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***“That’s the boat that reared us”. Maritime culture, place and belonging: the role of the ‘Galway hooker’ traditional wooden sailboat in South West Conamara***

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**Title: “*That’s the boat that reared us*”. *Maritime culture, place and belonging: the role of the ‘Galway hooker’ traditional wooden sailboat in South West Conamara***

*Abstract*

The West of Ireland ‘Galway hooker’ holds iconic status in the region’s maritime heritage and identity. In this paper we explore its significance from the perspective of *bádóirí* (boatmen or hooker sailors) and *saortha báid* (boat wrights) in southwest Conamara, whose lives and family histories revolve around this traditional sailing craft. Selections from thirty-three interviews reveal emotions and meaningful experiences resonating through family biographies: stories of sacrifice, loss, obligation, love, reverence and excitement. We also trace how the hooker characterizes a tangible culture, animating a distinct local, embodied knowledge and sense of place. No longer premised upon economic livelihood, but primarily practiced as a leisure and heritage activity, the hooker and its material culture confer an ontologically sensed continuity of connection to place and culture over time. Here we provide insights to the centrality of the hooker for coastal communities and its sedimented, intergenerational emotional and cultural connections.

Keywords: traditional wooden sailboats; Galway hooker; place; belonging; family histories; community culture; South West Conamara

## *Introduction*

In the West of Ireland, a family of boats known as the ‘Galway hooker’ occupies iconic status in the maritime heritage and identity of the region. A fairly common sighting in the open waters of Galway Bay, particularly in the summer months, it is unmistakable with its maroon coloured sails, distinct ‘tumblehome’ shape and pitch-black body (see Figures 2 and 3). While nobody is entirely certain of its origins, the traditional ‘hooker’ boat provided the key ‘lifeline’ for the more remote and peripheral coastal communities in this western region of Ireland for over two centuries, until its decline from around the 1950s. A remarkable renaissance in the life of the hooker occurred in the 1970s with a renewed effort among key activists to rescue the craft of sailing and boat building from near extinction. A community group, Cumann Húicéirí na Gaillimhe (the Galway Hooker Association),<sup>1</sup> was founded in 1978 to actively promote the use of the boat through various activities including organised races and regattas each year, while a major annual festival in August known as Cruinniú na mBád (Gathering of the Boats) attracts thousands of locals and visitors to witness the spectacle of the hooker race from Conamara to Kinvara (see map in Figure 1). In recent years, Galway City museum has housed a long-term exhibition of its heritage, with particular attention to the renowned Claddagh area of the city.

While the hooker can be viewed as a key signifier of place, identity and tradition of Galway and the Conamara region, in this paper we explore aspects of its material culture from the perspective of *bádóirí* (translated as ‘boatmen’ or hooker sailors) and *saortha báid* (boat builders, singular: *saor*)<sup>2</sup>, whose lives and family histories have revolved around this traditional sailing craft. