Irish government, materialised to take advantage of Ireland's substantial diaspora community by directly targeting their affinity for Irish culture. The purpose of The Gathering moved beyond that of a tourism initiative as it was hoped that after visitation and strengthening of ties to Ireland, the diasporic community may act as a potential resource for economic investment in a struggling Irish economy. Critically discussing current theoretical deliberations in the diaspora tourism field, with the contextual background of The Gathering acting as empirical resource, will elucidate the fruition of this planning in a manner which will contribute to the growing diaspora tourism research field.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Background

Ireland, as an island nation on Europe's periphery, has a long standing history of immigration and emigration. This has led to Ireland and its people developing a connection with lost Celtic brothers and sisters, those who constitute the Irish diaspora. The Irish diaspora is not a group represented solely by histories tales but an evolving entity with a place in contemporary Irish culture. Such a fact is compounded by the most recent exodus of Irish natives from their homeland as a result of the European economic crisis beginning in 2008. A struggling Irish economy with high levels of unemployment resulted in a new wave of emigrants seeking opportunity abroad, joining their ancestor's decedents across the globe. The Irish government, recognising histories repetitive cycle, began a campaign to push for solidifying closer connections with Irish living abroad, whether they are part of this newer generation of emigrants or those whose ancestors left centuries ago but still hold an affinity to everything Irish. A central part of the government's plans in reaching out to the Irish diaspora was the initialisation of a tourism project known as The Gathering.

Theoretically speaking, this thesis intends on using The Gathering and Ireland's ambition to connect with its diaspora as backdrop to contemporary heritage and diaspora tourism narratives. Of particular concern will be conceptualising the active nature of socio-cultural tourism practices through a process of identifying the uniqueness of terms and the warrant for avoidance of over-arching terminologies. Separating diaspora tourism from that of umbrella expressions such as heritage and Visiting Family and Friends (VFR) tourism will assist in this achievement.

The practice of clan gatherings will too play a vital role in comprehending the impacts of The Gathering and diaspora tourism in general on both Irish citizens and the Irish diaspora. Clan Gatherings are a ritualistic tourism practice in which diaspora members are encouraged to return to their homelands for festivities with locals celebrating their cultural unity under a common family name. While this phenomena will be fully elucidated in the theoretical section of this thesis, it is paramount to state the vital contribution the researched McGrath Clan Gathering adds to The Gathering through an example of diaspora tourism in action.

1.2 Research Question

Research question is:

- What is the role of government tourism initiatives in diaspora engagement? A focused investigation of The Gathering and its local resources.

1.3 Research Aims

Aims of project:

- Conceptualise the progressive relationship of tourism and diasporas.
- Detail the approach and implication of The Gathering and discuss the potential effects on Irish citizens, the Irish diaspora and Irish tourism.
- Demonstrate the value of examining a bottom up approach to tourism products for dissecting the longevity of The Gathering through an example of diaspora tourism in action (The McGrath Clan Gathering).

In order to familiarise the reader with terminologies ranging from locations to institutes, the following will provide both an introduction and reference guide for assisting in following the threads that will be laid out.

1.4 Introducing Irish Tourism Bodies

Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland are the two national tourism bodies of Ireland and worked in close allegiance on The Gathering 2013 tourism project. The tourism boards will be mentioned throughout this thesis and it is important to clarify their roles in Irish tourism policies. Tourism Ireland is responsible for marketing the island of Ireland overseas as a tourism and business destination (Tourism Ireland, n.d.). Two important aspects to highlight in this definition are that Tourism Ireland is representing both the Republic of Ireland as well as Northern Ireland in their campaigns, not differentiating political and national landscapes. Secondly, the dual role of marketing Ireland as an investment opportunity and a vacation opportunity. The duality of this role will be investigated further, particularly in relation to the goals and legacy of The Gathering 2013, in the analysis section of this thesis. Tourism Ireland were primarily first point of contact when reaching out to global diaspora networks as well as non-diaspora audiences for The Gathering.

Fáilte Ireland is the National Tourism Development Authority of Ireland. Fáilte Ireland works to sustain Ireland as a quality tourist destination, supporting internal tourism networks in Ireland. They are primarily concerned with domestic issues in tourism such as development, training and advertising (Fáilte Ireland, n.d.). Fáilte, the Gaelic word for ‘welcome’, Ireland is the face of Irish tourism to visitors and tourists once they are on the island of Ireland. They are responsible for managing nationwide tourism information offices.

1.5 The Irish Diaspora Case and The Gathering

“It is the entitlement and birthright of every person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, to be part of the Irish Nation..... Furthermore, the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage.”

Article 2: Bunreacht na hÉireann

The above statement is taken from Bunreacht na hÉireann, the Constitution of Ireland, and epitomises the close relationship Ireland wishes to convey to its diaspora members and the rationale for embarking on The Gathering tourism project. Diaspora tourism has become the targeted marketing approach for Ireland in attempts to boost an economy that has been stricken by recession and the fall of the fabled Celtic Tiger. Employment losses, increased taxation and failing banks have also lead to a recent mass emigration from Ireland, a factor that resonates historically with the island state. It is given this stuttering economy that Fáilte Ireland, the government run tourism board, has reached out to diasporic members in an attempt to stimulate the Irish economy. This approach manifested itself through The Gathering 2013, a state run tourism initiative specifically designed to attract both Irish citizens and claimants of Irish heritage to return to Ireland in an effort to boost the Irish economy through tourism practice. It is to be noted that this is by no means a revolutionary tourism approach by a state as governments throughout the global north and south have attempted to engage with diasporic communities as national resource. The Irish government believes that through The Gathering it will be possible to reaffirm Ireland’s connection with its diaspora in the hopes of potentially securing future investments for a struggling economy. It is upon this notion which the legacy of The Gathering hopes to be structured. This thesis aims to evaluate the possibility of such an occurrence by means of elucidating what is meant of diaspora

tourism and how this particular case of The Gathering will impact upon Irish citizens, tourism and the diaspora.

In recent history, the tenure of President Mary Robinson (1990-1997) epitomised the yearning of the Irish government to promote and build relationships with the global Irish diaspora. In 1995 President Robinson gave a speech entitled ‘Cherishing the Irish Diaspora’, cementing the position of the Irish government in recognising the importance of directly communicating and acknowledging the Irish diaspora. Such procedures by the office of Áras an Uachtaráin (Irish presidential residence) continue to the present day with current president Michael D. Higgins (2011-present) basing his 2015 St. Patrick's Day message on the subject of the Irish diaspora and the level of gratitude they and their forefathers command. In December 2012, current Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Enda Kenny launched The Gathering, proclaiming the intent of the project to engage with the Irish diaspora and persuade them to return home to Ireland in 2013 with family and friends alike. He further commented:

“It is not just about encouraging anyone with Irish heritage – it is also addressed to those who love or have an interest in Ireland”

Enda Kenny (2012)

Addressing this comment momentarily, it can be comprehended twofold. Firstly it can be understood in line with the primary message coming from The Gathering organisers and backers, the idea of an inclusionary communal project. The Project Director of The Gathering, Jim Miley, described The Gathering as Ireland’s largest ever tourism initiative, furthering that the concept had transformed into a *‘people’s project’*, facilitating the growth of social capital and providing a platform for bottom up growth in Irish communities (Cochrane, 2015). In an Irish context this is important as the previous twenty years have seen a rise in immigration of Eastern Europeans into Irish society. With these mannerisms, An Taoiseach Enda Kenny supports the necessary inclusion of immigrant assimilation in organising local community initiatives for The Gathering. Secondly, and perhaps more cynically, the comment can be seen as nothing more than a pleasing political rhetoric. A certain level of contempt is held for the Gathering amongst Irish citizens and diaspora members. Actor Gabriel Byrne, a former Irish Ambassador for the Diaspora, criticised the project as a shakedown of the descendants of Irish emigrants and those unfortunately forced from Irish

shores in recent years due to the economic crisis. From this stance, Enda Kenny's comment can be interpreted as not wishing to alienate groups from visiting Ireland during The Gathering because they do not have Irish heritage. The potential for poor business is avoided and tourism numbers are kept up. While the semantics of the comment are important so is the government's connection with Irish tourism, particularly the potential arduous relationship of Irish heritage and Irish affinity. This section is designed to provide a basic background into the environment in which The Gathering 2013 was attempting to operate. Naturally a government supported scheme received vocal backing from many elected officials but those disenchanted by government competence were not afraid to let their voices be heard. Aforesaid disagreements will play an important role in deliberating theories and concepts relating to diasporas, migration and tourism forms in the analysis section. The role of government in tourism practices will too be addressed in both Sections 3 and 4 of this thesis.

1.6 The Gathering

The Gathering Ireland 2013 is a tourism initiative led by Fáilte Ireland as a response to both a decline in visitor numbers to Ireland since 2007 and the economic downturn which resulted in a recession for the Irish economy. Fáilte Ireland worked in close conjunction with Tourism Ireland and The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in both the development and execution of the initiative. The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport provided the €12 million budget over the course of two years, with additional budgetary requirements being subsidised by Fáilte Ireland to the tune of €1 million (Final Report, n.d.). Governmental support was given by then Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport Leo Varadkar (2011-2014) and was first presented at the Global Irish Forum in October 2011. The Gathering Ireland 2013 credits Scotland's The Homecoming 2009 tourism initiative, in which ancestral Scots from around the world were encouraged to return to their homeland of Scotland, as the inspiration for the tourism initiative. The Gathering was not only supportive of welcoming ancestral Irish back to Ireland but aimed to inspire sports clubs, cultural institutions, private individuals and local authorities on how to attract the diaspora back to Ireland. This network was highlighted as the backbone for a successful Gathering 2013 project, deeming the people on the ground as a vital resource for the government led tourism initiative. With the global Irish diaspora estimated to be at 70 million, 40 million of which is resident in the U.S.A., The Gathering was seen as a mobilisation tool for these

groups, as well as groups holding a close affinity to Ireland, to come and visit Ireland in order to celebrate Irish culture, heritage, music and life. To briefly summarise, The Gathering was Ireland's largest ever tourism initiative that focused primarily on mobilising two groups, those residing within Ireland for implementing and supporting the project as well as the Irish diaspora, for connectivity and assistance in economic recovery. The following sections will delve further into these two areas, introducing and exploring concepts related to Irish residents, the Irish diaspora, and their relationships to The Gathering and Irish tourism as a whole. These concepts will provide a platform on which discussion and analysis can be based in order to successfully illustrate the aims of this thesis.

1.7 Setting the Scene

Dungarvan is a seaside town on the south coast of Ireland (Appendix 7). Dungarvan is the largest town in County Waterford, one of twenty-eight counties that makes up the Irish Republic (Appendix 6). Dungarvan is situated on the Colligan River dividing the town into two parts, Abbeyside and Dungarvan. Locally Dungarvan is used to refer to the commercial centre of the city on the western bank of the river while Abbeyside is the more residential area lying on the eastern embankment. The Dungarvan area is a popular seaside destination during the summer months but has experienced a downturn in this industry in recent times both due to increased competition from low cost airlines affording tourists cheaper alternatives and nationwide slumps in the tourism industry aggravated by economic recession.

The original Irish name for Dungarvan was Dun Garbhan, directly translated to English as Garbhan's Fort, after St. Garbhan who founded a church in the 17th century. Abbeyside, or Dún na Mainistreach, in Irish is too so called for a fort that was once present residing next to an old Abbey, the ruins of which are still visible. As with many Irish towns many Dungarvan and Abbeyside's names have religious meaning. Throughout history, Irish towns and villages were subject to many comings and goings of people. Most notable Dungarvan has seen Viking, Celtic, Norman, and British invasions take place, the cultural impacts of each noticeable in the town's heritage. The mobile nature of such towns is not lost to history and leads this thesis eloquently into the subject matter at hand.

2. Methodology

2.1 Methodology Introduction

The following section will detail the chosen methodological considerations for this thesis. Of particular concern will be clarifying the socially constructed nature of tourism in relation to the chosen diasporic tourism focus of this thesis. The first section, entitled Empirical Data, will focus on both the selected interviewees and the nature of the interviews conducted. It is determined that this approach will best help supply context and meaning to both the theoretical and analysis sections (3&4). Following will be the chosen ontological considerations, primarily displaying the social constructivism approaches taken to address outlined goals. Lastly it is important to reflect upon implications and limitations of the research at hand. In doing so it is aimed to show the methodological approach chosen has been done from a critical perspective through the discussion of alternatives and limitations. This will too contribute towards future reflections and implications of the research, to be discussed in the closing statements of this thesis, Section 6.

2.2 Empirical Data

This section will discuss the interviews undertaken with the three identified resources for The Gathering in Dungarvan. The three sources provide complimentary inputs and assist in shaping an understanding of The Gathering's impact on the locality. This is vital for this thesis as it attempts to analyse The Gathering at a specific local level opposed to broader spectrums. The first section will give an introduction to each interviewee and the second delves more in the method and interview process. Alternative resources for the collection of data aside from the interviews will be discussed in the final section. Here access to online materials will be important for deliberation and lead into the methodological approach.

2.2.1 The Interviewees

First and foremost it is important to address the names and backgrounds of the three chosen interviewees for this thesis. This is done to add an air of familiarity for the reader as they read through both the theory and analysis sections. This section may also be used as a valuable reference point upon reading the analysis section as the empirical data will be resourcefully used to supply credit to discussions and position theoretical concepts.

Mealla Fahey is the Project Manager at Lismore Heritage Centre in Lismore, Co.

Waterford. Her primary concerns at the Heritage Centre are based on marketing and promoting local events particularly those concerned with Irish Heritage. Mealla is classified as working under the stewardship of Fáilte Ireland and would therefore have been heavily involved in projects for The Gathering in 2013. Her viewpoint for this thesis would be that of a knowledgeable understanding on the make-up of how The Gathering was to be planned and integrated with local initiatives.

Dan McGrath is a local entrepreneur with a background in photography and media who has recently become involved with local and national genealogical programmes. He is the organiser of The McGrath Clan Gatherings, an event focused on promoting the history and culture of the McGrath family name. Clan gatherings in recent years have become a means for diaspora members to retrace their roots and often act as an anchor connecting the Irish diaspora with their ancestral homeland. Dan is a well-known active community member in Dungarvan and his photography has been used both in local and national newspapers. His work with clan gatherings and the media has recently lead him to receiving a position on the board of directors for The Clans of Ireland, a national body with close ties to the presidency in which genealogical practices through family (clan) gatherings are organised and developed. Plans to organise McGrath Clan Gatherings in other areas of Ireland will be greatly assisted by this new position. Dan's input on the role of clan gatherings and their potential viability as connectors to the Irish diaspora beyond touristic values provides a critical insight for discussion in this thesis. Again there is a strong connectivity with The Gathering but differentiating from Mealla's insights, Dan and the McGrath Clan Gatherings provide information from a community position of local volunteers trying to establish a heritage offering.

William Whelan has been accredited as a local community leader and co-founder of Deise Design, a web design company based in Dungarvan. William is deeply involved as a volunteer in the Dungarvan Heritage Centre with a vast knowledge of local histories. Awards won for web design include creating the Irish Heritage Council Best Publication 2003 and the world wide winner of Best Small Museum Web Site 2006. As it can be seen, both passions of heritage and web design are successfully intertwined and William is centrefold for producing social media content for Dungarvan Heritage Centre and affiliated branches. Unlike Dan and Mealla, William has no direct link to The Gathering. He attended the initial meetings to see what the potential offering was but did not subscribe under The Gathering umbrella for any specific programme.

Instead William offers insights into local heritage initiatives and how The Gathering would impact upon already established programmes.

All three interviewees offer varying yet connected insights into the role of The Gathering for local tourism in Dungarvan. They also share a theme of heritage association, an important point of departure in the theoretical section. Contrasting and comparative viewpoints on matters related to The Gathering, heritage promotion and diasporic connections will help shape a thorough analysis in this thesis. Quotations from the attached interviews (Appendices 1, 2 & 3) will help launch valuable discussions topics in the hope of understanding the future effects of The Gathering and stimulating new concepts in the diaspora tourism context.

2.2.2 The Interviews

The interviews took place in Dungarvan and Lismore, both situated on Ireland's southern coast, between May 2nd and May 13th 2015. The interviews themselves were based on the unstructured model which created an open environment encouraged by freedom to speak similar to that as one does in an everyday manner. The selection of interviewees was done by identifying key areas in local heritage and diaspora initiatives in Dungarvan and surrounding areas including Lismore. The interviews occurred both through premeditated and opportunistic paradigms. The primary intention was to procure three distinct information sources which would each provide an alternative input to local diaspora tourism practices, particularly in relation to The Gathering 2013. The various backgrounds of the interviewees (see Section 2.2.1) while contrasting in nature still provided a multitude of instances in overlapping concepts, concerns and outlooks. The analysis section while charged with elucidating theoretical concepts too engaged with establishing the commonalities present in order for securing a well-rounded discussion on Dungarvan heritage matters.

The settings of the interviews varied depending on applicant but commonly invited the interviewer into their spaces. The first interview with Mealla Fahey took place in her offices at Lismore Heritage Centre. Visiting the heritage centre offered a dual benefit of also allowing the opportunity to tour the new Heritage Centre and acquire a feel for the operation in place. The Heritage Centre is also adjacent to the impressive Lismore Castle, a topic of conversation in all three interviews conducted, demonstrating its value to local tourism and diaspora practices. The second interview perhaps can be noted as showcasing an embodiment of the term 'Irishness' in its

welcoming and relaxed location as it took place in Dan McGrath's home living room. In line with the structuring of the interviews in free flowing manner, the opportunity to casually discuss the McGrath Clan Gathering afforded a natural air to the proceedings in which opinions were free to be formed with minimal interruptions or steering of the conversation. The third interview that with William Whelan, took place at the local Scouts Den in Abbeyside, a familiar hall from childhood. William has an office there from which he organises local scheduling of programmes and events. The voluntary nature of the Scouts epitomises the nature of Williams's days in which he spends a measurable amount of time on local projects, with history and heritage cited as a passions.

Advantageously, all three recipients were made aware of the topic at hand prior to engagement in the interviews. This was done in some instances via email from Copenhagen and in others through introductive conversations. Both Mealla and William were actually introduced upon arrival to Ireland and were not previously known heritage affiliates. Given the position of the interviewer as returnee to Ireland, similar to that explored in the diasporic subject matter of this thesis, a meta correspondence can be interpreted through returning home and using social connections to be introduced at a familiar level to such possibilities for interviewing those involved in local tourism and heritage practitioners. By presenting limited questions prior to the conducted interviews a greater flow was achieved with minimal interruptions and allowance of time for the interviewees to express themselves in a natural train of thought. The interviewees were simply made aware of a project curious about The Gathering and from there were encouraged to naturally share their opinions. It is to be noted however that such a tactic for conducting the research was not attempted adversely i.e. there was no pre-arranged investigation into potential insights from the interviewees as not to be tempted to focus on areas the researcher may misinterpret as a concern. This helps in avoidance of placing a specific frame of reference on people and encourages a social constructed environment in which the researcher is genuinely restricted in adopting the world view of the interviewees (Bryman, 2008). Such an approach emphasises a strategy of not delimiting areas of enquiry with an opportunity to proceed in conversations with subjects concentrating on areas of discussion deeply important to them which may have been overlooked by a more structured approach (Bryman, 2008).

One further benefit of this approach is the ability of the researcher to change their method of enquiry into a subject given the availability of new unforeseen information to be accrued (Bryman, 2008). This point too makes a contribution to the varied yet loosely connected nature of

the chosen interviewees. The makeup of the interviews themselves were not designed to be as comparable as possible due to the desire to achieve natural opinions on The Gathering. While there was some instigator questions present should a lull in conversation arise, or the point becomes too off topic, they were merely designed to return reference to insights on The Gathering. For instance were Mealla Fahey would provide insights to the governmental stewardship of The Gathering her instigator questions would be dutifully aligned to political discourse whereas for Dan McGrath and his input on clan gatherings, any such questions would deal more so with his experiences with the aforementioned bureaucracy. While the topic is similar, the questions require input from directly opposite experiences. Asking structured questions to interviewees in the context of the research method for this thesis is deemed to potentially lead to fruitless insights. For instance asking Dan McGrath questions of a political nature concerning The Gathering, or Mealla Fahey for insights on clan gatherings is unlikely to be appropriate and would only add confusion to collected data. An environment in which the interviewees could discuss their area of expertise naturally concerning The Gathering is believed to have created a more resourceful pool of data.

The possibility of obtaining meaningful information from unstructured interviews requires the presence of strong commitment from the interviewees to their areas of expertise (Botterill & Platenkamp 2012), a factor this thesis believes is present. For example the voluntary nature of the work conducted by both Dan McGrath and William Whelan adheres to this proclamation through the free time they spend on engaging with local heritage and genealogy programmes.

2.2.3 Alternative Materials and Processes

So far the methodology section has detailed the nature of the unstructured interviews undertaken for data collection but it is also pertinent to clarify the use of alternative source materials for helping to mould diasporic understandings, both historical and contemporary, in Ireland as well as highlight The Gathering's goals on impacts of various facets of Irish society. This section will introduce these alternative materials and deliberate their methodological contributions. By the conclusion of this section the processes of this research should ideally have been made clear to the reader. The final paragraph will quickly summarise this point.

First the usage of Irish government websites provided a valuable source of material on The Gathering through linking to Minister sites who were involved with processes, such as the former

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport Leo Varadkar, accessing transcriptions from tourism policy and government debates on The Gathering (House of Oireachtas, n.d.) and accessing the Irish constitution (Constitution of Ireland, 1937). Access to Minister information together with transcriptions from government debates assisted in shaping a political sphere of operation, an important aspect when examining the outlined goals and their possibly attainment in The Gathering tourism policy. The ease of access to Bunreacht na hÉireann, the Irish Constitution, assisted in comprehending the historical connection Ireland has with its diaspora in a national context which helps provide reasoning for divulgence in diaspora tourism activities as well as a potential gauge to the diasporas meaning to Irish natives. Continuing with the benefit of online material, Gathering specific websites, either hosted by official tourism sites or private sector interests, assisted in obtaining source material to select the chosen aims and research questions. In particular the concept of Clan Gatherings was discovered in this way which when compared and contrasted with official The Gatherings sources, allowed connections to be drawn for potentially securing the long term viability of the project.

Previous theoretical research in associated fields of heritage tourism, diaspora tourism and mobilities in combination with the outlined interviews and alternative sources have been considered through a data triangulation process in which primary and secondary sources have helped focus the problem formulation as well assisted in the writing technique (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). Though context specific literature on diasporas was difficult to procure, references reviewed assisted in building theoretical deliberations for the Irish case, specifically Dungarvan. Together with the online sources cited previously, field notes written during and after the interviews also played an important role for the researcher. The field notes primarily consisted of making on the spot connections, or disassociations, between the responses of the interviewees and online sources and theoretical deliberations. The unstructured interview process allowed for new topics noted in field notes to be discussed should the occasion arise as well as aiding the process of analysing data through recording on the spot information.

2.3 Ontological Considerations

Consideration of the chosen methods in this thesis leads to the importance of emphasising the ontological implications. In this understanding, the research of this thesis follows a direction in which one understands that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being

produced and reproduced (Bryman, 2008). Formulating a research question and proposal in this manner helped this thesis to place emphasis on the ability of people to be constructs in their own lives and the lives of others through active involvement (Ibid, 2008). The following section will elucidate on the constructivism concept in relation to the used qualitative approach.

2.3.1 Social Constructivism and the Qualitative Approach

The following section will detail the concept of social constructivism, key to critically choosing the method of approach in this thesis and the foundations for the specific qualitative approach undertaken. Discussion of the topics in tandem opposed to separately is selected as desirable due to their overlapping nature.

To begin, constructivism (often also referred to as constructionism) in essence is an understanding that social phenomena and their meanings are constantly being established and re-established by social actors (Bryman, 2008). The nature of the research in this thesis required an approach that accepts and allows for analysis to not be definitive in nature but rather presenting a specific version of social reality. This is aligned with concepts in postmodernist thinking in that any definitive version of reality is unattainable (Bryman, 2008). This section will look to this understanding as a framework for stating the standpoints made throughout the data collection and analysis. As a viewpoint, constructivism assisted this thesis to develop a detailed script of a specific diaspora tourism example while allowing for further interpretation which may assist future research.

