From Dark Tourism to Phoenix Tourism: The Ethics of Cultural Translation in Urban Festivals
An exploration of Féile an Phobail

Project Update

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Troubled beginnings

- Féile an Phobail emerges 1988: response to conflict
- Acute period of demonization – ‘the terrorist community’
- Chronic underfunding and unemployment
- Effort to steer away from street confrontations
- In its 29th year, Féile is now the largest community festival in Ireland, set in the middle of the second most deprived constituency in the UK
- Opening out, internationalisation, ‘worlding’, transculturation – beyond monodirectional, ‘a process [...] in which both parts of the equation are modified’ (Bronislaw Malinowski)
- Mutuality, reciprocity – ‘contact zones’ (Pratt)?
Overarching aims

• Question of how ‘translation may be seen to be constitutive of cultures in their formation, projection and transformation’ (AHRC Strategic Q. 1)

• Particular focus on the role and impact of the urban cultural festival in facilitating the transition from ‘dark tourism’ (conflict) to ‘phoenix tourism’ (conflict resolution)

• Festivals posited as ethically charged mediators or ‘translators’ of cultures, ideas and ideologies - transformative potential?
The Project

• A History of Féile an Phobail
• Key objectives:
  1. Analyse ethical tensions: ‘from below’ v. state funded, radical politics v. tourism
  2. Leading to policy recommendations
  3. Learning (by doing) re methodologies: crowd-sourcing virtual exhibition
  4. Discover social capital benefits: connectivity? Resilience?
The Project (continued)

- How has the festival facilitated the translation and transculturation of Irish language cultural production and communities

**Outputs:**

1. Crowdsourced community archive website: Stair na Féile (A History of Féile), supported by People’s Collection of Wales
2. Conferences 1 & 2
3. Recorded interviews

4. Monograph
5. Conference papers
6. Workshops
7. Develop follow-on comparative project
8. Pitch documentary to BBC
9. Generate significant interest online: social media
10. Policy document
Updates:

• 1. Crowdsourcing, print media & social media
• Leveraged significant community support
  ❑ Partnership with West Belfast Facebook page:
    Admin access granted – 14,862 page follows
  ❑ #StairnaFéile + Féile an Phobail Twitter page: 10,200 followers
  ❑ Coverage in biggest selling paper in north of Ireland, The Irish News (circulation 40,842); local Andersonstown News (12,090) – also project partners
• Online interest through archival ephemera, footage and photos
Birlids (1967) was a landmark Féile an Phobail play that challenged negative media representations of West Belfast, most forcefully in scenes where local women reject what they see as the demonisation of an entire community. Féile responded to such negative representations with a festival that has now been running for almost three decades. Help us tell the Féile story by registering at www.fellebelafshistory.com where you'll see what we've been doing so far.
Sourcing from the ‘crowd’

• Different from other crowdsourcing projects – part of the learning
• Launched website on 24 March 2016: www.feilebelfasthistory.com
• So far: 3,022 objects and counting (ephemera, t-shirts, photos, videos, programmes, letters etc.)
• Next step: website upgrade and long-term maintenance in partnership with Féile
Help us capture the history of Ireland's most vibrant community festival.

Cúideadh líon stair na féile is fhuinidhla in Éirinn a chur le chéile.
Féile Belfast History

Welcome to Féile History, a major public participation project where you help us to piece together the dynamic and complex history of Féile an Phoball.

Féile an Phoball, Queen’s University and community partners including Belfast Media Group, are asking you to help us create an exhibition, a book and an online archive that showcases the dynamism, energy and complex history of the West Belfast Festival since its inception almost thirty years ago.

Contact us with your photos, objects and memorabilia – which we’re glad to scan and make available on the website. Then you and others can log in and tell us more about the things that you see on the site? Where was a photo taken, who is in it, what was happening?
Write and supply as much or as little as you like – all contributions are welcome – and become part of a wider team that will make Féile’s history as the festival approaches its 30th anniversary.

Why not get involved?
Oral histories

• 50+ interviews and growing
• Personal accounts to be published in local newspaper
• Planning a pamphlet
• Coffee-table style book (separate from academic monograph)
• Further partnership with community historical project
Exhibition: August 2016

MichaelP @michaelpierce · 13 Aug 2016
Theatre pros Brenda Murphy and Maura Brown give our #stairnaféile exhibition a big thumbs down today.

Ellis McAteer liked

Feargal Mac @feargal81 · 4 Aug 2016
@michaelpierce speaking at #stairnaféile exhibition launch in @StMarysBelfast. Gró @mackei_deirdre @EllisMcateer
BBC documentary

• Pitched idea to Dearcán Media, Derry
• BBC supported: Sept 2016
• View promo here: [https://vimeo.com/178325389](https://vimeo.com/178325389)
Unexpected outcomes

• Further book publication
• Advising on musical: planned pitch with Kabosh
• Extended exhibition for Féile30 celebrations
• Newspaper series
• ‘Stakeholders’
Theoretical and research challenges

- As we write the monograph:
  1. National, local, ethnocentric? Or transcultural ‘contact zone’/‘Third Space’?
  2. Relationship with the British Left
  3. Debate, democratisation v. expediencies of Peace Process
  4. Capturing the efflorescence of activities attendant on Féile: Belfast Film Festival, local radio, theatre, grassroots cultural activism, relationship between cultural activity and community activism; cultural (and social) capital and confidence – policy issues