Important is the realisation that interpretation of spaces through experience helps to define place in a social constructivist manner (Powers, 2011). Positions in contemporary society are based on the conception that identities are formed within social contexts which have been shaped by past and present influences (Bilton *et al*, 2002). These past and present influences include family, social connections, work and school colleagues, governments, corporations which all help mould the social processes that attribute to natural instinctive forms of behaviour (Ibid, 2002). Curiously understanding the social construction of diasporic groups requires these processes to be interpreted with a transnational viewpoint, creating potential further complexities when attempting to decipher transnational positions. Social science understandings offer a key resource for ascertaining meaning and stimulating research in tourism studies. No more so does this concept become aware

when melding geo-political concepts of diasporic communities and transnational societies with that of national tourism strategies as witnessed with The Gathering.

2.3.2 Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research as a strategy allows research to emphasise an understanding of the world from the viewpoint of participants while observing “*social life as being the result of interaction and interpretations*” (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004 p.4). Such an ideology is represented through the chosen three interviewees detailed in Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2. Broad community receptions to The Gathering, or values of ‘Irishness’, were not selected for inclusion in this thesis. Instead the research dictated that the insights of specific resources of The Gathering be those focused upon. Utilisation of a qualitative approach is relevant as the researcher aimed to understand the roles played local resources of The Gathering in Dungarvan.

As resources for The Gathering, the three interview subjects provided thick descriptions into their everyday roles as participants in an honest manner which gave opportunity to humanise the issues at hand. This qualitative approach also helped in supporting the circumstances for an insider perspective to be achieved, allowing interpretations and relations of the interviewees to be made clear, a critical point in the qualitative approach (Bryman, 2008). Anecdotal perceptions of the diaspora were also presented through this interview method, providing a valuable resource which otherwise would currently be difficult, or at least time consuming, to obtain. While second hand stories of diaspora tales must be sometimes taken with a grain of salt due to the potential for exaggeration in storytelling, they do provide a certain contextual understanding to key points of diaspora opinions on The Gathering and interpreting ‘Irishness’. Together, these facets help the researcher to uncover real cultural complexities of the local resources and involved groups of this thesis (Hollinshead in Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). The uncovering of cultural complexities is particularly important to the tourism field as wider cultural, societal, ethnical and national phenomena are included.

The qualitative nature of this thesis is based on an understanding that tourism, as a complex socio-political agglomeration, should look beyond economic concerns and embrace structures that can be difficult to quantify (Burns and Holden, 1995 in Faulkner *et al*, 2000). Inclusion and interpretation of qualitative methods in tourism research has the ability of leading to a better tourism product both for the hosts and the guests (Ibid, 1995 in Ibid *et al*, 2000). Hollinshead

(1996), alludes to the ability of the qualitative researcher to efficiently incorporate the intertwined complexities of culture, identity and meanings (in Sharma, 2004). With regards to the diaspora tourism research topic at hand, Hollinshead (1996) notably identifies the requirement of qualitative researchers to think ‘historically, interactionally, and reflectively’ (in Ibid, 2004). With regards to unfolding diaspora tourism in Ireland and The Gathering tourism initiative, these key components helped the researcher to comprehend the view of the interview subjects and empirical data. Thinking historically helps constitute the rationales and continuance of the Irish diaspora. Interactional comprehensions are centred in the analysis of the empirical data and allow this thesis to assert new paradigms for understandings in Irish diaspora tourism. The ability to think reflectively supports fundamental structures for elucidating diasporic and heritage theory with the empirical data collected.

Faulkner et al (2000), in an attempt to produce a state-of-the-art model for qualitative research begin by providing a summarisation of the work conducted by Cohen (1988). The tourism research programme presented proposes to ‘take into account and compare a visitor’s psychological needs and experiences, the sociocultural attributes of a destination and the culture symbols expressed in tourism’ (Cohen, 1988 in Faulkner *et al*, 2000). As will be discussed in both the theoretical and analysis sections of this thesis, the relationship between the psychological needs and motivations of diaspora visitors being met in correlation with the sociocultural attributes and symbols of Ireland are paramount to knowledge creation in diaspora tourism, which this thesis aims to provide.

The desired outcome of this chapter in the methodology has been to demonstrate the qualitative lines of inquiry chosen are best epistemologically suited to the research aims and problem area outlined in Section 1. With regards to the three selected interviews, the qualitative approach has been targeted to best understand the cultural world in which these resources to The Gathering operate. Moving on from the interview source material, the following section will illuminate the alternative materials used to assist in refining data collection, stimulating discussion and molding the analysis section.

2.4 Grounded Theory

The research approach of grounded theory seeks to create a constant interpretive process of inducing theory from empirical materials (Dwyer *et al*, 2012). Grounded theory is a growingly

important research methodology as it acknowledges tourism's multi-disciplinary nature, an important quality for assessing the subject matter at hand. Diaspora tourism as a field of research requires interpretation of broad characteristics pertaining to a variety of disciplines. Grounded theory acquires this understanding and assists the researcher by offering a "*lens into tourist behaviour at a specific time*" into scenarios previously perhaps untouched by a qualitative perspective (Dwyer *et al*, 2012 p. 325). To take for a moment the empirical source of The McGrath Clan Gathering, this research's qualitative method is offered a valuable insight into the norms and practices that take place during the event opposed to repeating quantifiable guest numbers or monetary concerns. A quantitative approach while able to produce statistical reasoning to The Gathering's potential success does not justifiably incorporate value of investigating phenomena in a specific place at a specific time. Such an insight is particularly important in a case where it is felt that current theoretical deliberations fall short of a comprehensive understanding, as it allows for the development of progressive deliberations. In this manner grounded theory has been a useful concept for this thesis if not the central approach. Grounded theory also is vital to inter-disciplinary studies, a research method deemed substantial for growing diaspora tourism theory and practice, and is important for future implications of this research (Section 6).

It would be remiss to enter discussions on grounded theory and not involve the debated topic of the advocacy of a literature review. Previously, proponents of grounded theory remained adamant that the researcher should maintain as little prior knowledge as possible before entering the field. Such an outlook has altered as grounded theory has evolved and reached a middle ground where certain theoretical underpinnings of a subject are supported prior to data collection (Dunne, 2011 in Dwyer *et al*, 2012). Surprisingly what is not discussed is the goal of grounded theory in generating theoretical concepts in a field where they are considered lacking, or even non-existent. In such a scenario, naturally completion of a literature review would be demanding and is why this thesis adheres to a notion wherein grounded theory can be used for inducing context specific knowledge in a wider theoretical frame. Diaspora tourism while a growing topic in tourism literature is not a complete unknown. However when researching Irish tourism, specifically Dungarvan and The Gathering the term appears alien. This required the researcher to position themselves in broad diasporic tourism dynamics in order to contextualise new paradigms in the subject matter. In doing so it was possible to build theory with understandings of social processes in a specific locality.

2.5 Implications and Limitations

The subjective approach of the methods chosen in this thesis has previously been pinpointed as a positive aspect in drawing out natural responses from the interviewees while relying on their connectivity to the subject matter for honest committed input. A potential pitfall in qualitative status can be identified as the researcher's unsystematic views on what inputs from research are to be deemed significant (Bryman, 2008). Without a quantitative blue print, open ended questions may be seen to only give open answers, upon which the researcher will choose a specific area to focus. It is the forgotten or overlooked inputs that may lead the reader of the writings to wonder of the story not told, why are certain areas over looked? What is important to remember is the obtainment of the interviewee's point of view. If the researcher adheres to the methodical qualitative approach then the presence of transcripts, field notes, and data analysis decisions etc. can at minimum provide a resource for potential alternative angles in future research.

While this thesis acknowledges that research and suggestions are based on a finite micro scale i.e. the example of Dungarvan and diaspora tourism, the subject matter does entail a certain requirement of explicating the findings to broader macro terms. Application of findings to Irish diaspora tourism as a whole cannot be fully accounted on due to the multitude of community makeups present in Ireland, or any country for that matter. Instead what is possible to achieve is a generalisation of the theory in a certain parameter that may accompany further research in the quest for broader conceptualisation of theories. Stake (1998) actually places the onus of difficulties in generalisation on the reader of the text, allowing them to decide of the potential usefulness of theories or concepts uncovered (in Botterill & Platenkamp 2012). The possibility in transferability of research however does require the researcher to provide the necessary thick descriptions that will allow for future judgements to be made. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state this by claiming it is an empirical issue whether findings will remain relevant in different or similar contexts (in Bryman, 2008).

An implication of the method chosen in the interview selections is that of the social connections made both prior and after engagement. The interviewees were not chosen as a random sample but based upon perceived ability to provide pertinent information to the subject matter and in correlation with validity of such input. The potential for validity strongly associated itself with

the social connections of the researcher due to the potential for more honest discussions to be held in a trustworthy environment. Moving away briefly from the subject matter, the transcriptions and audio attachments offer a sample of the rhetoric, the colloquial language, familiarity of people and place names, and even demonstrates the fate put in the researcher by the interviewees to be familiar with local heritage. This point is included not necessarily as a limitation but an implication of the method chosen especially in relation for achieving an efficient response as possible from the interviewees in an unstructured interview environment. Here too the nature of qualitative versus quantitative approaches to research can be seen through the proximity to research participants that is derivative of the qualitative approach (Bryman, 2008).

2.6 Sub-Conclusion

This thesis will be supported by a constructivist view of society in which concepts on culture and heritage will be examined through a lens encompassing their evolving nature. The qualitative approach chosen adheres to these principles of trying to discover the nature of things, how they were, how they are and what they may become. This too will aid in further research should it be required as the concepts and inputs will be in a state of motion opposed to any fixity. In relation to The Gathering and proposed connections to the Irish diaspora, it is important to be able to evaluate the unfolding of events over time which will allow for future adjustments in deciphering the connections between research, participants and social settings.

3. Theoretical Literature Review

3.1 Theoretical Introduction

The theory section of this thesis will cover a diverse range of concepts and issues related to diaspora tourism. This will be done in order to provide a conceptual basis for interpreting the empirical data collected, which has been outlined in Section 2. Before embarking on a summation of diaspora tourism and related ideologies it is important to introduce the relationship of government in tourism. The positioning of this project to the source material of The Gathering requires clarity to be made on the role of government institutions in tourism. From this point then the broader umbrella concept of heritage tourism is introduced to provide a theoretical background to the birth and rise of genealogical and diaspora tourism theory and practice. The work is divided into two sections, the first of which provides an expansion on existing terminologies in the genealogical tourism field such as Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) tourism and Diaspora tourism, followed by the second which delves further into diasporic tourism in socio-cultural settings with topics such as imagery, romanticism, space and place of primary importance. Culminating these concepts in the theory section will be a look at the touristic practice of clan gatherings, a phenomena with the potential to provide alternative approaches and understandings in the practice of sustained diasporic engagement. The layout chosen has been identified to best allow the topics to flow and provide a substantial supporting reference point in achieving the outlined goals of this thesis. It too assists in structuring the analysis section in an efficient and comprehensible manner.

3.2 The Relationship of Government and Tourism

This thesis would be erroneous to neglect the role played by government institutions in tourism policy and planning not just in Ireland but throughout the world. Much of the writings in this thesis will be taking point of view from a bottom-up aspect of the production and continued impact of The Gathering however in order to accomplish a well-rounded theoretical comprehension it is important to elucidate on the role of government in tourism planning and production. Understandings from this will then be used throughout this project to critically discuss The Gathering in an efficient manner.

The role of government in the tourism industry of any nation can be as complex in operation as it can be compelling in understanding. National tourism organisations in their role as promoters work on behalf of governments to build awareness of tourism products and investment opportunities for destinations (Timothy & Guelke, 2008). This role also carries with it certain governmental responsibilities to citizens that will be covered both here in the theory section and furthermore during the analysis. As the writings of this thesis are focused on The Gathering 2013, a tourism initiative of the Irish government, it is significant first to establish some of the key elements that shape the relationship between national governments and the tourism industry. First it is important to define a basic comprehension of the state role. The greater the income obtained by governments through taxation of industries, such as the tourism industry, a greater spending power of governments in the social, environmental and economic aspects of their nation can be obtained (Owens, 1992). Relevant here is to highlight the point of spending power of governments, as expenditure on tourism planning and regulations will often not be exclusive to the tourism industry as “*an amalgam of economic, social, political and environmental*” structures will be at play (Hall, 2008 p. 14). The interplay of these facets of the tourism industry all consequently reflect and impact upon one another and while tourism can be seen as a market activity representative of private sector competition, governments have also attempted to manoeuvre the tourism industry as an economic device since the latter half of the 20th century (Hall, 2008). Tourism policy as a result can be an economically and politically attractive tool for governments by both producing effective results in a short period from initiatives and addressing, or appearing to at least, wider social issues (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015). Categorically, The Gathering falls into this rationale by alluding to providing a substantial benefit to communities across Ireland and abroad while simultaneously exercising a fiscally responsible tourism policy measured in a short time span. As a response to the European economic collapse in 2008, The Gathering too attempts to alleviate concerns for regional development in Ireland. It does this by not only assisting in economic recovery but plans to solidify the future of these communities by using diasporic links as a means to procure investment. Diaspora members maintain strong economic, political and cultural ties to their homelands and with this in mind governments believe tourism policy centred on welcoming such tourists ‘home’ will help to enhance the well-being of local people, culture and economies (Levitt & Waters in Huang *et al*, 2013). As has been stated however, governments achieving such benefits through policy must take into account broader social ramifications. The success of a policy

may appear to be pure on the surface yet deep lying issues may detract from this. There will be a potential for policy to implicitly cause gaps in operational activities by working counteractively to government obligations. This point will be furthered discussed in the analysis section as a means to critically analyse the influence of The Gathering on Irish citizens, tourism, and diaspora members.

3.3 Heritage Tourism

While this project focuses primarily on the connection between diaspora and tourism it is also pertinent to examine the backgrounds of these disciplines to uncover any possible linkages. Such a process will involve exploring the definitions and semantics of concepts such as heritage tourism, genealogy tourism and legacy tourism amongst others.

Tourism has often been noted as the world's largest industry. Given this point it is important to look at tourism and the wide ranging effect it can have social, economic, cultural and environmental elements across the globe. These effects manifest themselves through the myriad of tourism practices available to the modern day tourist including nature-based, business, eco-friendly, activity-based, and cultural. Heritage tourism as a segment of the market can be seen to intersect with a variety of the aforementioned categories. As a tourism practice, its design encompasses the usage of the socio-cultural assets of a destination for economic purposes (Chhabra *et al*, 2003). Heritage tourism occurs on a scale ranging from the grand to the mundane but often requires a degree of personal reflection and meaning in quantifying such truths. The Pyramids of Giza, The Great Wall of China and the numerous castles, museums, art galleries and churches of the world all provide examples of heritage in a physical format, demanding aesthetic appreciations and a sense of grandeur (Timothy & Guelke, 2008). At an elemental level, heritage tourism takes a personal form, with focus upon physical and imagined artefacts important to the lives and identities of individuals and families. This point is strongly argued by Poria *et al* (2003) when attempting to clarify understandings amongst a growing field of heritage tourism research. The personalisation of heritage tourism demonstrates the importance that is to be placed on the tourist perceptions with motivations to visit a heritage site rather than site attributes themselves being a central point to contemporary heritage tourism discussion (Ibid *et al*, 2003). The past here is a valuable tourism resource with passion for exploring one's personal heritage a strong motivator

in tourism choice despite the difficulty in defining and measuring the exact constitutes of genealogy or roots tourism (Timothy & Guelke, 2008).

While this chapter only briefly introduced the heritage tourism concept it achieved a salient purpose of creating a familiarity with its personalised manifestation in contemporary society. The following chapters will delve further into the heritage tourism spectrum, specifically leading to a comprehension of diaspora tourism practices for usage in analysing The Gathering 2013. Personalisation attributes of heritage tourism will act as a thread throughout the theory section, not just assisting in connecting concepts but also to add an understanding to the rise in personalised diaspora tourism products and its potential for broad societal implications.

3.4 Genealogy Tourism

Genealogy is a process of uncovering births, deaths and lineages in order to portray a family tree (Birtwistle, 2005 in Novelli, 2005). As a tourism concept, physical mobility properties are added to research methods in order for greater access to historical records. A retracing of heritage in this manner has also been referred to as roots tourism, and along with genealogy tourism has been considered as a branch of heritage tourism pertaining particularly to one's movements and desires to discover or reaffirm their personal cultural identity (Kreiner & Olsen, 2002 in Coles & Timothy, 2004). The genealogy tourism concept has garnered interest in the past 20 years, with the turn of the millennium offering an occasion for nations to organise targeted marketing approaches specifically aimed at encouraging descendants of immigrants to come and trace their roots (Basu, 2007). For instance, the New Strategy for Scottish Tourism policy identified genealogy tourism as a core to its niche market segments (Birtwistle, 2005 in Novelli 2005; Basu, 2007). The Scottish example further encouraged genealogy tours by its launching of The Homecoming in 2009, a year-long tourism initiative advertising Scotland as a primary destination for chasing ancestral roots. Scotland's Homecoming project has too been accredited as a blueprint for Ireland's The Gathering 2013 project.

The role of technology in the rise of genealogy tourism is substantial (Gilchrist 2000 in Novelli, 2005). The internet naturally greatly aids access to information but this only holds true in regards to records that have been well documented and transferred to an electronic format. An abundance of genealogical websites for interested amateur genealogists are widely available and are now being targeted by tourism marketing campaigns, enticing web users to take the next step

and walk in the footsteps of their ancestors (Lynch, 2009). Interestingly with the case of Ireland research has uncovered the potential detrimental effects of technology on the Irish genealogy tourism industry. Heinlen (2007) attributes negative effects with the global rise in internet usage which offers simplicity, far reaching and instant access to records demanding the mobility of information opposed to the corporal. Traditionally genealogical research in Ireland would have required visiting the island, contacting historians or knowledgeable locals in a more time consuming process. This process is too credited with the potential for solidifying affinity to Ireland as well as supporting and connecting social networks thus encouraging return visitation (Heinlen, 2007). It is claimed that there is potential for the internet to deter some of these crucial characteristics in affinity construction, an occurrence which can drastically impact upon tourism products and local lives. Naturally arguments for both the advantages and disadvantages of the internet as a device for genealogy tourism can be argued. It is important however at this juncture to demonstrate the potential value loss, both in tourism and social relations, which rural or remote 'attraction-less' communities can experience because of over reliance on web researching.

Genealogy tourism can be represented as a process whereby tourists partake in trips to libraries and museums to search for further information on ancestors or travel to a locality closely associated with their ancestral roots (Prinke, 2009). The latter is identified as of particular importance by Prinke (2009) as it does not encapsulate the same requirements of traditional tourism activities in so far as it is not centred on destinations with attractions but rather guided by individualised tourist motivations. This point correlates with the previously discussed contemporary understandings of heritage tourism proposed by Poria et al (2003) as an activity focused closer to tourist motivation and perceptions than on location attributes and is central to the writings of this thesis as it demonstrates the value in relating identities, communities and tourism. The legacy of The Gathering is hypothesised to be successful at grassroots levels with a bottom up production of tourism activities. Genealogy tourism as a mechanism inherently supports and is supported by the individual desires and locations, free of clustered touristic intrusions. This point is well supported in the empirical data by Mealla Fahey and Dan McGrath. Both champion the potential of community vitality in rural areas to lead to positive tourism experience for locals and visitors. While the internet can be an effective tool, corporate sponsors and tourism boards use genealogical research websites to promote certain regions above others, creating a potential scenario of poor national dispersal in the field.

3.5 Tourism, Migration and Diasporas

Whether in the guise of tourism or migration, the movement of people lies at the heart of discussions in contemporary Irish culture (Lynch, 2009). Mobility has played a vital role in the survival and adaptation of many cultures throughout history but with varying means, requirements and accessibility. While this thesis does not deal wholly with migratory issues in the field of tourism, it remains applicable to introduce the concept briefly prior to entering discussions of a diasporic matter. This is built on an understanding that migration and diaspora are intrinsically connected and will naturally intersect.

Williams and Hall (2000) introduce the overlapping concepts of tourism and migration citing mobility concepts as the glue that binds the two disciplines. Largely the major defining difference between the subjects appears to be the level of permanence associated with movements, with migration seeming to imply a single journey followed by stasis and tourism movements inferring a return home after minimum one night away (Williams & Hall, 2000). Naturally such definitions can be prone to debate, for instance how does one quantify permanent stasis, but this is not the purpose of introducing the connected disciplines of tourism and migration nor is detailing migration in relation to tourism. The value, however, is found in comprehending rough defining boundaries for migration and tourism to identify the space diasporas occupy between them. On this note many nation states are today attempting to build relations with emigrants and their descendants for both economic and social purposes pertaining to both tourism and return migratory functions (Schiller & Fouron, 2002 in Bhandari, 2013). This relationship is built on the concept of existing ‘long-distance nationalism’ (Andersen, 1991; Schiller & Fouron in Ibid, 2013), a contended ideology as a governmental top-down activity, as it appears to flourish more naturally through the experiences of diaspora members (Ibid, 2013). The permeable nature of nation states has seen a growth of complexities in tourism and migration studies. This has however lead to understandings that heritage forms enable “*nationhood to be experienced in everyday experience*” (Park, 2013 p. 105). In correlation with Anderson’s (1991) ‘imagined communities’ contribution to innate interpretations of national belonging, connections are bridged from national and heritage studies to the diaspora tourism phenomenon. This point will be notably explicated in Section 4.3.3 and 4.4.4 but also referenced throughout these writings.

Bearing in mind the structuring of The Gathering, identifying the make-up of a tourism

policy i.e. policy based either from a top down governmental narrative or one more inclined to support locally produced initiatives, will allow for a more detailed analysis particularly when exploring the influence of the legacy of The Gathering on Irish tourism and the Irish diaspora.

3.5.1 Diasporas and Tourism I: Laying Foundations

The connection between diaspora and tourism is regarded as largely disjointed by researchers (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Bruner, 1996). One reasoning is the confusion the topic embodies due to its relative position between tourism forms. Timothy (1997) ascertains diaspora tourism as a “*specialised form of (personal) cultural and heritage tourism*” (in Coles & Timothy, 2004 p.220). On face value, the apparent common component of the two subjects is that of mobility yet research has attempted little more than interpreting concepts opposed to uncovering the progressive relationship between mobilities, tourism and diasporic communities (Hall & Williams, 2000 in Coles & Timothy, 2004), a gap this thesis aims to amend.

Diaspora populations can play a unique role in opening and expanding tourism destinations as well as directly influencing wider socio-economic issues. Scheyvens (2007) for example discusses in detail the value of a relationship with the diaspora for a government requiring investment and engagement at the core of community and societal development. Scheyvens (2007) incorporates domestic tourism with grouped concepts of VFR tourism and diaspora tourism, claiming that the value of domestic tourism is not to be overlooked by developing nations, dismissing pre-conceived neo-colonial notions that the wealthy ‘Northerner’ is a requirement for successful economic growth through tourism policies. Although the context of Scheyven’s (2007) work differs to that of Ireland and The Gathering, a fundamental connection is heralded by both and that is the ability and likelihood of diaspora communities engaging directly with local economies. Meis, Joyal and Trites (1994) further emphasis the benefits for local economies by discussing the likelihood of repeat visitation by tourists to area where they have family and friends (in Butler, 2003). While a correlation between VFR tourism and diaspora tourism does hold true in certain circumstances, it is by no means of universal application. The analysis Section 4.2 will detail this point further to assist in progressing understandings of VFR tourism and diaspora tourism in a manner which shifts their parameters further apart, offering a clearer conception of the concepts.

Other studies in VFR tourism have focused on the diaspora visitor in a manner of discovering their motivations to visit a place, the pull factor of destinations for diaspora tourists, or the seeming complexities the diaspora tourist will experience upon returning to a homeland e.g. the complication of relationships with locals to issues of self-identity (Hollinshead, 2004 in Coles & Timothy, 2004; Wagner, 2008). Ali and Holden's (2006) research on returning first and second generation British Pakistani migrants to their homeland discusses the purpose of the visits for passing down a sense of home through generations. Each passing generation brings their children to Pakistan in the hope of connecting diasporic British-Pakistani's, affirming their identities and continuing traditions. Although this can be judged to be the most logical method of securing future connectivity to ancestral homelands, Ali and Holdens's (2006) research concluded that such an approach is deemed hopeless due to complexities of hybrid identities resulting in a diminishing connectivity to Pakistan.

These concepts provide the foundation upon which this thesis intends to further the study of diaspora tourism. The analysis section of this project will progressively detail the coherence between VFR tourism and diaspora tourism but also create important distinctions. The primary goal of this will be to critically elucidate on current contexts and issues in diaspora tourism for the benefit of tourism planners and academics alike. The conceptualisation of the relationship between tourism and diasporas in Section 4.2 will concentrate on this point.

3.5.2 Diasporas and Tourism II: Space, Imagery and Identity

Etymologically the meaning of the word diaspora can be traced to the Greek word for dispersion (Coles & Timothy, 2004). Classic diaspora examples include those of Jewish, Greek and Armenian origin but today the term is represented in a vast array of migrant groups. Contemporary diaspora formation is noted to be a result of issues such as political unrest, opportunity seeking and natural mobility of people related to globalisation (Shuval, 2000).

Diasporas materialise as groups of people who are in some way separated geographically from their homelands but acknowledge, either real or imagined, common bonds of ethnicity, heritage, and identity (Coles & Timothy, 2004; Timothy & Guelke, 2008). Members of a diaspora often experience a duality in their lives as potential social cohesion in adopted lands occurs simultaneously with historical connections and romanticism of homelands. Such pluralism does not necessarily lead to existential difficulties but as Hollinshead (1998) identifies, halfway

populations may demonstrate feelings of agitation to their host societies unbeknownst to themselves (in Timothy & Guelke, 2008). These characteristics can be witnessed when looking upon the hyphenated identity of multicultural citizens such as Irish-American or Indian-British. Research however also further identifies these classifications as having limited time spans, as migrants will gradually assimilate with a variety of cultures leading to greater mixes of ethnicity (Nauck, 2001 in Timothy & Guelke, 2008). In this manner a sense of wandering the world away from a homeland is diluted as generations pass resulting in abstract homeland connections often only stirred by media inputs e.g. tourism advertising, film, music. On the contrary to this point, Levitt (2007) provides the example of Jewish diaspora citing the difficulties of assimilating to American Protestant cultures due to the varied connection of the Jewish people to Judaism, some through faith others through heritage. Levitt's (2007) example of the difficulty in assimilation processes showcases the potential requirement of altering self-identity for favourable societal integration and the existential issues which may result from it.

It is also noteworthy that polarisation of the concept of home is not necessarily the only approach to examining the likely relations, movements and identities of diaspora members. Basch et al (1994) produce the term 'trans-migrants' to describe an in between state where diaspora members are simultaneously home and away and equally produce meaningful life connections that cross borders (in Sim & Leith, 2013). This form of transnationalism is of importance for The Gathering tourism initiative as it allows examination of non-migratory Irish in transnational networks. Irish diaspora members are ascribed power in this scenario i.e. the possession of agency to shape identity and cultures, a point which will be further explicated in Sections 4.2 and 4.3.3.

With regards to various media a vital connector is created between diasporas and the homeland - nostalgia (Akhtar, 1999 in Timothy & Guelke, 2008; Ray & McCain, 2012). Nostalgic emotions enable tourism operators to stimulate interest and attract visitation to destinations. The strength of nostalgia can too intersect generational differences in diasporic communities. First generation migrants may yearn to return to visit close family members, friends or a childhood home while further removed generations romanticised imaginaries or ambitions to discover lost family can become a reality through targeted tourism marketing strategies (Hall & Williams, 2002). Jones-Correa (2002) and Perlmann (2002) align with this conception in concluding that first generational diaspora members are more likely to be connected to homelands in economic

and political sense whereas further removed generations are more likely to nurture a cultural connection (in Huang et al, 2013). The majority of the marketing for The Gathering was centred on the encouragement of homecomings for all generations of Irish immigrants. The semantics of 'homeland' or 'old-country' images anticipated an emotional response for returnees. The ethics of selling these images through a tourism project was met with some controversy both within and outside of Ireland. The point being here that a government that has failed fiscally and jurisdictionally is trading its last remaining wealth, national identity, in attempt to rescue themselves from a self-inflicted economic crisis. This is an important underlying concept for examination of the difficulties The Gathering encountered in collecting wide support for the project and will be required in the analysis section for unfolding recommendations. Returning to the concept of further removed generations of the Irish diaspora leads to the role of place, space, and time and the potential influences of these forces on The Gathering's success and longevity. Hybridised values of home lead to multi connections to place. Ahmed (2000) addresses this issue by demonstrating the complications attached with the experience of a double sense of home, particularly related to functionally returning home (in Wagner, 2008). Ahmed (2000) postulates that as much as diasporic values imply a strong metaphoric closeness to place through diasporic communities there is a necessary distance required for this to be true (in Wagner, 2008). Any such distance will directly link with the expansion of spaces in homelands that will continue on their own paths and only intersect with diasporic communities as they proceed on return trips (Ibid, 2008). To put it another way, recollections of homeland by a first generational diaspora member, which are passed down through diasporic communities over time, may no longer be accurate tales as homelands will too carry on a separate path. This may lead to further removed generations returning home and encountering unfamiliar circumstances causing concerns with affinity. Such an intersection of different but related place recognises difference, strangeness, and sameness for diaspora members between their experiences and imaginaries. This understanding will be deeply discussed in the analysis section and provides a pivotal insight to potential difficulties in diaspora tourism and connectivity.

In a tourism context, especially in relation to 'roots' tourism, this last point is of central importance. The Gathering for example is producing an image of Ireland corresponding to that of the potential tourist diaspora member (tourist). Stark contrast however may be present between the imagery of Ireland representing an un-spoilt 'old-country' shrouded in folk tales, myths and

legends passed through migrant generations which are reproduced by tourism boards and the realities of a modern society, pressured by institutions and recovering from depression levels of unemployment and social unrest.

It would be remiss to discuss aspects of migration, diaspora and national identity without acknowledging the role played by borders in a globalised society. Transport and communication progress has encouraged an increasingly mobile society, delimiting the extent and realism of migratory movements ending in stasis. Facilitating potential return migration, tourism further encounters overlap with migratory flows by supporting global networks and mediating family and friends' visitation (Hall & Williams, 2002). Comprehension of the influence of a borderless modern society further assists altering flows of movement, such as in tourism, to and from traditional centres. Importantly in combination with globalisation theory, the concept of a borderless world has evolved from political geography discourses to reach new fertile grounds for research and analysis in areas such as tourism (Ohmae, 1995; Hall & Williams, 2002). Borderless concepts however must not be assumed as a straightforward ignorance to political, social and economic barriers. Particularly given the case of Ireland it is important to recognise the meaningfulness of borders, as a large part of modern and historical impacts on society stem from the border between the Republic and Northern Ireland. A bottom-up approach, a key component to examining The Gathering and Irish identity in this project, enables a viewpoint correspondence with Ohmae (1995), that border narratives and experiences impact greatly upon people living in those regions and, noticeably in Ireland, to an expansive portion of society. The increased traffic of people in an era of globalisation has further reduced the capabilities of the modern nation state to assert influence over the identities and identification of those residing within its border (Anheier & Isar, 2011). Diasporic identities are now *"forged in and through movements between places"* (Ibid, 2011 p.84). Diasporic communities enter a transnational negotiation process with both fellow diasporic members and homeland citizens, a point which will be crucial to Sections 4.2 and 4.3.4 of the analysis. Irishness at this level does not manifest itself by citizenship, documentation or location but by a self-proclaimed identity, free of restrictions imposed by institutions.

The concepts of tourism and diaspora appear contradictory to one another given the definitions that the former relates to superficial often temporal relations to a place away from residence while the latter concerns a more profound deep rooted connection (Wagner, 2008). Wagner (2008) further describes the importance of recognising the heterogeneous nature of

migrants and diaspora groups by applying the behavioural adjective ‘diasporic’ to characteristics. This distinction acknowledges variables in migratory patterns and communities such as generational differences, conditions of migration, and conditions in new lands all of which can impact upon affinity to homelands. Jones and Jackson (2014) manifested this affinity by establishing the interrelation of three components in place attachment - identity, place and memory. Corresponding to the previously discussed points of both nostalgic emotions to ancestral lands (Akhtar, 1999 in Timothy & Guelke, 2008) and constructs of borderlands (Ohmae, 1995), Jones and Jackson (2014) in their case study of Armenian diaspora tours to Eastern Turkey, raise a crucial point in the ability of social encounters in homelands to construct, or reconstruct, the nature of place attachment. This again can be referenced to discussions of transnationalism and the potential for affecting societal structures of both diaspora members and locals through a negotiated process.

3.6 Clan Gatherings

The previous theoretical sections introduced the prominent concepts of heritage tourism to be used in this thesis with particular attention focused on diaspora tourism. This chapter will now turn attention towards a tourist activity which falls under the diaspora, genealogical tourism category - clan gatherings. Important for this project will be the comprehension of what and who makes up a clan gathering, what is the potential influence of clan gatherings on Irish tourism, how local economies are affected by clan gatherings and to what extent can locally produced heritage such as seen in clan gatherings impact upon wider societal conditions. These questions will be principally analysed and discussed in the Section 4.3 of the analysis but now it is important to lay the theoretical foundations in a comprehensive review of the terminology and practice.

This section will take point of departure in the yearning of discovery diaspora members seek through practices which assist in affirming identities. As has been discussed, the internet while proving a useful tool in genealogical research has a limited capacity in that information is required to have been input on the provider's end. It is important to remember that the internet is still in its infancy, particularly when it comes to converting documents hundreds of years old to digital format. Traditionally in Ireland family documentation would solely be in possession of local parishes. William Whelan points out that *“it was only this year that the Catholic Birth, Marriages*

and Death registers are going up online” (Appendix 3). So while the internet does create an ease of access, for those truly interested in discovering their personal heritage, there remains gaps in the format. Cohen (1996) propositions the ability of the internet to complement existing shared imaginaries amongst diaspora members to recreate homelands without the requirements of physical visitation (in Sim & Leith, 2012). This notion however is received flatly by Meethan (2004), who retains the importance of physical visitation in an ever increasing individualised heritage tourism industry which repudiates grand societal narratives of history (in Ibid, 2012). This concept of individualised tourism sparks the flames for clan gatherings role as a personalised heritage product. Building on the work of Anderson (1991) and his details on ‘imagined communities’, diaspora members can be seen to occupy a space of forgotten time in that stories passed down or media imagery most likely do not reflect contemporary Irish society. However, rather than perpetuating a lost land to visiting members, clan gatherings offer a uniquely constructed mix of personal historical heritage combined with introductions to the reality of Irish life. The analysis section will champion the ability of clan gatherings to naturally create an environment wherein visiting members experience the modern and historic factions of their ancestry simultaneously. A main reason for this is the fluid nature of the narrative and ability of the visitor to shape their own personal experience.

A pivotal theme of this thesis is the stressing of the ability of the diaspora not only to be affected by visitation to Ireland but the viability of the influence of diaspora visitors on the local Irish. Such transnational relations too play an important role in recognising the wider societal effects which can occur through running clan gatherings. Mottiar et al (2014) in their study of the impacts of The Gathering in Kerry and Westmeath, note a key element to be the emphasis the project placed on family with respondents detailing the ability of The Gathering to help “*reaching out to family and friends linked by name and blood*” (p.10). With this in mind clan gatherings should not be solely forced into a strict diaspora-local dichotomous relationship but instead be understood as a tool to create and sustain network capital amongst family and friends at regional, national and international levels. Dan McGrath discusses the ability of the Dungarvan McGrath Clan Gathering to assist in McGrath gatherings in other areas of Ireland as they had no people on the ground or “*any real base of heritage*” (Appendix 2). With the planned trips to these other McGrath heritage sites around Ireland, The McGrath Clan Gathering is incorporating a mobile heritage tour at the national level, resulting in positive economic and cultural impacts for areas

lacking perhaps in physical attractions. This point is in correlation with Poria's et al (2003) aforementioned observation that perception of heritage value is a fundamental concept in diaspora tourism, an active notion being employed by McGrath Clan Gathering programme. A symbiotic relationship in this regard is formed amongst rural communities in Ireland, with the catalyst for such connections being the returning Irish diaspora.

3.7 Theoretical Conclusion

This theory section has covered a multitude of topics relating the concept of diaspora tourism. The role played by governments was introduced due to the nature of The Gathering and the form in which it was conceived. Heritage tourism is noted to be a deeply personalised experience with motivations and perceptions of heritage based on innate conceptions. This is particularly made clear when uncovering the individualised nature of genealogical tourism activities. Diasporic tourism is seen to occupy a space between home and away in which individuals, often with hybridised identities are seeking, an experience of homeland. The VFR - diaspora tourism paradigm is too identified as a key area for research clarification, a subject to be elucidated in Section 4.2. Returning to the example at hand, it is noted that there may be generational differences between varying diasporic groups with the Irish diaspora positioning themselves far removed generationally. Diaspora tourism is seen to potentially supply a new connection to homeland, in which those with Irish heritage are given an opportunity to experience 'Irishness' and accordingly enter negotiations of the concept. The potential of such a transnational relationship is an important concept for tourism studies with this thesis elucidating on the subject throughout the analysis section. The likelihood of sustaining these diasporic connections is noted to exist through the diasporic tourism practice of clan gatherings. The McGrath Clan Gathering experience will attempt to further this discussion with an emphasis placed on the potential for a progressive relationship to be forged between the people of Ireland and the Irish diaspora.

4. Analysis

4.1 Analysis Introduction

The analysis section will be comprised of three primary segments with a series of sub-sections in each. Combining the theoretical underpinnings identified in Section 3 with the empirical data collected in Ireland demonstrated in Section 2, will assist in generating knowledge for the completion of the outlined aims of the project in Section 1.

The first of the three sections of the analysis will illuminate the current state of diaspora tourism literature by attempting to progressively conceptualise the connections made in previous research (Scheyvens, 2007; Meis *et al*, 1994 in Butler, 2003) with a similar discipline, VFR tourism. In doing so it is hoped to actively assert new foundations in diaspora tourism understandings and provide a theoretical compound for assisting in both Sections 4.3 and 4.4 of the analysis. The second section of the analysis, 4.3, will be concerned on the practical effects of The Gathering on three identified elements; Irish citizens, Irish diaspora and Irish tourism. Accordingly, this allows for each section to be given a detailed analysis but overlapping themes will be cornerstone to discussion and conclusions. Identified theoretical implications from Section 4.2 will be ever present throughout these writings, complementing empirical data. The final section of the analysis, 4.4, will focus on the McGrath Clan Gathering and its ability to act as a lens through which to view The Gathering. Important will be the locally produced and specialised qualities clan gatherings possess and their ability to potentially bridge diaspora connections in a previously unidentified way.

The design of the analysis section is aligned with that of the thesis as whole, where each section is structured to flow and contribute to the previous. With this in mind, although the sections for the analysis and discussion have been divided up they are by no means exclusive. Each section will aim to progressively assist the previous for encapsulating a process which will most efficiently contribute theoretical deliberations, unfold the case of The Gathering and progress diaspora engagement concepts.

4.2 Conceptualising Diaspora Tourism

This chapter will begin to conceptualise the relationship between tourism and diaspora by exploring the concept as it has been used in previous literature. Contemporary knowledge of

diasporas in tourism studies ties the concept with several other tourism forms including but not exclusively; heritage tourism, genealogy tourism and VFR tourism. Of particular concern first will be to discuss the current state of VFR tourism definitions both in practice and principle. The focus here is placed on defining and refining diaspora tourism and VFR tourism understandings as both are implicitly located under broader genealogical and heritage tourism frameworks. Expanding on current definitions and boundaries of VFR tourism will allow for detailed application of the term to a specific context, in this case the Irish context in relation to The Gathering 2013 initiative.

4.2.1 Challenging the VFR/Diaspora Connections

A primary focus of The Gathering 2013 tourism initiative was to boost tourism numbers in the Irish economy as a response to both a downturn in tourism performance and the recession currently being experienced in Ireland. As has been outlined previously, the Irish diaspora were identified as an untapped resource in a bid to expand tourism in Ireland. The Irish diaspora however provide a complex sample of potential visitors to Ireland in that their diaspora status tends to be generationally stretched. Concentrating briefly on the North American Irish diaspora, the most numerous segment of Irish descendants, proximity to a relative of Irish birth often spans the 150 to 200 year mark, creating a genealogical gap to Irish family lines. In this manner it is important to emphasise that diaspora tourism may not at first be easily distinguished from other forms of tourism. Scheyvens (2007), as detailed in the theory section, assimilates diaspora tourism into VFR tourism in a detailed analysis of the role of government in diaspora tourism engagement. While acknowledging such a combination, this thesis differs slightly in interpreting the notion due to contextual conflicts. Generational differences in diaspora tourists creating hybrid personalities of American-Irish, British-Irish or any other combination for that matter, are impeded by time in the hope of mirroring the often found closeness between VFR tourists and host countries. Ali and Holden's (2006) work on the British-Pakistani diaspora concluded that despite efforts to sustain a strong connection, the duality of identity blurred lines resulting in a diminishing identification with Pakistan as a homeland for self-identity. It is to be noted that this occurred despite a motivated effort by previous generations of the Pakistani diaspora to actively travel with their families to Pakistan in the hope of solidifying affirmation and identity. The empirical data on Ireland produced examples of diaspora members with century long gaps of failing to return to Ireland in their families. One such experience recounted by Dan McGrath described the wonder of a returning

diaspora member being the “*first time a member of his family set foot on Irish soil in 200 years*” – a source of pride, relief and fulfilment. It is seen that despite the gaps, the emotional connection of the Irish diaspora member appears to have inversely been solidified by lack of exposure. Whether or not this is a result of mysticism to spiritual homelands is uncertain but a potential explanation (Hall & Williams, 2002). The fact remains though that current high levels of engagement by Irish tourism initiatives with the Irish diaspora provide on unknown future. Taking the diasporic tourist, it is interesting to gauge their future identification. It is possible that in this scenario visiting Ireland will proactively grow and strengthen their hybrid Irish identity. Even diasporic tourists more concerned in connecting with their McGrath heritage were unavoidably exposed to scenarios encompassing Irish music, food and culture:

“[the tourists] did want to get as much information on their McGrath heritage, like they came for that information and went away having seen great Irish hospitality..... they couldn’t get over we had a few of the lads singing, Sean and Sarah Ni Creagh, some Irish dancing for them as well, they were delighted with it, it was good craic...Sunday in the Tig an Ceoil [The Music House] which is a real old Irish pub with good music”

Dan McGrath (Appendix 2)

This works counteractively to the writings of Ali and Holden (2006) wherein visitation failed to engage diasporic members any further with homelands. An interesting point however is also made by Ali and Holden (2006) that can have significant impact on conceptualising current diaspora engagement in Ireland. Ali and Holden (Ibid) cite that duty of visitation to relatives and homelands as a major factor in pulling diasporic Pakistani’s towards their homeland. Such a force will naturally be absent in Irish cases due to the unknown discovery attributes of genealogical visitation which occupies the diaspora tourism spectrum. This demonstrates a valuable quality when looking at reasonings behind diaspora tourist travels which in turn can assist local tourism planners. For instance the McGrath Clan Gathering, and national tourism projects, like The Gathering 2013, can gauge diasporic tourist’s potential for assimilation to homelands both as tourists and pseudo-locals. It is also possible to correlate Ali and Holden’s (2006) identification of ‘duty’ with that of personalisation in heritage tourism for motivation of visitation as discussed by Poria et al (2003). Duty as a concept is quite personalised but the McGrath Clan Gathering is operating at a similar level of personalised consciousness just through an altered structure. Both touristic forms adhere to the discussed heritage tourism personalisation attribute however that held by clan gatherings may hold greater trans-formative capabilities, a subject to be discussed in Section 4.4.2 and

4.4.3.

To further this discussion, take for example the tendency for VFR tourists to know the location which they are travelling to, to know communities and people, to have networked connections. Contradictorily a prime engagement of diaspora tourists with homelands has been an identifiable journey of discovery (Kreiner & Olsen, 2002 in Coles and Timothy, 2004). Roots tourism, genealogy tourism and their counterparts are based on acquiring further knowledge in family histories. These acts are performed by tourists who place value in heritage studies for identity creation, relating a sense of who they potentially are with that of where they came from. The aspect of the outsider will linger through these experiences of discovery. This offers an opportunity for tourism industries and institutes in that a tourist is now witnessed passing through enclosed local family circles during visits yet remains positioned on the periphery as a non-local participant. These principles identify closely to those detailed by Hollinshead (2004) in that contemporary societies now bear witness to “*personalised communities*”, with diaspora members seemingly occupying new found spaces (in Coles & Timothy, 2004). Self-identification for these diasporic groups leads to speaking of difference and sameness in the one sentence, positing a curious case for those tasked to utilise diasporas efficiently as a tourism resource. To take this further, one such outlook allows for a less rigid interpretation of boundaries between those deemed local or outsiders. It concerns the discipline of mobilities wherein applied to the context of diaspora members and tourism helps to understand the fluid nature of self-making. Self-making applied to cultures and societies demonstrates the nature of cultures as being alive (Hollinshead, 2004 in Coles & Timothy, 2004). That is to say they are not fixated in a place, bounded by rigid lines, possessed solely by those considered within a culture but indefinite structures supported by a range of actors both internally and externally. Cultures in contemporary society do not exist in a bubble and accordingly are influenced and negotiated from a myriad of directions. Irishness, while a lived experience by citizens of Ireland, cannot be hoarded by one group. Considering the existence of the Irish diaspora as a scattering of Irishness throughout the world, it can be determined the gathering of the term requires a global influence. Such an occurrence is aided by the position trans-migrants will occupy in the relationship being built between diaspora members and the local Irish. Importantly, Basch et al (1994) characterised the transnational relations that migrants and diaspora members nurture in their lives as a mechanism to uncover the pluralist nature of social settings (in Sim & Leith, 2013). Equally as important, this thesis wishes to identify the transnational society

opening up to local Irish by initiatives such as The Gathering. To clarify, it is important to acknowledge and comprehend the impact of a diaspora tourist entering into local communities as transnational influences will not just be felt by the returning Irish diaspora but too by the local Irish. For instance, the belief that returning diaspora members will affect local economies and potentially impact the well-being of local community members is central to VFR and community tourism understandings (Levitt & Waters in Huang *et al*, 2013). It can be posited from this concept that the transnational relationships equally impact upon those who may appear in a state of stasis as well as returning diaspora tourists. When applied to notions of Irishness, these concepts open the door to further examining how the notion of Irishness is challenged and negotiated by returning diaspora members who bring with them a wealth of perceptions and imaginaries. While these understandings lay close to cultural sociological ideologies they play an important role in clarifying new stances in VFR and diaspora tourism principles, particularly the constructed nature of communities and societal makeup. In correlation to the previous discussion on conceptualising diaspora tourism and VFR tourism, the impact of diaspora on ancestral homelands provides an alternative outlook. The understanding is that a homelands ability to potentially strengthen the identification of a diaspora member can be similarly conceived as a diaspora member's ability to re-negotiate what constitutes a homeland. It must be too highlighted that not all interactions of returning diaspora member and homeland citizen will suffice to a level of negotiation due to often found disparities in both parties' willingness to participate and/or ability to control power. Negative impacts or concerns with interactions are however not the central point being illustrated at this moment. What is to be stressed is both sides capability to influence the diasporic-homeland relationship. Understanding such a bi-lateral relationship is a vital addition to diaspora studies and moves further away from static VFR relations.

4.2.2 Tourism and Diaspora Practicalities

The empirical data collected for this project uncovered evidence for connecting VFR tourism as an important topic of focus in discussing the relationship between diasporas and tourism. Meis, Joyal and Trites (1994) strongly associate VFR practices with repeat visitation of areas (in Butler, 2003). Logically, this makes sense as these journeys will exempt a strong 'pull' force on potential migrants, not just for personal experience but for solidifying broader cultural and dutiful ties to the family unit. Research, corresponding to the empirical data collected for this

project into diaspora engagement in Irish tourism however too demonstrates tourists travelling to encounter a once in a lifetime experience. The concept of a trip of a lifetime differs widely to the previously accepted viewpoint strongly tying VFR tourists with repeat visitation. This is an important issue for this thesis as it further creates distance from applying traditional VFR understandings to the relationship of diaspora and tourism engagement. VFR tourism's financial returns to an economy are inherently difficult to apply stringent measuring devices to. This is due to casual spending, cash expenditure and non-taxed exchanges often related to tourism at local community levels, for example cash transactions at community markets. What is often accounted in these scenarios however is that money is being spent in one form or another. VFR tourists provide fiscal stimulation for local economies globally. Differentiating diaspora tourists and VFR tourists however allows for disillusionment in analysis of whether they provide the same economic stimulation to local economies. Once in a lifetime diaspora visitors may be beneficial in the short term but over the long term provide a less than desired return on investment. The diaspora or roots tourism product in this manner counter acts against itself. On one hand a returning diaspora member receives an emotional engagement to the land of their ancestors, affirming romanticised notions, fulfilling a dream and creating memories for a lifetime. On the other hand repeating of this experience is unattainable as the gravity of the event in itself is based on its once in a lifetime essence. The Gathering Final Report itself affirms this notion stating that even potential repeating of the project should be done in no less than five year cycles (Final Report, n.d.). The Final Report further suggest refraining from ever repeating the project in the same guise due to the perceived reduction in value of The Gathering product. If diaspora tourism is to be as beneficial to local communities in the long term as VFR tourism has been accredited to be, then this issue of achieving repeat visitation should be addressed. Importantly this thesis also uncovers an alternative opportunity for once in a lifetime visitors. There is a possibility of shaping diasporic perceptions after visitation to assist in sustaining transnational relations, a point to be discussed in Section 4.3.3. In this manner, despite a lack of return visits a sustained impact on tourism, diaspora and socio-cultural aspects may be possible. The empirical data for this thesis also points to long term thinking beginning to be adhered to in clan gathering projects. This will be further elucidated in the final section of the analysis, where exploring the day-to-day running of The McGrath Clan Gathering will reflect on differentiating VFR and diaspora tourism groups.

As genealogy tourism is considered a spectrum of heritage tourism so too should diaspora tourists be considered independent of VFR tourists. While there is some similarities, it is pertinent that diaspora tourists in the Irish context be considered alternatively to VFR tourists. Furthermore, members of the Irish diaspora are not to be considered a homogenous grouping. Like tourists at any destination they will have divergent wants, needs and requirements resulting in the necessity of planning for multiple eventualities. The aim of this discussion is to examine the contemporary relationship between tourism and diasporas in Ireland. The argument boils down to a requirement for special attention to be placed on differentiating between VFR tourism and diaspora tourism. This is not only to provide a better engineered tourism product, but too takes into account the relationship and well-being of both tourists and locals in VFR and diaspora tourism practices.

4.2.3 Sub-Conclusion

The conceptualisation of diaspora tourism in this section has predominantly been focused on engaging the differences and similarities with VFR tourism. This was chosen as a means to further the disciplines theoretically and in practice by offering samples from this projects empirical data with concepts previously proposed by research. Key to this section was undertaking a progressive approach to diaspora tourism understandings in a manner that opened the subject to interdisciplinary conditions while maintaining realities of touristic experience. The first concept detailed involved the proactive nature of diasporic tourism participation in moulding visitor's potential identification with Ireland. This understandings was then lead to a discussion on the ability of the diasporic visitor not just to shape their own realisations of Irishness but to have the agency of negotiating what it is to be Irish with locals themselves. Such transnational values equipped this thesis with identifying the '*personalised communities*' in which diasporic visitors can occupy, a valuable insight which not only differentiates the diaspora and VFR tourists but can add value to future tourism policy indicated towards diaspora engagement. The trip of a lifetime visitor provided a real example of the importance of not just identifying a diaspora tourist but potentially realising their sustained impact on homelands. This evolving nature of the diaspora tourist will be central to uncovering societal and tourism related construct to be discussed in the final section of this analysis. Importantly, these concepts will provide theoretical underpinnings in the following sections by assisting in alternative methods of thinking when analysing The Gathering.

4.3 The Gathering Impacts on Citizens, Diaspora and Tourism

This section of the analysis will aim to elucidate on the approach and implication of The Gathering 2013 for three distinct categories; Irish citizens, the Irish Diaspora, and Irish tourism. The composition of this break down has been determined to best utilise the empirical data collected as well as to allow for highlighting of distinct stakeholders effected by The Gathering 2013 tourism initiative. The selection of areas is by no means enclosed and further affected stakeholders will appear in discussion. It is also worth noting that the three areas have not been determined as mutually exclusive and will naturally encourage overlapping themes that will assist in a competent analysis. What is fundamental to this section of the thesis is that focus be laid specifically on The Gathering 2013 project in order to comprehensively understand the impact this tourism project had on the selected areas. In doing so, this thesis will have the tools to best interpret the legacy of The Gathering 2013 while independently discussing implications of diaspora tourism in Irish society. Progressive theoretical concepts concluded in Section 4.2 will be used to accomplish these goals.

4.3.1 Irish Citizens

This section of the analysis will look to how the approach and implementation of The Gathering 2013 impacted Irish citizens. Irish citizens in this manner is referring to people currently residing in Ireland. Although the term naturally has greater meaning, this is done merely for the sake of simplicity. As broader theoretical conceptions of the new relationships and spaces introduced to Irish citizens from diaspora tourism activities have been already discussed in Analysis Section 1, the focus here will look more specifically at the governmental objectives proposed before The Gathering and the impact of said objectives execution on Irish citizens. What is wished here is to discover the processes of The Gathering, including potential future outcomes, as a governmental originated tourism policy. In doing so, realisations of the impact, or potential lack of impact, can be deduced to help evaluate and re-evaluate the success of The Gathering as a *“people’s project”* (Final Report, 2013, p.16). The Gathering 2013 claims to provide a platform for Irish citizens to organise local events with the hope of engaging diaspora members from around the world (Final Report, 2013). Important to bear in mind is the potential of tourism policy as an effective tool for governments both politically and economically (Sharpley & Telfer, 2015). The following will look to clarify The Gathering’s role as a platform while taking into consideration

the future relationship that is to be held between Irish citizens and the Irish Diaspora. In doing so it is hoped to deliver a quantifiable summary of whether The Gathering 2013 impacted upon Irish citizens in the manner claimed and if there have, or will, be further ramifications of the tourism project.

One of the key elements highlighted by both the empirical data collected in Ireland and from reports of The Gathering online was that Irish citizens are to be heralded as both a primary resource and beneficiary of The Gathering 2013. Policy for The Gathering initially is represented as a solely government led tourism initiative. Such rhetoric was considered undesirable, with the labelling of The Gathering as a peoples project determined as a more appealing identification. Although the 're-branding' of The Gathering to a people's project connotes political agendas being secured, it is not the purpose of this section to clarify on the reasoning's for this change but alternatively to study the change as it occurred, and analyse the impact of The Gathering on Irish citizens. The Irish government labelled the Irish citizen as the key component for the success of The Gathering. The build up to the project was dominated by regional and local meetings with interested community members actively participating. These meetings were fronted by Fáilte Ireland and appointed county coordinators. The meetings were seen as portal for which to provide training to Irish citizens in preparation for planning community events for The Gathering. The empirical data provided further insights into community meetings with the respondents interestingly offering differing viewpoints. Mealla Fahey firmly supported the new structuring of the meetings and believed they provided an equipped training guide for local citizens to acquire the necessary competencies for planning and organising Gathering events, while Dan McGrath was not so much in disagreement with this perception, but more the fundamental failing in the timing of the meetings that appeared to be a cause for concern. Anecdotally as a grievance, Dan McGrath's concern here may be interpreted as humble in nature and an issue associated with local multi-layered development meetings but it must be highlighted that these steps in the process were The Gathering's first communication with local citizens who are to supply the legs for the project. Such is the nature of the connection proposed and both sides, diaspora and citizens, ability to influence, failure by The Gathering to effectively engage with local citizens erroneously damages the process as a whole. The negotiated nature of diaspora and Irish citizen engagement will be further discussed in section 4.3.4 but it must be pointed out here that failure for The Gathering to effectively connect with Irish citizens will be detrimental for building a connection between Irish

citizens and the Irish diaspora.

A central function of The Gathering was not just to engage the Irish diaspora but to create a lasting relationship between the Irish diaspora and the people of Ireland. In order to secure a tourism product aimed at supporting an influx of diaspora members to Ireland, a national engagement with Irish heritage was heralded. The impact on the citizens of Ireland was felt strongest in the manner that they were made to reflect upon their own personal cultural and societal history. Genealogy programmes such as clan gatherings or other historical events prerequisite a commitment of local communities and community members to acknowledge, explore and develop narratives of personal cultural value. This is done in order to create a structure capable of supporting the needs of diasporic visitor wishing to participate in roots tourism activities. It is within this concept that a classical argument in contemporary tourism arises. In The Gathering example the question stands; is it for the benefit of the local community or for the tourism product that Irish people now engage their own heritage. What is equally important is questioning whether the two concepts can or should be differentiated. Mealla Fahey acknowledges that the bottom line cannot be ignored, particularly in an economy such as Ireland's which is slowly progressing out of a recession.

"you have to look at it because people do look at the bottom line, the country was looking at the bottom line figure, they were going how can we make this work for us...it might seem mercenary but it's what makes it happen"

Mealla Fahey (Appendix 1)

This point is of absolute importance when looking at the case of The Gathering due to the nature of its conception. A governmentally organised tourism project structured in Ireland between the years 2009-2012 will only have one primary concern in its operation; to not lose money. Of course this could be said for almost every tourism project throughout the world but with an economic crisis, bank bailouts, a bust construction industry and rapidly rising levels of unemployment, the years 2009-2012 were crucial for many reasons and a tourism project putting the national budget further in the red was simply not an option. With these points in mind, The Gathering's claims of being a project *"of the people, by the people, for the people"* (p.16) is questioned as political positioning comes into play (Final Report, 2013). In this instance it appears that The Gathering is predominantly concerned with benefiting Irish tourism as product opposed to engagement of the Irish citizen with local heritage. Although there is some substance to the *'of the people...'* (Ibid,

2013) claim by The Gathering officials, a more pressing concern is raised. The Gathering as a community lead tourism initiative could have been more blatant about the desired outcomes. The Gathering as a project looking to increase tourism numbers and boost the Irish economy appears successful. Complicating The Gathering's modus operandi with forced societal benefits acted negatively towards to potential success of the project. Animosity for The Gathering from public figures like Gabriel Byrne, who labelled it as 'The Grabbing', was founded in the Irish government's attempts to squeeze money from the diaspora. If The Gathering was produced as purely a tourism campaign, then such hostility may have been avoided, for what is any tourism campaign but a means to promote and generate income for a destination. The *'for the people, by the people'* mantra appeared to only act against the reputation of The Gathering. Irish citizens potentially could engage with diasporic community members outside of government tourism initiatives, as seen by the clan gatherings, in a manner which would heighten the impact of the relationship between Irish citizens and the diaspora. The approach by The Gathering in this case appears to have overcomplicated the issue and potentially isolated support from Irish citizens. Current tourism initiatives such as The Wild Atlantic Way (Wild Atlantic Way, n.d.) and Ireland's Ancient East (Ireland's Ancient East, n.d.) do not derive criticism in public opinion despite being of similar structure in operation to the set-up of The Gathering i.e. local community run projects as part of an overarching government supported tourism platform. The success of The Gathering could have potentially reached even greater levels by achieving wider support. This in turn would be the most successful scenario for implementing a long term locally based strategy for supporting genealogical tourism, building diaspora relations and securing the legacy of The Gathering. The political seal of The Gathering 2013 to proclaim community based ideologies can be deemed as too transparent to truer, more economically centred, operational goals.

The main point to get across here is that The Gathering, through miscommunicated ideologies of their goals, ultimately failed to engage with the average Irish citizen and even went so far as to disengage those who may have been crucial to a successful initiative. A resemblance can be reflected from the conception that returning diaspora members can feel alienated in their ancestral homelands due to disillusionment of what is presented and what they are seeking. Similarly, due to the aforementioned miscommunication, The Gathering was seen to alienate Irish citizens by failing to focus the programme. Maximising profits and maximising community cohesion is admirable yet difficult to accomplish. Whether the miscommunication came from the

inability of The Gathering to clarify its message or the inefficiency of the Irish citizen to listen, it is reasonable to assume the failing negatively affected both parties.

4.3.2 Irish Tourism

The Gathering 2013 is heralded as the largest tourism initiative ever attempted by the Irish State. This section of the analysis will analyse and discuss the implications of The Gathering on the structure of Irish tourism. Official reports on the performance of The Gathering heavily discuss the legacy aspect of the project i.e. what will be the effects of The Gathering when the year-long programme is completed. Concerns in this area were predominantly focused on how the newly solidified relationship with the diaspora will be sustained. While this is an important aspect of the project and will be discussed in Sections 4.3.3 and 4.4, it is not the focus at hand currently. This section will rather look at the impact of The Gathering on the face of Irish tourism. It is believed that in order for the legacy of The Gathering to be fulfilled, Irish tourism will have to react accordingly to supply platforms on which The Gathering's achievements may continue.

4.3.2.1 Disturbance to Current Programmes

The following section will examine some of the potentially negative consequences of The Gathering. This is done not to be overly critical but to stimulate conversation into possibilities of making any potential future programmes more successful in the long term. One such negative consequence which arises from the empirical data in the interview with William Whelan is the case of government backed tourism initiatives impacting adversely upon current tourism events and programmes. The manner of any such disruption can be seen as twofold. In the first instance, overbearing tourism programmes can constrain locally run programmes by overriding, or temporarily suspending, annual events in order to accommodate particular mandates from tourism boards and government funded programmes. The second instance of disruption can arguably be described as more sinister in nature due to its potentially long lasting effects in a society. Funding, sponsoring, and prestige in local event planning can blur the true meaning of success in community lead projects. The Gathering directly encouraged those currently running any projects, particularly in relation to diasporic or heritage subjects, to “*badge up*” and get their programmes under The Gathering 2013 banner (William Whelan, Appendix 3). As demonstrated in the empirical data, local heritage programmes will have been running for 30 years or more and were not doing so to

gain entitlements. They rather existed to get involved with groups such as the Irish diaspora through a natural progression of curiosity and passion.

The minute the Gathering was over a report was prepared, four civil servants got a promotion, a minister got a pat on the back and they actually did make a couple of bob [money] for the country, not quite as much this and the figures because events that were already running around the country got badged up

William Whelan (Appendix 3)

An issue with the badging up of events draws back to the Section 4.3.1, in which the problem of miscommunication in alienating Irish citizens was discussed. ‘Badged up’ programmes can devalue the effort put in by volunteer Irish citizens to programmes as they will now be accredited to The Gathering, with rewards following suit. As has been stated, this can lay at the core for potential disillusionment in local tourism planners and heritage workers as their effort is not necessarily reflected in gratitude. Funding from Fáilte Ireland for Gathering events was also adjusted depending on the scale of the project being run. This too can create a competitive desire amongst local community members to produce appealing facts and figures when planning tourism events as to procure greater funding. Naturally funding can be advantageous to community groups but caution must be advised particularly if there is potential for rivalry and jealousy amongst competing organisers at local levels.

4.3.2.2 Short term Planning

For a tourism initiative as grandiose in scale as The Gathering, the event occurred over a condensed period of time. While acknowledging evidence from the empirical data of the often rushed time frame in the planning of the event, declaring The Gathering as a brief note in Irish tourism history is more glaringly evident in the seemingly abrupt end the initiative and associated programmes experienced. The Gathering 2013 Final Report advocates the continuance of community lead events in order to sustain a meaningful relationship with the Irish diaspora. Continuance is used in this instance opposed to reoccurrence as it is deemed more viable to act upon gained momentum instead of repeating The Gathering initiative in its entirety. One of the major reasons given for this stance by The Gathering Final Report is the belief that “*it would not be feasible to mobilise the national and international effort*” (p.5) in less than five year cycles and therefore more prudent to focus on diaspora and community engagement projects currently in

place. While there is merit and rationale to such an approach, it is the opinion of this thesis that a more factual representation of the difficulties of procuring effort is being drastically overlooked, namely the demanding nature of mobilising volunteer groups to continuously address tourism concerns and promote diasporic relationships repeatedly. Herein lies the folly of The Gathering 2013 organisers in expecting that the built relations are to be sustained with minimal structuring in place to support those who wish to try. As an economic resource, The Gathering has met its best buy date. William Whelan divulges that at initial meetings for The Gathering were focused on the immediate fiscal impact of the project stating “*we don’t really want long term planning for this one at all, this happens this year*” (Appendix 3), clearly neglecting aspects pertaining to long term impacts on Irish tourism. It appears this notion is not unfounded as in the two preceding years of The Gathering the focus of Irish tourism has shifted dramatically. In 2014 The Wild Atlantic Way was launched placing emphasis on the marketing of Ireland’s rugged Western coastline while in 2015 Ireland’s Ancient East was the chosen promotion for Irish tourism with the focus on the abundance of Viking settlements and British castles on Ireland’s East coast. While there is not necessarily a direct correlation between promoting a new facet of Irish tourism and abandonment of a previous one, it does raise certain cautionary flags due to the apparent lack of new information being prepared on The Gathering since 2013 aside from government produced reports heralding its roaring success. Proposed independent studies are as of date unavailable and it is noted their findings will provide an invaluable resource when released. A key schematic however in these various projects being launched year after year arose in the meeting with William Whelan. This schematic took on a political form, a force with which tourism studies is inherently acquainted. Policy and planning in tourism understood as “an amalgam of economic, social, political and environmental aspects”, best demonstrates the shifting nature of projects of Irish tourism (Hall, 2008 p. 14). Policy makers and planners who were decisive in executing The Gathering required immediate reparations for their investment. This is due in large to the altering nature of political environments. Leo Varadkar, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport at the conception of The Gathering, who is often cited as the originator of the idea, is currently the Minister for Health in Dáil Eireann, with an obvious shift in concerns and policy making. Naturally the new Minister for Transport, Tourism, and Sport, Paschal Donohoe will attempt to impose his own legacy on the face of Irish tourism and is attempting to do so in the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland’s Ancient

East. Such political positioning may be seen as normative but frustrates processes requiring true sustainment.

4.3.2.3 Passion and Innovation

In order to balance an analysis of the potential impacts of The Gathering on Irish tourism it is important to uncover potential benefits of the initiative on the makeup of Irish tourism. Potential positive impacts of The Gathering for Irish tourism overlap strongly with the projects influence on Irish citizens.

One central benefit identified for its soaring potential to address and innovate the Irish tourism sector at the ground level has been the newly discovered capacity of local communities to structure and organise independent tourism products. It is estimated that for The Gathering only 8% of organisers were from the tourism sector (Mottier *et al*, 2014). This reliance of The Gathering on non-tourism associated citizens of Ireland to influence the face of Irish tourism has previously been identified as a potential barrier for repetition of The Gathering due to demanding nature of the voluntary work required. However when focused momentarily away from tourism initiatives as expansive as The Gathering, there is now a growing understanding amongst local communities of the capabilities they possess to impact on their localities tourism product. This can be understood best by establishing that The Gathering has worked as an effective stimulant in Irish tourism as an opportunity but materialises as unresponsive when seen as a requirement. The interview with William Whelan (Appendix 3) introduced this mindsight through explaining the often expressed locals desire to be part of a club or social group but not let it dictate their existence. William Whelan acknowledges that he and other members of Dungarvan Heritage Society perhaps act like “*Cistercian Monks*” in their devoutness for local history, heritage and diaspora connection but this level of commitment will not be for everyone nor should it be a requirement for those who may wish to participate in heritage projects more freely. This too is connected with The Gathering’s identified ability of stimulating community members into proactive action for the benefit of local tourism. Dan McGrath is a prime example of such a reaction and furthermore demonstrates on a local’s ability to shape a new tourism product as their own, in this instance the McGrath Clan Gathering. The McGrath Clan Gathering will be analysed in detail in Section 4.4, allowing for full discussion of the points introduced here pertaining to the new potential of community members to foreseeably mould the future of Irish tourism products. Without going into too much detail yet, a

positive aspect of The McGrath Clan Gathering has been the ability to construct a locally founded tourism programme with wide spread ramifications to diaspora connection and the altering face of Irishness. The question arises then as to why the Irish government is seemingly more concerned with short run tourism ideas or gimmicks when a community orientated product has been in operation for decades? It is true that clan gatherings get badged up into The Gathering profile, but is that the support that is needed for these projects to succeed? Again these questions appear best answered by looking at how and where the lines of communication for an event such as The Gathering have broken down. Clan gatherings as products of innovative, passionate and hardworking locals should be considered central to the any legacy success of The Gathering as they appear the most to resemble projects *“of the people, by the people, for the people”* (Final Report, 2013 p.16).

4.3.3 The Irish Diaspora

The Irish diaspora were identified as an untapped resource for the Irish economy upon which a tourism project, based on attraction and retention, could achieve success. Estimated to contain upwards of 70 million people globally, with the majority located in North America, engagement with the Irish diaspora was not only seen by the Irish government as a benefit to tourism in Ireland but also having wider social implications that could benefit both the Irish diaspora and Irish citizens. It is with this understanding this section of the analysis will examine how The Gathering effected the Irish diaspora.

One of the primary groups The Gathering mobilised was the local residents in Irish communities. The other vital group to be mobilised was the Irish diaspora. The mobilisation of the diaspora by government lead tourism initiatives is both a challenging and sensitive task. As the tourism body in charge of promoting Ireland internationally, Tourism Ireland spearheaded the advertising of The Gathering abroad, with the greatest volume of campaigns taking place in North America. As this thesis has discussed, The Gathering has been identified as having dual objectives in reaching out to the Irish diaspora; convince the Irish diaspora home as tourists but also to lay the foundations for sustained relationships to be formed between the Irish people and the Irish diaspora. The identified positive influence of The Gathering on the future of the Irish tourism product focused on the additions that can be made by Irish citizens. This point of structuring is chosen due to goals and outline of this project to attest and critically analyse The Gathering from

a bottom up perspective. It would however be remiss to overlook other potential impacts of The Gathering on Irish tourism. For example the emphasised importance of developing business tourism with the newly connected Irish diaspora. While, as has been discussed, this attitude to the diaspora as a fiscal resource has been panned by many critics, it must be recognised as an alluring proposal to increase foreign spending and investment in Ireland. The insecurity of the Irish economy provides the context for such policy making and a burden of responsibility has been placed upon the shoulders of those in the tourism industry to assist Ireland in economic recovery. The Gathering 2013 will directly influence the potential for business tourism with the Irish diaspora by having devoted an entire year trying to directly market Ireland to them.

As has been discussed, there is a substantial generational divide in the Irish diaspora currently being engaged as returnees by The Gathering. With this in mind, Section 4.2 of the analysis focused primarily on the theoretical understandings of diaspora tourism by; distancing the concept from proposed relativity to VFR tourism (*Scheyvens, 2007*), unfolding the concept of “personalised communities” (*Hollinshead, 2004 in Coles & Timothy, 2004*), and introducing a new concept of negotiated ‘Irishness’ based on transnationalism foundations. These principles will now be used to explore the complexity that can arise from The Gathering as a policy instrument and the potential enduring effect on the Irish diaspora.

Hall and Williams (2002) identify the capabilities of tourism strategies, such as The Gathering, to target diaspora members and assist in turning their imaginaries into a realities through visitation. A pertinent observation by Jones-Correa (2002) and Perlmann (2002) claims that transnational activities past first generational migrants tends to be primarily concentrated on the cultural aspect of homelands opposed to the first generations greater economic and political connections (in Huang et al, 2013). Such a statement correlates with the discussion on separating diaspora tourism from VFR tourism as they present a heterogeneous grouping that cannot be addressed as one. When re-introducing a central goal of The Gathering however i.e. to engage with the Irish diaspora in a manner not just as tourists but potential investors, a critical issue arises – how can The Gathering hope to generate sizeable economic future investments to a diaspora concerned more so with cultural artefacts? This leads to a critical point of The Gathering and its ability to impact upon the Irish diaspora in such a manner that it is possible to re-invent the diaspora by re-negotiating homeland connections and transitional activities. This argument lies closely to two way process in which ‘Irishness’ can be negotiated in that the diaspora connectivity to

homeland must move beyond the imagined to the reality. The cosmopolitan nature of the visiting diaspora consequently will alter their structuring and makeup. By instigating memories of place through visitation, opposed to previous perceptions based on imaginaries and mysticism, The Gathering may shorten the generational separation to one seemingly similar to first generational migrants. This thesis acknowledges that this is indeed a significant task to complete, as strengthening a connection to the degree of a first generational migrant from one centuries removed sounds insurmountable, yet it must be the end game of The Gathering in order to secure outlined goals. Critically, this thesis postulates, in accordance with the writings of Huang et al (2013) that any realisation of this task will require successful connections to be made in genealogical tourism as diaspora tourists must have demands met, or potentially face disillusionment from their heritage and imagined homelands. It is at this point in potential relationship building which Jones and Jackson's (2014) critical observation of social encounters ability to construct, or reconstruct the very nature of place attachment comes to the fore. One such avenue for potential success is the rise in popularity of clan gatherings. This can be partly attributed to their more specified approach to diaspora engagement opposed to nationwide interactions. While clan gatherings, specifically the McGrath Clan Gathering, will be discussed in Section 4.4 of the analysis, they provide a useful understanding on the effect of positive experiences shaping a new structure in the Irish diaspora. Dan McGrath identifies the potential for an exponential effect in visiting diaspora members:

"Like I would be hoping to get the 150-180 people over a number of years, then you have those coming for a visit, like getting relations coming for a visit"

Dan McGrath (Appendix 2)

The success of a clan gathering can be drawn from the occurrence of not just a repeat visitation to the McGrath clan in Ireland, but the additional visitation of further diaspora who become intrigued from hearing stories of relative's experiences of visiting their ancestral homeland of Ireland. It can then be identified that the initial diaspora tourist is now occupying a role similar to that of a first generation immigrant. Through stories, souvenirs and ongoing connections, this diaspora tourist has the ability to pass on knowledge, to educate fellow diaspora members and assist them in visiting ancestral homelands, thereby adopting a role similar to that of first generational migrants. Anheier and Isar (2011) identify diasporic identities as not being rooted in place *"but forged in and through movement between places"* (p.84), an agreeable observation with the potential of The

Gathering and heightened diasporic connections. This role of mediation shifted to the diaspora tourist presents a new structuring of the diaspora abroad where once a group of people who relied on knowledge at a distance are now shifted closer in a manner that allows for a revitalised communication to occur. The Gathering's effort to support and encourage clan gatherings is therefore identified by this thesis as a catalyst for potential change in Irish diaspora complexion.

4.3.4 Sub-Conclusion

This section of the analysis looked to examine how The Gathering impacted upon the three identified stakeholder groups in diaspora tourism in Ireland. Firstly, The Gathering's effect on Irish citizens was discussed. This section was predominantly focused on trying to understand whether the central focus of The Gathering was to benefit local communities in their understandings of Irish heritage or concentrate on improving the Irish heritage tourism product. The conclusion was that neither effort was fully realised due to the failure of communication channels between the local Irish and The Gathering policy makers. Resulting unfamiliarity with The Gathering as a product lead to criticisms of the programme from many corners of Irish society. Secondly, the effect of The Gathering on Irish tourism was detailed. This was done by dividing the section into two categories. The first outlined the potential negative effects on the Irish tourism product, such as disturbance to currently running events and the apparent short term planning of The Gathering, while the second shed light on the encouraging innovative environment where The Gathering acted as a catalyst in local tourism production. By identifying the negative and the positive effects on Irish tourism an overlap was presented. If structures were put in place in Ireland to assess the level at which current programmes were running previous to The Gathering, such as clan gatherings, then time and effort would be better spent extending these structures to the diaspora opposed to the re-packaging of events with a short term shelf life. Lastly, the effect of The Gathering on the Irish diaspora was reviewed. This posited the idea that far removed diaspora tourists could possibly undergo a metamorphosis in which they could occupy a role similar to first generation migrants by re-creating imaginaries after visitation to Ireland, further spreading new perceptions to other diaspora members. Through negotiating Irishness and experiencing a positive connection to Ireland, it is possible for The Gathering to mould the Irish diaspora to a group better connected to their homeland.

All three concepts look to be in one way influenced by clan gatherings, whether positively

through encouraging innovation and engagement to Irish citizens in Irish tourism or more negatively as an underappreciated concept overlooked by concerns of economic respite. The following section will build on the concepts discussed here in order to provide a clear understanding of the operation and potential for clan gatherings to influence all facets of Irish diaspora dynamics.

4.4 The McGrath Clan Gathering

Clan gatherings have been a central schematic to the makeup of this analysis. In particular The McGrath Clan Gathering has produced an array of interesting insights into a new era of Irish tourism. Clan gatherings have the ability to impact upon all three key stakeholders outlined in section 4.3, a key observation in this analysis. This is accredited largely to the ability of clan gatherings to interact with the diaspora at a fundamental personalised level in which the creation of a unique tourism product is driven by aspects of passion and heritage opposed to financial clout. This bottom-up method of production will be used to look upon The Gathering through a lens focused on a key resource to Dungarvan and diaspora tourism, the McGrath Clan Gathering.

4.4.1 Frictions between Clan Gatherings and The Gathering

An observation made of The McGrath Clan Gathering was the frustration felt by organiser Dan McGrath in the stringent time measurements available in order to plan for The Gathering events. Time constraints negatively impact the organisation capabilities of planners, “*clan gatherings take time, you have to build up an effort*” (Appendix 2), resulting in missed opportunities when attempting to attract a global diaspora to Ireland. Section 4.2.2 discussed the once in a lifetime visitor in relation to adopting a new perspective of diaspora tourists as a separate entity to VFR travellers and progresses here to contemplating the requirements of such a tourist, particularly time. While such observations may seem mundane as naturally time will always be an issue, it provides an astute counter point to rationales of The Gathering organisers who were mainly focused on the immediate impact of programmes during the year 2013. As this thesis attempts to gauge the situation of planning a clan gathering from a local level, government mandates and scheduling for the delivery of a tourism product work counteractively to the necessary steady progression of achieving meaningful connections to the Irish diaspora and is not simply possible to rush. The McGrath Clan Gathering is offering what Timothy (2007) refers to as a “*specialised*

form of (personal) cultural and heritage tourism” (in Coles and Timothy, 2004 p. 220) which in this instance requires much voluntary attention from organisers to a finite number of potential tourists. While it is acknowledged by Dan McGrath that The McGrath Clan Gatherings are not closed to non-McGrath members, the value in the product is unlikely to appeal them. Allocating sufficient time then to help organise events such as The McGrath Clan Gathering is in the best interest of not only Dan McGrath and McGrath members but also the governmental end game of establishing meaningful relations with the Irish diaspora. This issue is linked with the previously discussed problems of the short term focus of The Gathering for the year 2013 and the overlooking of current diaspora engagement infrastructure such as The McGrath Clan Gathering. The identification of frustration felt in planning timeframes is being used here to further stress the importance improving communication flows at home in Ireland before being able to secure those with the diaspora abroad.

Section 4.3 introduced concepts on the ability of previously non-active tourism agents, as well as the ability of The Gathering, to act as stimuli in local tourism production. To effectively do so, well timed projects have the ability to both adequately train and inform locals of diasporic tourism needs as well as demonstrate a showing of respect to the care required for securing diasporic connections.

4.4.2 Locally produced Heritage

This thesis posits The McGrath Clan Gathering as a non-intrusive tourism product. What is meant here is the low-level of interference exerted on the project from policy in tandem with high levels of everyday touristic practices. In this manner cultural heritage assets for tourism consumption allow for increased recreational activities for residents as well as the opportunity to understand their own heritage better (Timothy, 2015 in Sharpley & Telfer, 2015). Such tourism products are locally created and controlled adhering to bottom-up modes of tourism production. While it is difficult to say such products provide a wide representation of local communities, they are being produced by community members actively engaging in tourism practices and not blockading against the potential of new sources of local agency.

A more dynamic dispersal of power is also realised by avoidance of favouritism in regional development programmes. The potential detrimental effects of a more centrally controlled genealogy tourism approach, bolstered by strategic use of the internet in marketing (Heinlen, 2007;

Lynch, 2009), are side stepped by the implementation and operation of locally controlled programmes. Such freedoms were discussed more generally outside of clan gatherings in the interview with William Whelan, with an understanding “*that when you are not about money you can actually free yourself up*” (Appendix 3). The McGrath Clan Gathering is not a designated programme of Fáilte Ireland and more flexible in interpreting their own heritage in planning tourism. Admittedly money is received for “*badging up*” (Appendix 3) under The Gathering umbrella but the concern here for Irish tourism boards is not for the tourism product being produced but the productivity and marketability of the initiative. In relation to heritage materialities, the fluidity of heritage products is supported by the physically intangible properties of The McGrath Clan Gathering. This is similar to the discussion presented in the theory that remote communities can now efficiently produce tourism content without acquiring physical attractions whose financial investment will often come with non-negotiable obligations. Similar to Poria et al’s (2003) heritage tourism conclusions, genealogy tourism can be particularly successful in this environment as focus is more on personal perceptions of heritage value, an intangible quality, opposed to any physical tokens. It would be remiss however to exclude the tangible constructions of heritage stemming from community planners. When physical heritage attractions are given the chance to be locally produced they provide an effective tool in telling local stories to potential diaspora tourists who may require some symbolism in their journey. The McGrath plaque commemorating the site of the now ruined McGrath castle in Abbeyside is based on local initiative to promote heritage in the region (Appendix 3 & 5). Free of requirements, the plaque provides a simplistic reminder of the heritage that still exists in a now largely residential area. Similarly the WW1 memorial in Dungarvan Heritage Centre may have received mixed responses if requirements were in place to ask Irish tourism boards for permission yet without such it has become a local point of interest (Appendix 3). Both examples fall into the physical heritage tourism attraction category yet exude an intangible relaxed manner in conception, adding to an air of locally moulded heritage productions. They require personal interpretation for understanding and in that manner produce a fluidity in their definitions. The McGrath plaque may historically mark an archaeological site for some and an old family home for others. The point being that the value is not fixated but mobile. Hannam et al (2014) claim that heritage tourism is often too transfixed with static interpretations, such as witnessed in museums, with an overbearing narrative present. Locally produced heritage, in both tangible and intangible forms, promotes a conceptually fluid

tourism product in that interpreted meanings will vary depending on the viewer.

This section has largely introduced the benefits of locally produced heritage products, concluding with the importance of accepting and understanding the mobile nature of perceptions. Opinions by the very nature will remain ambiguous yet bring this thesis into an important phase for understanding diaspora programmes such as clan gatherings. Direct government interaction with tourism practices is avoided in the examples provided above, with such an approach heralded as creating an environment of freedom for tourism practices. State policy is seen to be more efficiently used to create a supporting environment for such tourism industries, for example through improving regional infrastructure, and leaving this new wave of heritage tourism to spawn more naturally. Irish tourism has also greatly benefited in recent years of the consistency in 9% VAT which helps support a competitive tourism market. With relation to diaspora connection, it is believed that locally grounded heritage products have a high potential to evoke authentic meaning therefore substantially boosting the ability of sustaining relations. The following section will delve further into the personal value of The McGrath Clan Gathering but introduce concepts pertaining to wider societal benefits.

4.4.3 Individualised Tourism and the Central role of Heritage

Clan gatherings offer a unique illustration of the personalised direction contemporary heritage tourism has undergone (Meethan, 2004 in Sim & Leith, 2013). As discussed in Section 4.2, Ali and Holden's (2006) motivation of duty while personalised does not appear to successfully integrate diaspora members and homeland. This section then will aim to highlight how the personalised nature of clan gatherings can assist diaspora members in negotiating their connections to homeland and alter their role in relationships. This point can contribute to current trends in heritage tourism by providing an example of how different forms of personalised tourism can have altering impacts on locals and diaspora members alike.

Taking The McGrath Clan Gathering as a product of Irish tourism, there is a limited segment of interest for participants. This was discussed in the interview with Dan McGrath where questioned were pressed about the potential for non-McGrath participation in the event and although it was not dismissed off hand, it is deemed an unlikely uptake by travelling tourists to partake in a clan gathering not of their name (Appendix 2). The specialisation of clan gatherings

however does not alienate clan tourists, or clan tourism as a whole, from impacting on broader local economies. Hotels will be required to accommodate visiting clan tourists, bars and functions rooms to host events, restaurants and markets for eating and enhancing cultural experiences, and also other local tourist attractions to facilitate varying vacation interests. The last point in particular must be remembered that although the primary purpose of visitation may be to partake in associated clan gathering activities, opportunities to experience other local tourism treasures must be made available.

Garrod and Fayoll (2000) recognise that many local heritage or genealogy managers do not identify themselves as being part of the tourism business (in Poria, 2003). William Whelan points out in his interview the multiple occasion's local tourism offices have to defer tourists to local heritage committees and archive managers for seeking information, especially involving genealogy research:

"We are the guys you can come to, all of the other groupings treat you as a pain in the ass with the notable exception of the archives, or the library wouldn't be too bad. Like the tourist office, the first thing they will do is go "who can I send this person to?", because there's no cash in it, they have you at this stage so the job is done."

William Whelan (Appendix 3)

Although not the proprietors of tourism they often act as, such as with heritage, the curators. In these circumstances the lives of heritage volunteers and local community members becomes embroiled with the tourism industry. They are fundamental supporting actors to tourism. While this may not be revolutionary in scope it does begin to bear questions for events such as clan gatherings upon whether they can reflect the role they are now entering in local tourism. Important is to reiterate the main focus here of examining diaspora tourism from a bottom-up perspective in order to critically address the impact upon tourism practices and societal conditions. It is not as straightforward to concern heritage societies as assisting local tourism industries but to acknowledge the shifting dynamics in small towns such as Dungarvan that sees them becoming much more central to tourism processes. Events such as The Gathering herald attempts to increase social capital and the expansion of networks both in Ireland and abroad through their programme yet fail to realise the already pre-existing local conditions. Dungarvan provided ample examples that such connections have been ongoing for the last 30 years and in such cases policy like The Gathering is better targeted at supporting these relationships:

“I suppose as people who have been doing it for twenty years, our first reaction was are ye going to give us a bit of credit now at last....we are going since 1984, quite long established.”

William Whelan (Appendix 3)

Dan McGrath states the existence of McGrath Clan Gatherings taking place up to 15 years ago in Ennis, Co. Clare. This point is suggestable that such a drive in Dungarvan for heritage related activities is not a local phenomenon but perhaps a more available Irish quality. Along with sustaining local infrastructure, investing in amenities and servicing economies as normative state activities outside of tourism in local communities, this project again reiterates the point that the Irish government should have more prudently examined the resources available at home before designing a policy which details already present attributes. The perspective of this project allows for this understanding to be witnessed. Effective training and development of the matter would have given the opportunity to locals such as William Whelan and Dan McGrath to understand the touristic role they play in local communities better.

It is also worth noting that as an organiser of The McGrath Clan Gathering, Dan McGrath demonstrates nuances of tourism organisation whether he is aware of it or not. Dan McGrath speaks clearly about the need to stagnate the diaspora tourism experience in a way not to exhaust local resources on initial visitation. Furthermore this conveniently concurs with planning of diaspora trips which are inclined to be attended by the 50 year plus demographic and occur over concentrated week long breaks. Dan McGrath notes exhaustion amongst visitors as a real detriment to experience enjoyment and this will only be exacerbated by over packing schedules to assure visitors see all that has to be offered in way of their heritage during a single visit:

“We also weren’t expecting the age as high as it was, we thought a bit lower and keep going, we realise now we have to give a little bit more time between, some of these people are like in their mid-70s, and we have to be ready for that you know”

Dan McGrath (Appendix 2)

By organising the McGrath Clan gathering efficiently, that is spreading the experience and recognising demographics, the clan gatherings appear more sustainable in the long run while simultaneously providing tourist satisfaction. There will however also be diaspora tourists to Ireland who will truly wish to have a once in a lifetime experience. This may be due to economic,

distance or time constraints and will require attention when encountered. The McGrath Clan Gathering scheduled for 2016 is currently attempting to organise a cross Ireland trip over the course of two weeks. The benefits of this can be twofold. Firstly it benefits McGrath diaspora members seeking a once in a lifetime trip to Ireland as they will experience a 'road trip' style vacation, with access to McGrath heritage, Irish culture and community activities throughout Ireland. Secondly the dispersion of McGrath diaspora members from a concentrated locale in the Dungarvan and Waterford area minimises the over exhaustion of local amenities, allowing for McGrath members who do wish to repeat the clan gathering to have viable local options without being required to plan a long stay in which to travel all around Ireland. While the once in a lifetime tourist may be difficult to transform to a repeat visitor due to outlined constraints, it is possible to solidify their affinity to Ireland in a nationwide tour, strengthening the possibility of them adopting a new role as a tourism mediator to the diaspora as outlined in Section 4.3.4.

4.4.4 Imagined Realities

Clan gatherings have already been discussed as providing a unique individualised local tourism product. They provide a passage for members of the Irish diaspora to mediate their way into Irish experiences through genealogical connections. It is posited from these accepted notions that clan gatherings offer a chance to create a physical setting in which concepts of imagined communities are challenged or reaffirmed. Building on the work of Andersen (1991) allows this thesis to place members of the Irish diaspora, for instance those attending the McGrath Clan Gatherings, as simultaneously being offered an opportunity to experience their imagined perceptions of the historical life of their ancestors in a setting created and supported by contemporary Irish society. A genuine meeting of past and present materials in the form of a tourism product. Such a realisation is an important step to understanding the spaces diasporas occupy particularly with regards to shifting global dynamics progressed by concepts of globalisation. Ahmed (2000) highlights the passing of time as creating a path upon which societies travel leading to a distancing from that of the imaginaries kept by diasporic groups (in Wagner, 2008). Such a distance can be traversed by return visitation, which acts as a bridge from perceived imaginaries before visitation to contemporary realities of homeland life. This bridging plays a pivotal role in diaspora tourism as it offers a connection for returnees without denigrating either Irish traditions or modern realities. This concept is aligned with that of Powers (2011) in which

homeland tourism, or diaspora tourism as referenced here, acts “*an interface between the gravity of history and the leisure of tourism, connecting heritage to consumable international products*” (p.20). This thesis postulates that clan gatherings act as key tool for connecting the diaspora member to Irish life. One such method of achieving this is done through the activities carried out at clan gatherings. The McGrath Clan Gathering highlights a multitude of examples where listening to music, watching Irish dancing or barbequing at a castle all represent a melding of history and modernity. For example at a pub in Dungarvan famed for traditional Irish music one diasporic visitor is referenced by Dan McGrath:

“McCarthy was playing, Noel Clancy was playing, Ciaran Galvin. So your man was saying Jesus I only see these guys on television and here they are feet away live, he couldn't get over it...”

Dan McGrath (Appendix 2)

The realism of the situation struck the diaspora tourist as they witnessed faces, sounds and senses previously only experienced through the medium of television, a medium which would have helped mould perceptions of Irishness had now been transported to their proximity. They too have been transported from their everyday life as a member of the Irish diaspora, creating a meeting of worlds as it were; the traditional and the contemporary, the foreign and the local, the pilgrim and the homeland. This relates again to Ahmed (2000 in Wagner, 2008) in which the characteristics of difference, strangeness and sameness are identified all in the one setting, placing the diaspora tourist in a position which their own perceptions are centrefold to comprehending constitutions of Irishness. The McGrath Clan Gathering as a local operational tourism initiative provides a platform for this event to take place, autonomous of over bearing policies which have the ability to constrain diaspora tourism products (Powers, 2011). It is in this formula that the Irish government has the opportunity to achieve the goal of securing a sustained connection with the Irish diaspora. Through this meeting of the past and the present, the posited possibility of shifting the role of a diasporic tourist to that more similar to a first generation migrant can be realised. As this thesis has already stated, such a transformation will both assist The Gathering in connecting with a more investment orientated diaspora while encouraging the diasporic visitors new found role as a cultural broker.

4.4.5 Sub-Conclusion

As a whole, The McGrath Clan Gathering has acted as a lens through which to examine the objectives, failures and achievements of The Gathering. This section of the analysis concerned itself primarily with examining The McGrath Clan Gathering as a locally produced specialised tourism product. The very freedom enjoyed in structuring clan gatherings appears to be linked with the inability of government policy to identify clan gatherings as an efficient tool in bridging the connection with the Irish diaspora. Through discussing imagined realities to '*personalised communities*', there is potential for clan gatherings to satisfy diasporic visitors both as tourists and migrants. The previously discussed aspect of potentially altering the perception of diasporic visitors to that of first generation migrants is best supported by clan gatherings in which the potential for tourism satisfaction is accomplished.

4.5 Analysis Conclusion

The analysis of this thesis has attempted to detail the nature of diaspora tourism in a manner which will allow for assessment of the impact of The Gathering and the potential for its legacy to legitimately create a long lasting connection with the Irish diaspora. One aspect which greatly helped in achieving this was understanding the notion of diaspora tourism being something very much alive and far from a static state. The proactive nature of diaspora tourism demonstrated the ability of the diasporic visitor to now have agency and influence their own conceptions of 'Irishness'. By separating the concepts of VFR tourism and diaspora tourism this thesis was able to identify the potential creation of 'personalised communities' which in turn acted as an example of the evolving nature of not only specifically diaspora tourism, but also diaspora members, Irish citizens and the face of Irish tourism. The Gathering's impact on Irish citizens at a local level became difficult to fully grasp as it was unclear whether the project was implicitly more community driven or economically focused. Miscommunication is accredited with such confusion and this thesis must emphasise the importance of clarifying roles and goals in future initiatives. This will be particularly important if local clan gathering organisers and heritage workers are to realise the importance of the role they will come to play in sustaining diaspora connections.

The potential effect on Irish tourism of The Gathering was divided into two separate yet equally important parts; the negative side outlining the short term planning consequences and

concerns for interrupting currently running programmes as well as the positive side detailing the innovate environment which was encouraged. By analysing these parts separately an overlap was presented where a crucial need for assessment of current diaspora structures in Ireland is required before extending them abroad. This would hopefully provide a more efficient use of time and resources for The Gathering opposed to attempts at monetising already successful concepts for short term gains. The nurture of already running programmes instead of their re-packaging would have greatly assisted in building on the existing connections to the Irish diaspora which in turn would encourage them to potentially assimilate to new roles of cultural brokers. Clan gatherings were heralded as potential bridges from the old to the new, the imaginary to the real, to help acclimate diaspora visitors to a closer connection to Ireland while re-creating their roles. Following this pursuit it is not just the Irish citizens who will be a resource for connecting with the Irish diaspora but the conversion of the diaspora themselves to Irish ambassadors upon returning home will exponentially assist in establishing connections for tourism and investment alike.

5. Conclusion

Tourism is often erroneously seen as a panacea by nations for socio-economic ailments. There is merit to utilising tourism in conjunction with broader development projects as a complimentary approach to stimulate social, political and economic grievances. The Gathering 2013 while providing a quick fix to the balance sheet of the Irish economy may have not been best utilised to sustain the desired legacy of connectivity to the Irish diaspora. The personalisation of the heritage tourism product in Ireland, for instance in the case of clan gatherings, can garner a genuine rapport with the diasporic community all the while placing a strong responsibility in the hands of local communities. It is suggested that the Irish government is to look here first, at local communities, at the potential for social entrepreneurship and ingenuity, at innovative cultural and societal events, for realisation of creating honest sustainable connections. Much of what The Gathering intended to introduce was already very much existent. Through policies addressing current strengths and weaknesses of communities across the nation, The Gathering would have greater utilised a primary resource of the Irish nation, the people. Local communities as the primary creators of heritage tourism provides a sense of authenticity and familiarity, attributes which will promote social cohesion through support and collective values, while benefiting tourism in short and long term

categories.

The co-creation of the Irish identity and “*personalised communities*” promotes the transnational relationship existing between the Irish diaspora and Irish citizens. The Gathering as a programme offered a static glimpse of Irish life. Quite often it has been suggested by critics that pandering to the diaspora as a response to economic issues was selling the strongest asset remaining to the Irish nation, national identity. Welcoming of the diaspora home to Ireland is better concentrated on encapsulating the heritage experienced by both parties, whether similar or different, as after all it is together that they will construct an Irish identity. Such an inclusionary process has the possibility of adding new contextual layers to diaspora relations through recognising the evolving nature of roles. New diasporic brokers are being formulated, showcasing the potential for diaspora members not to solely be considered an external investment opportunity but an internal asset exporting cultural heritage.

6. Future Research and Implications

The research of this thesis relied upon the value obtained from clan gatherings, specifically The McGrath Clan Gathering, in reaching conclusions of the individualised qualities of a diasporic tourism practice which allow it to form new connections, brokers and realities in the tourism and diasporic space of Ireland. The information on clan gatherings even though supplied by practitioners may be better augmented through future possibilities of participation with a more ethnographic centred approach. Participant observation approaches too can offer the chance to attempt additional forms of data collected, such as focus groups, a technique which would help add the diasporic opinion first hand to research and provide an opportunity to build on grounded theory in order to develop compelling theoretical components.

Transnationalism’s role is transcendent too of fixated governmental barriers especially when conducted at a sub national local level. This can have a major impact on international relations through the creation of connections not normally perceived as accessible. This area of diaspora tourism pushes towards a more societal, cosmopolitan stance where it is no longer sufficient to look at context separately or comparatively at national, or subnational levels, but necessary to construct the picture as a whole to allow for detailed comprehension. With regards to the future of diaspora engagement in Ireland, government structures appear to be garnering an

understanding of this accord, particularly through resource allocation in relation to community appraisals. Perhaps mirroring one of the sentiments of this thesis, the Irish government has recently abandoned plans to construct a National Diaspora Centre in Dublin with Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport Pascal Donohue stating:

“Rather than trying to limit the many and varied stories of our Diaspora by putting them into one centre, I believe that they are more meaningful and appealing to locals and visitors alike when told in the context of the places that our emigrants came from...”

Donohue (2015) Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

Such an action gives aspiration to the possibility of the Irish government realising the true value of communities in diasporic connection and the benefits of sharing these connections for social, economic and cultural reasons. Changes in policy such as this are advised to be monitored in the future.

The research of this thesis has been predominantly focused on aspects of The Gathering pertaining to a lasting relationship with the Irish diaspora becoming a realisation. Given the requirements of remaining in the tourism theoretical field, the conclusions of the thesis were accordingly focused. However it must be detailed of the possible benefits in expanding the knowledge base to cross-disciplinary research for furthering the aforementioned conclusions. In discussing diaspora tourism a number of topics have been briefly touched upon including migration and citizenship, two provocative topics in Irish discourse of recent. Immigration to Ireland from both E.U. and non-E.U. states has been met with societal and political barriers, impeding the ability of newcomers to Irish society to partake within the *‘personalised communities’* Irish citizens and the Irish diaspora have been privy too yet they remain a central part of modernised Ireland in a global age. Naturally, their inclusion in discussion would require in depth knowledge of migration and global development studies but this can be assisted by the criteria for negotiating identity outlined in the diaspora tourism examples of this work. Most recently Ireland has altered the rights of ‘non-nationals’, a disputed colloquial term for the non-Irish residing in Ireland. Non-national parents do not retain the right to citizenship in Ireland in cases where their child has been born on Irish soil (White & Gilmartin, 2008). This in turn hinders the ability of new Irish citizenship status children entering a new negotiated ‘Irishness’ by interruption of their space and place due to legal and political discourses. The complexity of

‘Irishness’ is not enclosed in diaspora, homeland, and tourism enclaves and requires broadening disciplinary analysis. Political inclusion in research too would assist in unfolding the role and rationales of the newly created ministerial position of Minister of State for the Diaspora in Ireland, an expanding sign of the Irish position of diaspora studies outside the tourism field. Whereas in Section 2.3.3. usage of data triangulation for this thesis is noted, a cross disciplinary approach would recommend an interdisciplinary triangulation approach. It would be hoped such a method would provide researchers with enriched interpretations and methods relevant to the essence of tourism’s multidisciplinary characteristics.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Mealla Fahey Interview

Employee and Project Manager Lismore Heritage Centre. Conducted on May 8th 2015

Eoin: Did Lismore come with anything specific for the Gathering, for the event itself?

Mealla: Ya there was a lot of things that went on, there was a lot of things organized. We had huge County (Waterford) meetings where each little area was asked to put together a project. So like one of the big projects would have been light up the Blackwater (river), that was picked as one of the major projects for the year which took place on the 21st of June...all the little quays along the Blackwater had lights, they had bonfires on them, different things like that and this has become an annual event since then. It was bringing people back to those events..now a lot of the events that was held here say the Immrama festival of Travel Writing, the Robert Boyle Summer School, all of those they managed to bring people for those events from America and from the U.K., you know back to those specific events.

Eoin: For these people would it be the specific draw of the event to come to Lismore or would they include that as part of say (sic a larger journey)

Mealla: They would have as part of their trip to Ireland, so as part of it they would have used these as say the hook to come and afterwards traveled out from Lismore to more areas.

Eoin: So it like making Lismore one of your stops, ya but I suppose a lot of the tourists who do come want to as much as possible

Mealla: Yes as much of Ireland as they can. Really we haven't got a huge accommodation base so for us it's a lot of day-trippers and passing tourists, our accommodation base is very small, so people staying in Dungarvan would pass up here for the day and spend the day here and stuff like that. We wouldn't have a lot of overnights, its hard to get people to come and stay overnight.

Eoin: Is it just the one hotel we see here?

Mealla: One hotel here, the Ballyrafter House Hotel as well, it's a sort of 10 bedroom B&B overlooking the castle. The castle of course is open to the public, it takes in people as well for private lets so you're talking about €34,000 a week and its about 12 people it sleeps, and you can

pay extra if you want more people but it does sleep about 22 and apart from that now the hotel does sleep about 32 bedrooms, Ballyrafter is 10 and almost all the B&B's have closed in the last ten years, Bed and Breakfast is a dying breed in Ireland.

Eoin: Really, its country wide?

Mealla: Ya I mean I find its coming up, this year we seem to have a little bit of an upturn in it but a lot of them are closed but I suppose the ones that are left are finding there are more people coming to them. Dungarvan and this are have really lost a lot of prominent Bed and Breakfast in the last couple of years but I think it's because there is an awful lot of hotel rooms out there and a lot of hotels with leisure centers because people going away want that, especially Irish people

Eoin: Ya people want that especially the swimming pool.

Mealla: They want the pool, they want to relax, they want the whole package in one place but am like I suppose for us The Gathering was all about the smaller events, the niche events, trying to keep them in the town a bit longer.

Eoin: The organizing of these events, would it be done closely with the people in the town?

Mealla: Ya, they are all community-based, the three festivals we have here in June are very much run by the community..a lot of it would be done from this office, a lot of the PR, selling tickets, all of that kind of thing would be done from here but like they (the community) would have their own committees that would organize it in advance and get it ready, I mean a lot of these things take about six months to put together, any of the programmes that they do put together

Eoin: I've heard people saying about The Gathering that it came very quickly, between the idea being generated and the idea actually having to be done, and that maybe more time could have been needed?

Mealla: I think so, I mean there was a big build up to it the year before in 2012, we all knew about it we knew it was coming but I think when it actually came it took people by surprise. The year flew, there was so many events and so many things going on. For Waterford, county, I know that a lot of prominent people came back looking for their ancestors and that was actively promoted by Waterford tourism, you know Aidy Roach? She would be a reported in the U.K. who has gone to a lot of war torn areas and she has Irish connections from Waterford, she was

brought back. I mean it did fly, the whole thing seemed to have gone really really fast but I think a lot of the time that's what happens with these events, they do try and build them up and promote them to people but they go over people's heads until they are actually happening. So its kind of ...with Ireland's Ancient East coming up now again..I think the Wild Atlantic Way again kind of.....there is a lot of things they learned from The Gathering that they brought to the wild Atlantic way, and there is a lot of things they learned from the wild Atlantic way that they brought to Irelands Ancient East, so it is a process and they are learning as they go and I think it's only good for the area. They have put millions into promoting those three events in the last three years, coming up to 2016 we will have had 3 major marketing campaigns abroad, which are fantastic.

Eoin: Do you think they complement each other?

Mealla: Oh definitely, oh my God ya, definitely, I mean The Gathering was the start that got people interested, I mean I know tourists that would come in and say they didn't book for the year of the gathering but they booked for the years afterwards and I think that was obvious in Scotland as well when they did the homecoming, that it was the years after that they saw the benefit from the marketing that was done that year so I think the same thing is happening with the gathering.

Eoin: What would you think, the objective was of the gathering?

Mealla: Bring tourists to Ireland, I mean it was definitely to increase the visitor numbers that are coming in. I mean we have had to compete with the whole world, we are only a tiny island and yet we have such a large community abroad, we are trying to tap into that and get people to come back and I mean it's definitely to get people in to boost the economy because the economy was very, you know, very low at the time and it was seen as a way of really bringing revenue into the country and really get people back on their feet, and it worked you know you can see things have really picked up, I'm not saying it was all attributed to The Gathering but it had a lot to do with it, it did bring an influx of people.

Eoin: Do you think there could be some broader outside of tourism benefits from The Gathering? For instance, we (in Ireland) are always talking about the diaspora lately, in

politics and the president in his St. Patricks speech and then a lot of The Gathering they say that they try to reach out not just for tourism benefits

Mealla: For business people, well you know once people tried to research there roots and get back to their roots and discover they had connections with Ireland. I suppose what Failte Ireland did was get some really prominent people to promote it abroad. It got other people interested to say oh you know I think I have Irish connections. That would lead to them probably investigating that, business opportunities arising from that..you have an awful lot of international industries that are based here in Dublin and places like that and it would have gotten a lot of people thinking I must have Irish connections and it would have had a broader implication maybe in the business world as well as just in tourism but then tourism effects everything when you look at it, you know your local hairdressers, people working in restaurants, couldn't go to them if they hadn't a job. The hairdresser might say oh that doesn't have anything to do with me but it would have in the long run and it effects all the local businesses you know not just the direct businesses.

Eoin: Do you think people would realise this at the time?

Mealla: I think they did they got behind it. Like from a small village I see they really got behind it, thought it was a great idea, you know we had no kind of animosity on a small scale here with the small village we live in. No one said whats that all about, they really thought that God isn't it great that we are promoted abroad, that whoever comes in..they always love to see buses pulling in and people walking the streets, it gives a real buzz in the summertime here, people love to see that, because we had so many years without it really.

Eoin: Ya I would have never said growing up, I would have never thought of Lismore as a place people coming to visit.

Mealla: Ya you see you wouldn't and its gas that years ago it wouldn't have been a destination town but we have been trying to build it up as. I know a lot of the tour operators and cruise liners and stuff, they know and they have kind of put it on their itinerary which is great. It's a terribly (meaning incredibly) historic town, you've got a lot of historic buildings and different architecture, you've got the castle, American connections with the castle, Fred Astair and Adele Astair, Fred Astair the dancer used to dance up and down the main street here coming here for

three weeks of the year every year, and John F Kennedy's sister was married to the Devonshires, so that would have been a huge connection at the time of The Gathering as well to promote that, they had the 50 year anniversary as well of JFK coming to Wexford, Dunkenstown, and that was in '63 so it would have been 2013 the same year they had the big celebrations so we were also able to connect that with the castle here in Lismore, so it brought people here to Waterford as well. So theres a lot of connection, I mean there is two degrees of separation, I mean somebody knows somebody.

Eoin: It's true and if you can apply this to the tourism..

Mealla: Absolutely, I was here the other day and these two people came into the shop, and they spent two days living in our shop nearly. They were from Alaska and they were looking for their ancestors, the Lee's, and we just in the shop and I contacted a few local authors and historians to see did they know anything about these people, and one of these historians happened to be in town and said I will call in later, he called in later they were standing at the corner with a local lady looking at books behind them. The guy came in and said oh the Lee's they lived out in this house in Glengaragh, the lady who was looking at the books said oh that's my house, I live there now. So those people couldn't believe it, 2 degrees of separation, that's it. So she brought them for dinner out in the house and everything..took them out the next day and showed them where the graves are, so that's something that I don't think you get in any other country, something uniquely Irish and the gathering brought that out in a lot of people, it brought out that kind of, well we have always had it, the willingness to share information about your ancestors and stuff like that but I mean it definitely made people more aware of it, there was a lot of campaigns that went on to let people know you know do bring back your relations, or research your house you know whatever. So a lot of that went on there was a lot of publicity that wasn't evident say but went on in the background, and that people became more aware that there are so many Irish people living abroad and there is a possibility to bring them back home and if you brought half of them sure you would fill the country

Eoin: What do you think of people, who are say the naysayers towards The Gathering?

Mealla: Well, I don't know, I haven't met a lot of them but I do think you are going to get that it's kind of an Irish thing, and Irish trait as well, it's like they will say like at the moment Waterford is trying to get on the Wild Atlantic way isn't it but we could fall between two stools

as well because we want to be part of the Ancient East as well so we are not very wild, I mean I live on the coast, I look down at the coast every day and its more angulating than wild, but anyway I think there is going to be that and you do have that element all the time..you have people saying that will never work, and they will never turn around and say it has worked, I think you just have to be convinced that what you are doing is right, go with it and be positive about it and it does work, I mean what can you say about the people who knock it, I don't know.

Eoin: Say people were knocking it over being, a blatant money grab, but if your selling tourism

Mealla: That's what you do all the time, sales is sales, and no matter what way you look at it, your object in life is to sell yourself or to sell something, to sell a place, it's about making money and making money to make it go around, we have a business here, I would always say to the girls how can we look at making something out of this, you have to look at it because people do look at the bottom line, the country was looking at the bottom line figure, they were going how can we make this work for us, we have so many people working abroad, it has to be done, it might seem mercenary but its what makes it happen, nobody would have thought of those people living abroad, nobody would have thought of them or said bring them back if it wasn't for money, if we hadn't lost the economy, if we hadn't gone down the recession route then we would have all been happy out living in our ivory castles, which are about to fall down any minute, I think you are going to get that in society, people say oh that will never work they spent several millions but look at all that was generated for the country, it generated so much income and so much revenue and so much awareness of Ireland that you couldn't pay for that kind of advertising, you really couldn't and it made people who were never aware that they were Irish think of it..I emailed Mary there this morning but I suppose you have all the statistics from Failte Ireland anyway

Eoin: I have a lot but actually one thing that I couldn't find was the independent reviews, Fitzpatrick and associates was one name

Mealle: I must see if Mary has anything on it because she was part of the gathering team

Eoin: It said late 2014 so maybe you wouldn't get them on line, maybe not yet

Mealla: Ya not yet it's only May so they mightn't have published it yet, but if it comes up sure maybe I can email it on

Eoin: Ya just to see what the public surveys said, I can see what Failte Ireland said but it's nice to get the independent side.

[Man enters to conduct business over crafts]

Mealla: What were we talking about again, sorry?

Eoin: Oh we were talking about the naysayers, that people are going to be cynical

Mealla: They are, you have to kind of ignore it and have a hard neck, and go look this is eventually going to pay off, you are always going to get people with opinions that it's not going to work, any advertising they say that no publicity is bad publicity because anything that is being said about you whether it is good or bad means your name is out there, well you don't want it too bad. If you are being talked about it means you are doing your job

Eoin: Do you think the organizing of the gathering between all the different tourism boards, do you think it was a little complex? Failte Ireland, tourism Ireland, local councils?

Mealla: I think it was done really well, I mean from our point of view was we have a very good structure with tourism now, 10 years ago it wasn't like that we had no real connection with the council and tourism, now there is a tourism officer for the city and county, so it means that we have a say in it, Waterford didn't think tourism was a big part of its remit as a county because we had a lot of industry and the crystal (Waterford Crystal) did its thing abroad. I think we really lost out there because we hadn't anyone focused on tourism and now that we have, we have two very dedicated people in the council that are focused just on tourism and I think that for us we knew then what was involved in the gathering, what was happening and we were kept informed of all the different events and things that were coming up, there was a very good approach to letting people know that, there was a lot of meetings held, a lot of emails sent around informing you what was going on and what was next. From our point of view we were well informed and I think Tourism Ireland if you get the concept, like Tourism Ireland is for marketing us abroad, Failte Ireland is for marketing us internally, to help out with different things as in training, they have pulled back a lot from marketing I think their remit now is mostly training and they will

work with Tourism Ireland on the marketing, Tourism Ireland have the main marketing budget, Failte Ireland mainly put the stuff in place and Tourism Ireland go and sell it abroad. People are saying I know you have two tourism boards but Failte Ireland has been decimated and there is hardly anyone working in it now. It's very scaled back to what it was. I suppose this is why the councils never had a tourism remit really because it was looked after by Failte Ireland but now it is more locally managed and locally handled, it's a better way of doing it.

Say our tourism manager here with Failte Ireland used to be Gary Breen and he did Wexford and Waterford or Mary o Halloran would do Tipperary and Kilkenny and you know they kind of had a lot on their plate, there was nobody just focused on one county from the Failte Ireland end of things, they were regional rather than county and now that is totally scaled back there is only around 4 people working in Failte Ireland in Waterford working in the upper management levels and they have really scaled back their shops they are really just information, they are out making any money out of them and stuff like that, basically our county tourism boards are very important to us, and it does make more sense to have them working for us. When the gathering came it filtered down through them which is great because they know the groups to get together and get in touch with to make things happen, for me it works much better.

Eoin: Maybe we have already talked about it but about the legacy of The Gathering?

Mealla: Ya just to say that it has and is still resounding, it's still out there, people who heard about the gathering are still coming back. I found this year we have only had 5 months we are only in May now, we have an awful lot of people coming back looking for their ancestors, it's made us more aware as well to know where to look for that information for them when they arrive, before you would send them to the archives or send them to the library but you weren't really sure where information was as the gathering cleared that up for us, we had access to information on where to get ancestral records and stuff like that and direct people to the right place. I do think we need a bit more work on that to be honest, there needs to be a lot more work on genealogy around maybe local people with knowledge, getting together and putting their heads together on it. That is something for another era but definitely it made us more aware of it that's what people want, they want to talk to the people on the ground, know about their ancestors, it's so funny with all the Americans and Canadians wanting to know, are you related

to anybody, yes we have Irish connections all of them have Irish connections, and that's what they want to find out about, even if it's up in Donegal, they come and ask down here

[phone calls]

Eoin: We have covered most points I have here, anything else you would like to add about the Gathering?

Mealla: Well we had a lot of emails this one here is dated 30th January 2013, this came through to set out what they were going to be doing for the year and then the kind of meetings being held, I suppose like you said it did come on very quickly but we had an idea alright working in tourism but I suppose a lot of people out there who weren't working in tourism wouldn't have had an idea, maybe but mind you they had a lot of stuff on tv about it, you see when you are aware of it, like you say if somebody has a new baby you see babies everywhere, like that if I know something is coming up I will see it everywhere so it's just if people weren't aware of it suddenly they see these people talking about it saying what is that? But ya I think it was only good, since the gathering we have had major, major promotion abroad with the wild Atlantic way and Ancient East

Eoin: Would you think as well that the gathering could be seen as slightly exclusionary towards tourists?

Mealla: I don't think so, but I suppose everybody wanted to be Irish? You're saying if people weren't coming back looking for their ancestors they might have felt excluded? I don't think anybody was really made to feel like that. People coming into the country, people are basically welcoming it's one of our biggest traits, one of the main reasons people come to Ireland is the people. I don't think anybody would have made them feel like that, and I don't think they did, so I can't imagine that happening. I know that the marketing they did was tasteful enough, it didn't say you had to be Irish, find your roots but maybe your not connected but still come and visit, so I don't think it was exclusionary,..in my eyes [laughter] in my opinion

Eoin: No, no that's fine {laughing} but I think that was everything, a lot of the points I wanted to ask are covered here..

Conversation Ends

Appendix 2: Dan McGrath Interview

Local community member and organiser of McGrath Clan Gathering. Conducted on May 12th 2015

Dan: You see Board Failte were very interested in the figures.

Eoin: Yes, they wanted pay back for their investment and make sure that everything looked good

Dan: Like I suppose the lads that came in from America there was probably landing fees and all that charged coming in but it was a bit stupid like that if somebody came down from Belfast technically it is in Ireland but it is officially the U.K., you know that you weren't entitled to get money for bringing them down then although they probably spend more money in town than the guy coming over from America.

Eoin: They were very fixed on getting these big international numbers?

Dan: Ya the oversees numbers

Eoin: That's funny because I remember one of your answers from the first interview was about trying to get the domestic numbers

Dan: Ya because it's very hard to try and get the local people to buy into it

Eoin: You think if they did manage to attract them [the local people] there would be good value in it to get these lads in?

Dan: Ok it's like this right, clan gatherings take time, you have to build up an effort, like I had someone this morning from I would think the States and he said why didn't I hear about this before you know, why did I only come across it. It's a slow effort building up more and more people, like I'd probably get an email, like when we did the plaque in Abbeyside I probably had four emails from people that were interested in finding out more so it's a big thing to be getting out there and building up, widening it you know

Eoin: You think a lot of the effort for doing that is on you?

Dan: I do

Eoin: Assistance wouldn't have been the best even for The Gathering?

Dan: Like, we didn't seem to get a huge amount of help, like The Gathering gave us money for our gathering, they ran these courses that were actually too late when they did them. In theory they were ok. Granted I was probably more knowledgeable and as knowledgeable as the person giving it but it did help a number of people who were in there who wouldn't have been, but they were 12 months too late the courses

Eoin: When would you say you had them, 2012 sometime?

Dan: No, somewhere in 2013

Eoin: Ok so definitely too late! What would you say went on at the meeting, what was there purpose?

Dan: They were doing courses in social media, basically spreading the word. You see if someone is in England it's fine, if they find out four or five or even two months ahead, ok lets go, but if you are talking about someone from America, or in our case there was a couple from New Zealand, they only found out 6 months ahead, and one they didn't have enough time to save up the money plus to allow planning for it. They make it once in a lifetime, maybe for two or three weeks so you have to be in a position to do it. We had the dates set for next year before the last gathering started so we were planning next year straight away from then.

Eoin: You had them before the Gathering, The McGrath clan gathering wasn't new

Dan: There was a McGrath clan gathering about 15 years ago. They went in to Ennis, ok there's a lot more McGrath history in there, but they didn't have enough people on site, I don't think they had anyone really to put it, and the same thing seemed to happen in Donegal. The other fault it had was, they wanted it one year after the other, and it doesn't work. I've done some research into other clans, and the more successful ones, and they do it every 3 years because you have a lot of repeat people coming back and they don't want to come every year to Ireland doing the same thing. What was happening in some of them was it was the same thing so one of the things we decided was to make it different, or sorry allow to make it different. Like we didn't bring

them up to McCade castle, we didn't bring them up to Kilmanahan, because we need something different to bring them next year. So that's going to stand to us because some of the criticisms of the gatherings is that.

Eoin: So it's more long term planning your thinking. You're not just thinking about the next one you're thinking about the next three

Dan: Like grand, we have had word that we might be getting a castle hired and if we get that that will really give it a huge boost

Eoin: A good event you can plan a week or two around

Dan: Well what we will do is either have a barbeque on either the Friday or Saturday. Our official clan gathering is going to be from Thursday to Sunday which is the norm for these but ok this time we are being a bit more adventurous and there is an optional tour for making it a once in a lifetime so we are bringing them on a four night five day leaving here on Monday night to Cashel and into Clare for two nights, because Clare is where the clan started out, and either into Waterford or Donegal, so 2 nights in Clare and 2 in either Donegal or Fermanagh. More likely Fermanagh because it would be an hour down the road towards getting back because it's a long drive down. These people tend to be nearly retired so you have to plan a bit out for that too and we are going to go via Dublin on the way back because certain people will fly out, or stay in Dublin and do whatever else in Dublin, rather than bringing them all the way back down.

Eoin: And it was next year this?

Dan: Ya in June

Eoin: I was asking you about keeping in contact with everyone and you said the Facebook group is the main way

Dan: The Facebook group, and building up the mailing list and continuing it. Like at Christmas we send a Christmas card, an e-card, and told people to pass it along. We are tossing around sending a postcard with the last couple of months but the only thing is we don't really have enough addresses, I think social media is the only way to go. The majority of them, 85%, have an email address or some sort of social media

Eoin: You were saying to at the gathering meetings they were telling you to this root with some social media training?

Dan: They weren't necessarily telling us to go that way but they were giving us some knowledge on it. One of the groups what they did is sent out 100 cards to give to every family in the area, that was sort of one area or event and they actually did a Christmas card so people would know what's happening but that won't work because we don't have addresses for everyone

Eoin: Moving on to the next, I was asking how public or private the gatherings were in the questions I sent on. It's mostly through emails and Facebook that contact is made, so there's not really any way that people outside the mailing list would see it, say non-McGraths who might be interested in seeing it?

Dan: Well, it also depends, the local papers have loads on it, so in this area, the majority of McGraths in this area will know about it. We did get into the Fermanagh paper, I'm not sure about Donegal but we did get into the Fermanagh but like I said trying to get the Irish people to but its the idea, I'ts not that easy

Eoin: What would you think that comes down to? Mentalities?

Dan: Well they need an interest, the people overseas are more interested. Like in two weeks time I have 3 sisters [not his] coming home from America, and last week I had a man looking for his Great grandfather all in Dungarvan, trying to find family you know

Eoin: It's just a stronger pull?

Dan: Ya the genealogy, getting that bit of Ireland. I was looking last night and just people with the McGrath name tops 100,000 around the world, like America and Canada and Australia. That's just the McGrath name, like say someone who was McGrath and is now married or the Clancy brothers [famous local musicians] there mother is McGrath so that would bring out way way more of them, you can't calculate how much that would be

Eoin: Or the variations of the name too

Dan: Ya loads, it comes as far from love [in Gaelic]. Like in America there is lots of changes to it due to the fact when you arrived there people just spelled it wrong

Eoin: Would you say a lot of the McGraths you've met coming from abroad are interested in their Irish heritage?

Dan: Ya I remember one guy said to me it was the first time a member of his family set foot on Irish soil in 200 years. Ok we are spoiled here a little bit because of our Irish music, there is quality here. On an open night here last year, Donacha [pub landlord and musician] pulled out all the stops in The Local. McCarthy was playing, Noel Clancy was playing, Ciaran Galvin. So yer man was saying Jesus I only see these guys on television and here they are feet away live, he couldn't get over it and was stunned by the quality of the music we had. There was serious Irish music around the weekend, it was really worth it in that way. Our timetable was probably too hectic, that was probably the only fault we had, and we tried to put too much in, it was too hectic. It didn't allow us, we were looking at an Irish person were as these weren't Irish, they needed more of a break between events. We also weren't expecting the age as high as it was, we thought a bit lower and keep going, we realise now we have to give a little bit more time between events rather than finishing at 17.30 and ready for 19.00, we finish at 1700 and be ready for 20.00 or whatever. We make a dinner and start it a little earlier and let them have the option of finishing by 2300, have the formality done by 22.30, if you want to go away, some of these people are like in their mid-70s, and we have to be ready for that you know. There is a fair amount of people interested in it you know, just interested in the history too

Eoin: Like the McGrath castle that was in Abbeyside

Dan: Ya and there is a lot more interest in it now since the plaque went up, there is people there, I won't name them now but they're saying I can't believe I've lived here 40 years and I actually didn't know about the castle. That sort of spurred a lot of interest in it. I had people stopping me on the street saying well done but people were coming every year looking for it so at least it's marked and people know it's there or at least that's where it was. Hopefully the teachers in the school will bring the kids down and get people interested in it

Eoin: I went to Abbeyside School, and that's how I knew, they must have told us when we were young! When you have the McGraths to Dungarvan would you go to other historical sites as well?

Dan: In Dungarvan alone you have, well now we have the plaque where Abbeyside Castle was but across the road, on the step into the ruins, is the tomb Down McGrath. Out the road it isn't but it's Master McGrath [name of village and famous racing greyhound], it's still of interest who got the name from a McGrath lad who saved his life, out the road then you have Slaney Castle, a couple of hundred yards then you've got Mountain Castle and then back in Kilbannon is up there, Lismore castle well we are the only Irish family, it's debatable how long the McGraths had it, and then it's depending on who you are listening to whether we had Drumanagh but there is some who say we had Loughmaun castle as well. So there is quite an amount compared to other places that wouldn't have had and that helps here. There's a suggestion there is another castle up in Modeligo but the lads in the museum, or the experts in the museum, have one train of thought on it and others have a different train of thought on it if there was another castle up there. It's trying to find out 100% but it's not, it's difficult

Eoin: Finding out all of this would be done by yourself or by other local people who are interested?

Dan: There's a few of them there that I would love to be able to sit down with actually, record them, because they are not getting any younger and you would hate to see them gone with a lot of history gone with them. It's just getting the time you know. I'd love to get someone maybe doing an internship to do it but it's just getting the time and the interest to do it.

Eoin: Do you think it's the right way forward to keep this information and this development at the local basis, not too much what Failte Ireland is concerned with but more what's important locally?

Dan: You see Failte Ireland are only interested in getting numbers in, to go out and say in PR that they got so many people in. The clans are a huge economic boost. You say we get 150 people in here for four or five nights, that's a lot of bed nights. One hundred people for five nights is five hundred bed nights, and as well the couple of pound they spend whether it's only a bar of chocolate, there is serious money coming into the local economy. There is serious potential if it's done right. Like I would be hoping to get the 150-180 people over a number of years, then you have those coming for a visit, like getting relations coming for a visit, like I have some McGraths this time, like people from all over the States and Canada and get them home this time, so next thing all of a sudden you've got the numbers kind of increased and you can

have a great time. We are looking probably Thursday night at this stage, have the barbeque, the music Friday night, I'm leaving Saturday for the like the people who come on their own from overseas we can have an event or a few people who are visiting others they can have their time and then the clan dinner is on then Sunday night. That sounds like, like everybody goes to the clan dinner, they'll want to go to the barbeque in the castle, and not many locals are really interested in the talks so we are looking at doing the talks during the day on the Friday or we can have the tour around on the Friday and do the talks on the Saturday.

Eoin: Would you say there will be non McGraths, some locals, who will have interest in this? They would be more than welcome?

Dan: Like you know you have friends around that aren't McGraths but want to go to it. We will wait and see with the castle but if we need an extra couple for the castle there's loads of social climbers that would love to say I went to a barbeque in a castle. There is charges for everything obviously like we will need a bus to go from here to Lismore for the barbeque. The clan is now here in Dungarvan so we won't have to worry about that but the tour around we are going to organize busses for that too.

Eoin: How would the communication be between yourself and the local hotels or pubs, you don't have to name any specific ones.

Dan: I'd have no problem with them, they would come looking for me. They are looking for me for photographs, I have my own page in the Munster, an odd piece in the Examiner and probably every paper in the country has used one of my photos at some stage, and that's how I've got on the Board of Directors for the Clans of Ireland because of my media skills.

Eoin: I didn't know that you were on the Board of Directors for the clans of Ireland?

Dan: ya, it's only new, it will be in tomorrow's Observer, Ken was too lazy to do it for the Leader so it will in that next week

Eoin: I should say congratulations so! What will that entail so?

Dan: Meetings in Dublin and the like, well actually we will have a meeting next week before we go to the Aras, the Presidents, a meeting about the future of the clans of Ireland, we will be brought to the Aras for, I don't know what you would call it, to be welcomed and that. Basically

we will drive it forward and try to get more. I spoke at last year's AGM in Dublin which is held, well obviously each year as it's the AGM, to the delegates there just how to get and put together the logic of a clan gathering. You see these people are very very educated but they wouldn't have actually the logic of putting a b and c in place. Granted they are probably brilliant to talk, very deep you know and very knowledgeable on their subjects but they are not like you tell them to go and organise something and they wouldn't be the best. I suppose its horses for courses too you know! So I just said look its quite straight forward, you just organize your venues, ye know you're going to have talks. Like I end up doing it and I am a terrible public speaker, but I didn't want it all serious so I did a talk on a guy called Matt McGrath, he's a guy who won the gold for America, he's the only person we know of who got a medal of valor for his sport and the work he does, he's a policeman. I brought Ken McGrath in, and they dragged me, they wanted me to throw my father in and his brother, and my uncle would be Olympic champion and my father won four All-Irelands in a row so they want to put them in together, they'd be recognized. I suppose they would be right too. I suppose locally people probably with The Gathering initiative probably bought into it but we had already decided before any mention of the gathering was happening, like we had it done for 2012. We knew at the start of 2012 when we heard nothing that it wasn't going to be done, we had heard promises, so we said right we took a couple of people and said would you enroll, if you go at it we will support you. There was various jobs given and people offered their help so we were able to get going. It was just a matter of getting the word out then, so it has been building up, we are all looking forward to next year, we are helping out the lads in the north and Clare because they don't have any real base of heritage, like on the Tuesday the clan gathering in Clare, the McGrath Clare day, and the McGrath Donegal day will be on the Thursday and we will be giving talks at both, and there is a book launch in Clare as well. There is also talks of an Australian ambassador coming to it as well but that's a long time away

Eoin: Can I ask you then now overall what is your opinion of The Gathering as a concept would be.

Dan: The clan gathering itself or The Gathering initiative?

Eoin: Well let's start with The Gathering initiative first

Dan: Not an awareness, well I suppose an awareness, it did create an interest by the public into events that were being held. Like it probably did help with the marketing as people wanted to know what was going on. We could have done, like a load of courses, even the people were saying it could have been ran a lot lot earlier. I think they did a lot of things very late. They were crossing the 't's' in certain cases. Their website when it did get sorted was ok, but they were at least a year, two years behind time by the time they got going

Eoin: Would you think they are doing much to keep the legacy of it going

Dan: See there is a new fund there now, this is helping, I can't think of it, what's the word, diaspora? That's helping, but that's all, they are still giving money out to groups but some events are continuing and some aren't. I would think they would badly need to get back and pick another year for it, maybe 2018 or something like that? Maybe we wouldn't be having one there, we would be 2019 but they would need something maybe in like 2020 which is kind of a round number and then go every 5 years and then they would need to roll it out big time to get....like you take whoever ran an event, small events, like all them small events helped the country because they brought people in but all them small events then were only done because of The Gathering year. The Power gathering they were having it, there was a Kiely gathering that was kind of a big family, extended family one, that was ran because of the gathering, but there was all these other small ones that maybe brought in 15 or 20 people, just Waterford alone, maybe that's 200 people and you just travel around the rest of Ireland and that multiplies but they would need something like the gathering to keep them rolling, where as we would with the clan gathering be different. We are here every few years having our gathering, like hopefully we can keep it in Dungarvan because it's going to be annoying to try and run it somewhere else

Eoin: So your saying that the clan gatherings are really what is going to keep connected with the diaspora, it's the clan gatherings that are going to keep the relationship, not these grander initiatives (re The Gathering)

Dan: The clan gatherings are going to keep rolling and they are going to bring people back. They need to bring like the bigger events from The Gathering like St Patrick's Day is going to be there every year and New Year's Eve will bring a certain amount of people but say Tallow or Lismore are having a couple of events and bringing people in, you really need to have something like The Gathering to get everyone together like we are bringing everyone home. People try and keep

their thing going but when you have some sort of big national thing going they want to be part of it for the smaller events or sorry the non clan gathering events, they definitely need some sort of...[event planner]

Eoin: We were talking about the money, you said there was a bit of money made available

Dan: Ya well they paid so much for what it was. One clan gathering, which will remain nameless, but they got a lot of money, when I saw it I said what?! How come we didn't get that? They got about treble what we got, sorry no, six times what we got!

Eoin: Is there a vetting process?

Dan: Not a vetting process but they were probably able to twist figures to make it look really really big. I'm actually working on a submission to the festival crowd just now to see will I get a few schillings of them, and we will be looking for the Diaspora grant as well next year. [waiting for internet]

Eoin: Did you have any interaction with the County Managers. They had these newly appointed coordinators to do with the County Councils for each county, from what I understand, from talking to people at the Heritage Centre in Lismore, previously it was Failte Ireland set up more regionally based but with the Gathering they decided to break it down and have almost 32 coordinators, one per county..

Dan: Ya, well the guy pulled out midway through it because he got a job! He was no problem but like, he was a nice fella and all that...again I suppose when we got to meet him it was beyond, you know, it was too late. I'm going back to the time, the puch was too late...the people would be thinking something like 18 months – 2 years and I think that was the thing

Eoin: What do you think was the urgency to rush it out? Was it because they were really looking for a quick tourism booster and that was it?

Dan: well that's one possibility, the other is that they didn't realise there was so much more involved, that they didn't realise they need to give people this education as well and I think they didn't realise. You see a lot of people assume things like they can do this and they can do that whereas they don't, oh here it is it's a Tourism Diaspora Grant, this is the new thing that's there. Local authorities are giving these grants under the Tourism Initiative for the Diaspora

Eoin: You have a site there? Ah sure I can google it later

Dan: So this is basically building on the legacy of the Gathering, that's one grant that's out there. I know some of the lads got three grand out of it for the boxing club, which is how I know that this is only coming out. I know that for the year of The Gathering, with the money one clan got, I thought I could have to America and promoted this if I want to get this kind of money! Like I will probably get some money off them but I won't know until next January or February and January or February is no good, like you maybe get some English and that is what is the annoying part because you need to get to America or advertise in America to get the people in.

Eoin: You want these 'trip of a lifetime' people to come

Dan: Ya and they need time. A certain amount of people will come over here and go on to do their own stuff for the rest of the trip but like now we are offering a nearly 2 week of things happening which is going to be huge for those kind of people. It would be nice to see Kerry but we are going to see a huge amount of Ireland, like the Rock of Cashel, Clare, Bunratty Castle, up through The Burren and stopping through there with Yeates monument up in Sligo, then Donegal and Fermanagh and done coming across then Monaghan into, like to see the lakes around lough Erne, and then back into Dublin. They are going to get a nice trip of Ireland, like Cork and Kerry are the only places you are not going to see. We are even staying in Lahinch rather than in Ennis so we are going to get a lot more scenic, lovely little villages like I can see loads of opportunities for people stopping for photographs. This wouldn't be a norm with clan gatherings, people were coming along looking for things and it's no harm now...It's getting the time now, and getting people to stop me and saying that in a couple of years' time I mightn't be able to do it but I'm sure there will be someone ready to do it, because there will be a lot in place for it

Every couple of months I would be sending out emails, promoting us...St Patrick's day, Easter obviously Christmas, I would write on the McGrath thing [Facebook] happy Easter happy St Patrick's day and tag people on it as well so there friends are going to see it as well. We have been on to a couple of the lads in America as well, and it's one thing that is still annoying is that I made repeated requests for emails of journalists that would be writing about Ireland in America, and never got anywhere. That was one thing that really really got to me

Eoin: Any reason for that?

Dan: Not that I know of, I wasted a lot of time just trying to ring up the centres. They must have a list of people they email or people they bring over on junkets to bring around Ireland, but they were not interested

Eoin: Can I ask you one more question, it might sound a bit unusual, but it's about after the trips. Would the McGraths who come to visit, would you notice anything with members from America or Canada, the members of the diaspora, did they seem to be infatuated with McGrathness or Irishness?

Dan: I would say probably both of them. They really really enjoyed their stay, and it was both though, they came for McGrath but got both. It was gas actually on the last night, we were after a few drinks out on Tig an Ceoil, the music pub, one of the women from England ended up discovering that one of the girls from Tourneena [local village] who came out that night, they were related! So there was a lot of excitement there that night that they had actually made a contact!

They enjoy the Irish hospitality , the purpose of the visit was McGrath but they definitely like...the thing is we had the Thursday in the local, on Friday night in Minnie's, then on Saturday the clan dinner, we will move it to Sunday this time, they couldn't get over we had a few of the lads singing, Sean and Sarah Ni Creagh, some Irish dancing for them as well, they were delighted with it, it was good craic...Sunday in the Tig an Ceoil which is a real old Irish pub with good music again

Eoin: To show them a McGrath time is to show them an Irish time?

Dan: Ya they got great Irish hospitality, they got a great welcome like everyone we know was there, I would see say there was nobody there off on an agenda they were here to enjoy themselves, and they did want to get as much information on their McGrath heritage, like they came for that information and went away having seen great Irish hospitality

Eoin: It's hard to separate the two, when you are looking into your McGrath genealogy you are going to come across Irishness naturally.

Dan: When you think of a lot of people coming from overseas, they want Irish music, they want good Irish time and that's a huge help. It would be more difficult for someone say in parts of

Kilkenny or other parts of the country to say....they have great Irish music too but we have here right next to the Gaeltacht and it being here on a plate for them makes it all the better...they just turn up and listen to it!

Conversation Ends

Appendix 3: William Whelan Interview

Volunteer Dungarvan heritage centre/local social entrepreneur/community leader. Conducted on 26th of May 2015

Eoin: I was talking to a few people around before, I have been talking with Dan McGrath with the clan gatherings getting all that side of it from him. So then I was also talking with Mealla Fahey...

William: ...I know her well...

Eoin: ...I was talking with her up in Lismore, getting perspective from the tourism people, getting that side of things, just to see she had to say about it, then I said it would be interesting to hear from you, because from what I understand you are also in between, you have a different viewpoint because you don't work for Tourism Ireland..

William: No I don't we are involved with the museum in the sense, I suppose if I can put it bluntly, we were doing the gathering well before the lads [government] decided they want to make money out of it. That's out standard thing, I don't know if you have ever been in our museum, on Friary Street. We probably have one of the best voluntary museums in the country. I say humbly. Essentially what makes us stand out down in the museum is not so much the artifacts, which to be blunt we don't have we have a decent set up and display, it really is more the fact that we can provide a decent service. We are the one group in the town who will actually remember your family if they left here in 1880. We are the guys you can come to, all of the other groupings treat you as a pain in the ass with the notable exception of the archives, or the library wouldn't be too bad. Like the tourist office, the first thing they will do is go "Christ who can I send this person to", because there's no cash in it, they have you at this stage so the job is done.

Eoin: Because all you need is information now

William: Ya because all you need is information now which costs money to give. They are interested in, a lot of the problems with tourism offices now is the way they are funded and structured has been very poor over the years. Board Failte relied on the 10%, like I also work on web design and am familiar with all the hotels and B&B's around, Board Failte were relying on

the 10% take from the B&B bookings to actually pay for the tourist office to function. So what happened with the advent of the internet, we were at the internet from 1999 onwards, we were at it quite soon in Irish terms, but from maybe 2002ish it was quite obvious that ya there was a really great tool here but there is also some great challenges and one of those was that the tourist offices dried up. No revenue streams came in. So nowadays what most people actually want from a tourism office for costs money to deliver. Like you couldn't sell enough key rings or postcards to pay for staffing costs, so you know that became apparent. I suppose what I will also so that in my opinion I will also guess based on everything that I have seen that Tourism Ireland is very focused on pounds, schillings and pence [money]. Which is fine..but a lot of what we do is designed to actually create a relationship with the diaspora if you come to Ireland, it would be nice if you would. We may not get the payback for 20 years and that doesn't bother us, we don't sell any, there is no admission fee in the museum, if I do a lecture up in Ballyduff or I do a talk, generally speaking the money goes back into the museum kitty, the only thing we charge for is the lecture, they are 5 euro a head, and that money goes to the speaker. When you are not about money you can actually free yourself up...and one of the things you kind of see at the moment with the heritage infrastructure in Ireland is that Failte Ireland are funding a lot of it and there is a huge problem with that from a historical point of view in that..Failte Ireland would have the Viking triangle doing Viking exhibitions until it came out their eyes, it's interesting, they do it very well, it's non-threatening. There is no hard history there but you can see that the minute you get to a state where you begin to deal with the decade of centenaries we are looking at now, Waterford treasure are going to touch that in a very magnolia way if I can put it like that. They will be doing their best to actually offend no one whether as we can exhibitions like I was involved in WW1 memorial wall and that was quite interesting as there was quite a bit of shit that went with it, as you can probably guess from my demeanor I don't give too much of a shit what people think of me, and maybe that's not just me but other members of the museum when you are not just paid to actually do something I think you can almost do it more honestly. Mealla is a very able person, I like Mealla a lot, but basically her money is coming from the local authority or so company of the local authority, they have to jump on board all of these things whether they like them or not. For instance we can do exhibitions on the IRA we can do exhibitions on the famine, we can do a WW1 memorial wall, actually it has turned in to be a tourist attraction which is kind of a bit mad actually, we can deal with things I think more

honestly whether if you are funded by Board Failte, you can see this quite clearly in Waterford treasures, brilliant museums, they are actually so different from conventional museums or from what we do, ah its frightening and I'm not actually saying its wrong by the way I'm just saying that I think that when you take that level off funding off of people it actually skews the history. I think that's, even some of the history we do we collect a lot of photographs, I don't know if you use twitter or facebook, do you follow us?

Eoin: No I must get on that

William: So like I've about 4500 or the guts of 5000 followers, and about 3500 on twitter and that's without sponsorship purely on content, so we are actually quite big in a Waterford context, we'd probably be in the top 40 or 50 twitter accounts in Waterford, and we can play the game of doing it, and we can play the long game of doing it because it doesn't matter to us, no money comes in off it. With twitter and facebook, and with genealogy, you don't create a relationship with a country, I think, by saying come over and give us your cash which to a large extent what The Gathering was. I think you need to provide them with services. Like for instance I think it was only this year that the Catholic Birth, Marriages and Death registers are going up online. So you kind of have this thing, oh ya we really think you're great, we'd love to have ye but I mean why haven't these been online, why hasn't there been a service to the Irish diaspora with a long period of time. Take the Certificate of Irish Heritage, that's been a stunning failure. You can always tell about these things as to how much of a failure it really is...

Eoin: Lot of celebrities wasn't it?

William: Why it failed actually was, it was a good idea, why it failed was the pricing. They went and tried to make money on it

Eoin: Like 150 euro or something

William: wasn't quite that but I got a very, what I think we misunderstand, is Board Failte are not interested in the Irish diaspora, they are interested in the Irish wealthy diaspora or the middle class diaspora. An awful lot of Irish people went abroad and didn't make money and we don't care about them because they can't book hotels, bed nights. Like my gran-uncle went to America and ended up in a work house in the 1940s..shag him! Now strangely we have only recently managed to track down his family and they have actually done quite alright for themselves. His

wife died in 1919, and he had 4 kids and there is no social welfare service so he basically completely fell through the cracks and you kind of get a suspicion from the records that there was alcoholism there, but he is as Irish as the guy who has the American Irish foundation, he's not valued as much because there is no cash. Even for instance, I think it's quite obvious even when you see something that a lot of the people that are making decisions in Ireland today, not just relating to tourism, but the very first headline that happened after gay marriage was voted in was The Irish Independent ran a whole page on the Pink Pound and how we can now have gay tourism.

Eoin: I saw that ya..

William: Now, it's not that I'm against it but I have to confess one of the things that frustrates me, dealing with groupings around the place even at a local level, which is where I operate, dealing with TDs [Teachta Dála] [Member of Irish House of Parliament], I'd be well known to John Deasy and Ciara Conway, but is the lack of action of anyone doing anything because it's the right thing to do. Like the WW1 memorial wall was the right thing to do therefor it should be done, that would be my opinion. The fact that there happens to be, its become a little bit of a focal point at that end of the town, and people actually like it, and its acting as some sort of visitor attraction or place of remembrance, that's great, that's a bonus but should it be the primary driver? The reason the gay marriage should be in Ireland is because it's right and the other stuff can happen but give it 10 minutes guys before ye debate about the Pink Pound. Heritage is very much and I think the gathering comes very much into all of this, I know im being a bit long winded..

Eoin:..No it's great..

William: ...I do think philosophically all of this ties together. For instance we were given, I was asked as a quote unquote community leader, I have visions of someone like Martin Luther King..a pale version, to attend the meetings [for The Gathering]. The actual meeting there was an awful lot of council, like you could quite clearly see, that word had come down from on high that this damn thing needs to be a success. There was a couple of things we were told very very quickly. They were along the lines of that there is no money for this, and it will be great for the country. Second of that we don't really want long term planning for this one at all, this happens this year, I don't want to hear about what you are going to do in 2015, or 2016..

Eoin: ...Really?..That's crazy

William: Ya, there was no, this was very figure driven. Absolutely. Like the case for instance, there are American people out there that have a great relationship with the museum, as I said if you follow us on Facebook/Twitter, they would be asking us questions, getting answers generally, they actually feel that they are Irish but that doesn't happen because they get a brochure in the post. It kinda happens because they connect with the place, You must answer their questions and it's quite time consuming, but Joan Rothwell the County archivist is absolutely fantastic but what have they done? They have halved her job, she is now the city and county archivist and she has no person to type for her, as a result of which now the archive in Dungarvan, and the archive in Waterford is now open 50% of the time it used to be open. There is really only two places in Dungarvan, bear in mind Waterford treasures doesn't want to see you...Oh you have a tenner? Cool come in we have really great exhibitions come in have a look at them, and you will go in and like them as a tourist. As a person who wants to find out where my ancestors are from....Or I'm from Waterford tell me all you know, or I feel a connection to Waterford city, there is no one there to help you with that really, there is a couple of online groups but you know, that's hard, that takes time. Often one of the things that happens in my job is often I'd get a phone call from the museum, could you come over, speak to John here he has been looking forward to meet you with years, ah Christ! I could be dealing with 50 or 60 of them but now Eddie Cantwell, Eddie deals with way more than me actually. The website we built sucks in all of these people and Eddie deals with an awful lot of them and you actually feel, you'd see on his time line he has more friends from New Jersey than Abbeyside, but he has done more for the Diaspora visiting Abbeyside or Dungarvan than The Gathering and it's been over a long period of time but you could get a very clear sense that The Gathering was very much focused on now, numbers...hotels were in trouble and we need to get the numbers up. What was also very interesting and this you could quote me, well don't quote me personally but you can actually put the quote in, is the Irish hotels federation had asked why the hotels weren't supporting it [The Gathering] and the response was very interesting, essentially it was that first off an awful lot of hotels, had left the Irish hotels federation because they were in trouble, in fairness to all concerned they actually did have very little money at the time. The second answer was kind of slightly galling though and that was well look if they come we have them anyway.

So they were kind of looking for fools like myself, and Danny, to sell bed nights for them but the commitment level, with very honourable exceptions, there are some lovely people in the accommodation sector but generally speaking the hotels and I mean if you can find the hotel owner that will do anything except take a visa card off the visitor who came through their lobby id be slightly surprised, you know some of them are alright but most of them aren't. It was very a case of what's in it for me and that was kinda said to us quite bluntly, the question was asked kind of well how come, well at the table I was at there was eight people, four from the voluntary sector and 4 from various branches of the council masquerading as different organisations so it was quite interesting to see that, I suppose the hotels felt that it was going to be done for them and that has been my experience as well, on several occasions we have tried to interact with the hotels and tell them we will do free walking tours of the town for their staff but yet you cannot get them to turn up. We do it via the chamber of commerce, I have run a couple of days for the walks you know, Dungarvan town park this monument is put up here you know, this is the monument of the Moresby, this is what happened on the Moresby, you know if you are into history it's probably fairly interesting, if you not it mightn't be the most exciting thing on Earth but if I was selling footballs over town I'd probably learn how to kick one. Yet again within that particular sector it seems to very much a case of well look whatever we can get away with this is ok. Of the local hotels only one agreed to send any staff members and as it transpired nobody showed up that day, some issues with shifts of something. We got loads of other business people to turn up, we had about 50 in all to enjoy the tour but the actual accommodation providers cannot tell you the history of their own town which to me would actually indicate an awful lot about the genuineness of the offering they are trying..like we are web designers, my brother reads a book a month, I'm probably reading a magazine a week, you look at my podcasts and the feeds that I have and I'm in a permanent state of learning you know, now my wife could probably tell you I can learn a hell of a lot more.

Look, I've got to listen to Android central, I've got to listen Google, to all about Android. When I'm here on the play news stand, I have to read them every day because if I don't then I'm out of date, yet accommodation providers, there has been multiple attempts to attempt up skill them and get them involved, generally speaking with some outstanding exceptions there not, they don't do anything but take the money, so that was kind of, that was the thing. The other thing, an observation about the Gathering is that whats happening now?

Eoin: Do you think they moved on a little quick to these new Wild Atlantic and Ireland's Ancient East

William: See part of this right. There is a phenomenon we have seen right when we build websites for companies from small to very big but companied with marketing departments are really strange beasts and the reason they are is that there is a lot of people knocking around the company with feck all to do..bar marketing So rather than actually say well that brochure is actually kind of pleasant, lets expand on it and improve on it, that's probably not cool enough to keep the board of directors happy so what they tend to do is they come up with new initiatives all the time. Now again theres, like to me the Wild Atlantic Way seems to be working, I suspect Ireland's Ancient Easy was only done cause there was a whole clatter of politicians who said feck it, what about us? I would think the ancient east will not work overtime

Eoin: It's a bit forced is it?

William: It's a bit forced, like there has been multiple tourism initiatives in Waterford, I mean multiple hundreds and thousands was spent on Waterford It's a Feeling, web designers who got the job by all accounts are still laughing, they'd nearly to get in a surgeon to stop them laughing the money that was charged. There was a 3000 euro template sold and it went for north of 45 grand plus on top of that you had multiple staff within the council in theory operate, like if they came to us and said we want to do it, we would have told them jees hang on a minute, I think this isn't going to work, they thought they were going to get community created content that ..the government are a bit like that as well, the gathering guys are a bit like that as well, they kind of wanted a free ride, they wanted to be facilitators and the facilitation they did to a large extent was kind of , have you got your own shovel? Cool great, do you want to dig a hole for us lads? Brilliant, we'll applaud ye when your done and the council are a bit like that as well, they actually don't want to do the hard stuff, they want to produce a brochure about a walk, they don't want to do the walk...now actually, going to correct myself now, they've made massive strides with the Deise Greenway that has been driven by the most recent county manager. So, we had, the last guy was kind of mediocre, the guy before that was a disgrace, Ray Dwyer he's gone to Irish Water now I think he found his level, but they , it is possible to actually produce an attractive offering and they were going to do that with the Deise Greenway but it's kind of 3-4 years and its only really the last 2 years that have improved, and it's still going to be another

year, maybe year and half before its actually functioning, that's a really long term thing, and what you kind of find within government departments and with politicians that's hard, long term stuff. But doing something funky and if we can get it off the ground over 3-4 months like launching a website, launching a brochure...brilliant, I love that that's great! I'm only the minister for, how long do ministers last 2 years max? So if you have got a project in a ministerial department that is going to take four years, it's going to be the Labour guy who takes over from you getting the credit. So they tend not to like these projects but an awful lot of heritage projects, like, our photographic archive of nearly 7000 photographs started back in the 1980s and digitally we really started hustling it in 2008-2009 its gone through alterations and other things but that's long, that's forever in government speak or heritage speak and they tend not to like those projects as a result. They tend to like projects that they can do and you can have a brochure about. I'm not completely condemning it because there is loads of human nature aspects to this. When we were kids none of us want to be told to put 20p away week and week and eventually you'll have enough for a commodore 64 computer in 3 years' time because Jesus I'll buy the sweets that I have there in front of me now with the 20p but I think probably an awful lot particularly in heritage which I have experience of, it doesn't kind of work like that.

For instance there is little clubs around the county, Portlaw Heritage Centre, Ballyduff Upper History Society, I have given a talk to Ballyduff Upper History Society about what we did right and what we did wrong. When Denise needs to get a speaker I give her the phone number of Eddie Cantwell for lectures, when she might ask about a piece of software, or should she use Facebook or can I promote one of their talks, I'll do it. Like Gerard Crotty down in Portlaw were going to do a history book on the Deise greenway, it's going to be two years of my bloody life. Because Ger knows me and we have helped them, their on Facebook Portlaw Heritage Centre, Ballyduff are on Facebook because we showed them how to use it, like I did a lecture for it. It means that they are doinf their job better, they are welcoming Ballyduff people back a little bit better than they were before, and there is a focal point. Like Cappoquin Heritage Group they, I'll put up some just to look at the figures, on one way they're impressive and in another they are not impressive at all, but that's the nature of what you are kind of doing, no easy answer. So let's just look at Cappoquin and see what kind of numbers they have. Cappoquin Heritage Group, they have 600 people now who have liked that, is it revolutionary, not really, but there is 600 people out there that have a continued connection to Cappoquin that they otherwise wouldn't have and

that's actually what social media does very well, it mightn't inform you of exactly what's happening in Abbeyside, but you do kind of get a sense of... Shirley Templebar [drag queen Irish television personality] was on to me on twitter on Friday. Her, or his I'm not sure, grandmother was from Abbeyside and she wants her family tree. One of the script writers for Spitting Image [television show] Terence Dackombe, his mother knew my dad, and every Sunday he visits his mother in the nursing home, he prints of the pictures that I put up on twitter of Abbeyside, and every now and again he sends me a little tweet, my mother was asking how everyone is in Abbeyside, and she used to work down where the Village Inn [Local Pub] is in the 1950s, and he is a connection to Abbeyside and he comes here, every now and again, I haven't met him, he came once or twice to the museum but I was gone but that's small, it's slow, it's personal.

Eoin: Is this what The Gathering wanted to make you believe by them?

William: The Gathering, no, The Gathering, it wasn't all bad, that's the first thing. I suppose as people who have been doing it for twenty years, our first reaction was are ye going to give us a bit of credit now at last. I mean Eddie Cantwell probably brings more people back to Abbeyside than The Gathering ever will but that's, there was a real sense among a lot of the heritage groups, the serious ones that have been around a long time, cause you know a lot of the heritage groups they start up and a year later they are gone, we are going since 1984, quite long established. There was kind of a sense of, ya ye should have been doing this for a long time. I mean I think the proof of The Gathering really is in the eating. The minute the Gathering was over a report was prepared, four civil servants got a promotion, a minister got a pat on the back and they actually did make a couple of bob for the country, not quite as much this and the figures because events that were already running around the country got badged up. The Lismore Immrama Festival was badged up as a Gathering event. Very notional figures. Now my day job up at the DSP I'm an expert at notional figures because a lot of what you see happening, once you understand actually how they measure things it gives you a real great insight into how successful events are, and social media is their enemy...because sometimes you will see kind of an amazing type, fantastic Mahon Ramblers Walking Festival, and then you actually see the photos on Facebook and think well that's kind of the organising committee and two other people I don't know and I think there was, its getting harder to spin stuff like that. In fairness I do know that the current county manager is making a good effort now to stop the bullshit. Lovely you are telling

me now you are making a good effort for food in West Waterford but how many bed nights are you really getting out of the festival of food. How many people are coming from Youghal or Colligan or streaming over from Seapark. A lot of these events, and the Dungarvan one isn't bad, but the big one in Waterford, the Waterford Harvest Festival, by all accounts is one of the most expensive things put on in the country. It's all done professionally, whereas the Dungarvan one has quite a large amateur element of people putting stuff in. The bang for the buck in some of the festivals and some of the events, is not quite as good as they are saying. I'd say there was quite a lot of misreporting of figures and assumptions, you know just because of Waterford Festival of Food had ten thousand people in the square, you could probably safely say that eight thousand of them were within 5-6 km of the town. Lismore Immrama Festival, which is one of my favourite festivals of all time, but you see stuff when you deal with the festivals and think well Jesus this is madness. Be careful now with what you say, but for instance they can sell 11000 quid worth of tickets over the weekend, that's the max, yet you will often see PR bills of 3-4000 euro now and if you are running that as a community event you probably kind, as a business man, fuck I will half fill the hall and I will take my chances we will three quarter fill it and I will pocket the save, why are we spending this on PR. The reason they are spending it on PR is that it is actually not about the success of the festival or not, this goes for all the festivals, it's about generally speaking the perception within the council hierarchy, generally the council but the government generally, as to how many column inches have you got, as to whether the festival was a success or not. So an awful lot of money is spent on marketing companies getting photographs positioned in The Irish Times. I'm not sure how familiar you are with the system or how that works but when you see a thing saying things to do for the weekend in The Irish Times, they are not saying that because they like Darina Allen, or even because she is very good, they are saying that because a marketing company with a larger advertising spend at The Irish Time has said to them push on the Derina Allen literary festival down in Ballymaloe. So it gets featured as a fantastic festival. You see it, I mean Dungarvan Brewing Company gets featured in The Irish Times, the reviews would be genuine, I like them the lads would be my friends Dungarvan Brewing Company, but they are featured in The Sunday Business Post, they would be quite friendly with the editor Gillian Ellis but a lot of those premises are being featured because they are being placed there. There is PR companies getting an awful lot of money. Why skew up the festival budgets? It means that actually when I am a grade 7 or 8 person in the council and I want to

become a kind of grade 9 up in Mullingar, if I can go in with a stack of press cuttings from the front of The Irish Times looking at the good press that I have got for the council, I will more likely than not get promoted. Again none of this in certain respects is actually bad, it just skews decision making. Like you have sometimes got a choice, like for even very small festivals around the county are spending quite a lot of money on PR to the point where when you analyse how much they can actually take in ticket sales. Sometimes you get a situation where you've got a local authority, Failte Ireland are funding a festival, part of the funding is that they will spend XYZ on PR which almost eats up all the money which Failte Ireland have given. You sometimes are given a decision to make as to whether are we going to make this festival better or are we just going to advertise it as better. Admittedly in my opinion I have seen the easy option of advertise it better is a simpler thing to do than make it better, and again you can kind of see that again with The Gathering. The other thing I would kind of say for the figures, an awful lot of events that were running year in year out, just got badged up. Danny McGrath's event would have been exceptional, in the sense that I think he got prodded into action by The Gathering, and he has kind of continued to do it once or twice since. Almost all of the other pure Gathering events are never happening again. What does that tell you. I actually don't think it tells you that they weren't a success, I actually think that it consumed too much volunteer labour. It was one of those things that it was easy to peak for the once but the prospect of kind of going "Christ what do you mean to do it again next year?" , so I think that was more a case rather than them not being successful. Most of them were moderately to fairly successful, but why aren't they running again, you know? If something is good you do it again, I suspect that the labour put in versus the return achieved was generally speaking not high enough. When you really think about like if it's as good as they thought it was why not a gathering weekend every year? Heritage week works, and the other interesting thing is now when I say it works , it also shags up things!. What actually happens is we tend to be a 52 week of the year organisation. Right here and now, tomorrow I was meant to be attending a meeting about an archaeologist on Gallows Hill for a community archaeology project, myself and Eddie Cantwell, Willie Fraher, he knows a lot more history than I do I am more of a big mouth than a historian. We were discussing paving slabs for the town square, so that when they re-cover the square we are to bed icons that symbolise Dungarvan's history all around the square. We've got a book sale on Thursday night, we will make 3-4 thousand, myself the brother, my little daughter will be in at the book sale over in Garveys.

Eddie Cantwell is doing something else that is coming up, that archaeological dig is happening in June, in late June I've got a two week exhibition in the shopping centre. I won't have to do it in fairness, I normally come up with the museum ideas but luckily they don't actually rely on me to do them. They won't actually be able to start until I make a little bit of an effort this week. Say right we are going to have, this is a celebration of Dungarvan 800 years, in 1215 we got the charter, so there is going to be a 2 week exhibition in the shopping centre and we put 5000 people through that last year. That's being done in my spare time and it's not just me there's Eddie Cantwell, Willie Fraher, Jim Shine there's Chrissy O'Connor Knight is an excellent girl...but we are always at it. The Gathering actually throws us out because suddenly we are kind of told well you've got to do a Gathering event somewhere, and you think oh man, because it actually, I kind of suspect it actually kind of kicked a lot of community groups off balance that were actually kind of running. I know with the Festival of Food Therese was involved with it, spending an awful lot of time and energy creating a Gathering element to draw down grant aid and the element was to raffle a week for a family out in the Gold Coast [Local Hotel] and they just couldn't get buy-in...no they weren't raffling it they were actually selling them, these special packages but with, no offense to all concerned when you scratched the surface the special packages weren't so special, no one bought into it. I think they had one sail to Paul Flynn, and with due respect to him, he did it more out of supporting the event rather than out of any sort of major desire to have a week in August out in the Gold Coast chalets. It was quite disruptive as well, I'm probably painting a bad picture of it as well, I don't think it was bad actually, it was interesting to see people like Danny McGrath suddenly realise, I have ancestors all over the place, so you could see the plus side of it as well.

Eoin: There was probably an interest there already

William: Ya and this was just a spur, like they may not have the time. We are like the Cistercian Monks down in the museum we get up in the morning thinking of history, going to bed at night, we have arguments over it. Most people aren't like that, you want to be casually involved with a group, you probably Abbeyside Soccer Club to kick a ball not to sell raffle tickets and build a stand on the east side. I think The Gathering did give an outlet for an awful lot of community groups in a casual way that wanted to kind of address things related to the diaspora.

Eoin: During 2013, with people you said you were in contact with that would be coming over, with the museum, can you remember any story specifically, like with Americans coming and talking to you about The Gathering or people in town?

William: Not hugely to be honest with you, most of the people who were kind of talking about it where accommodation providers and service providers, one of them told me the nickname he had for it around the town was The Grabbing and for quite a long time there was that feeling. I actually think that at government level it was set up as The Grabbing but I think that at local level it, to some extent, took on a bit of a better nature, not always but the people did actual genuine things to welcome back the diaspora but again like I said if this was a good thing to do then why is it not a good thing to do this year, or last year. I strongly suspect based on what I was hearing around the table at the initial briefing meeting it was very much about figures and bums on seats and Failte Ireland are in trouble, and our hotel industry is about to collapse.

Eoin: It's good to talk to you about it, I've been suspecting a lot myself but you know there's no point in me suspecting I need to find out

William: The other problem you have is let's say Mealla, she's very good at her job, she can't actually say. She'd be decent enough if you asked her straight out, did you see much increase in business in Lismore for The Gathering, the honest answer is probably a little bit and I suspect there was probably a little bit. Again how many of these community festivals went and developed a life of their own.

Eoin: We are at the end of it anyway there I'd say

William: That would be my opinion on it anyway. You've picked an interesting two people in Dan and Mealla, I know he was quite frustrated with the lack of support he was getting. He felt he was doing fantastic things and they weren't getting behind him, I'd actually have sympathy on both sides there because I think they really didn't know who he was, they were really really distant from it and I also think they were kind of loured a lot with their grant aid, must of it went to the consultants who were acting as facilitators, they didn't really know his track record. In fairness to him he didn't really have one at the time he just happened to work hard and make it work so it would have very hard to turn around and say here is five grand. With the likes of the museums you kind of, look back at the last 30 years, look at my signs down the pond, like when

we go talk to people we kind of have all the stuff we have done saying basically we don't mess up too much so when I go and talk, at the moment I'm talking to Bernie about signs for on the way into town and it may not be exactly what I want but when we go and look for it we are pushing an open door, some of the communities that were running the gathering events really had no track record in events at all, there was two types of group, the groups who had never done it and the groups who had always done it and said how can we get our hands on some of this grant aid. It was a very clear instruction went out that everything was to be badged, if Failte Ireland had ever given money to you for anything, you badge this as Gathering!

Conversation ends

Appendix 4: Initial Email Correspondence with Dan McGrath

Where can you find McGraths today? Which area(s) of Ireland are the McGrath Clan most associated with?

Waterford, Clare, Donegal, Fermanagh are main areas, then to a lesser extent Tyrone, Tipperary

Do you have any anecdotes on the McGrath family? Historical stories, famous members, contributions to society?

Matt McGrath Olympic Champion

Paul McGrath

Ken McGrath

Glenn McGrath

Dan McGrath.....Simpson fame

Archbishop Miler McGraththe infamous bishop

McGrath Gatherings

Where did the idea to host McGrath Clan Gatherings come from?

There had been a clan gathering about 15 years ago but the person behind it moved out of Ireland. Plans for another were either put on long finger and the 'next year' story was repeated. We took the bull by its horns and had decided on 2013 before The Gathering was launched

What events take place at McGrath Clan Gatherings?

Talks/lectures, tours, meetings with genealogists, clan dinner and Trad sessions

Where do McGrath clan members gather from?

USA, Canada, UK and next year we will have OZ & NZ and possibly South Africa

How do the McGraths keep in contact?

on the internet, I have a mailing list of emails which I'm continuously looking to enlarge plus facebook, there is a twitter account but it's not used very often

Are the McGrath gatherings public? Are they purely for McGraths and anyone who may have an interest?

Yes, you would find people are interested in the historical aspect of the gathering

What is to be gained from a McGrath Clan Gathering? What do the McGrath Clan Gatherings do for you personally?

Attendees have a common interest and it's a very relaxed social occasion.

I suppose it give me great satisfaction to host the clan in Dungarvan and show of both our rich heritage and the area.

What is the future for McGrath Clan Gatherings?

We have a clan gathering planned for next year and will be expand the event to include a tour to Clare and the Donegal Fermanagh area immediately after the Clan Gathering.

We want to increase the number of visitors next year's gathering and try and get more Irish to buy into the idea. At the same time, we are targeting an even bigger event in 2019

Gathering Ireland

What is your opinion of the Gathering 2013 tourism initiative? (e.g. Helpful? Passive?)

It helped the people were buying into Gathering idea but many of the courses which they ran were probably 12 months late.

What role, if any, had the Gathering 2013 to play in McGrath Clan Gatherings? For instance did the Gathering help promote or organise McGrath Clan Gatherings?

We got a few euros which paid a few bills and were put on website but it didn't attract any extra overseas visitors that we know of.

Have you been in contact with any other Clans who have had gatherings? If so could you elaborate?

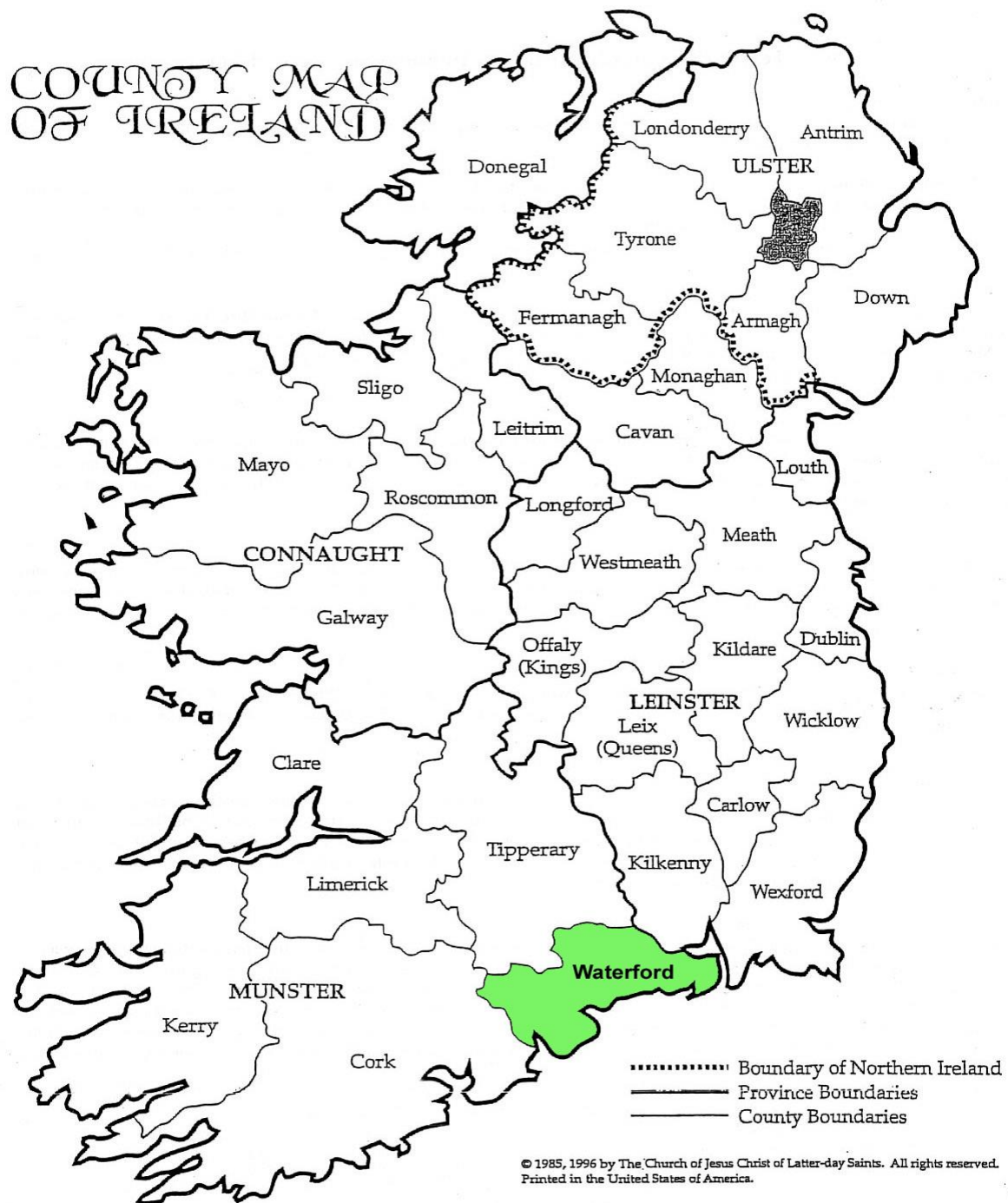
Yes, I did a bit of research of what other clans were offering and charging. I also spoke to both organizers and attendee, saw both positives and negatives in what they had done.

Appendix 5



McGrath Castle Memorial Plaque - Abbeyside

Appendix 6



County Map of Ireland (Source: Google Images)

Appendix 7



Detailed map of County Waterford showing Dungarvan (Source: Google Images)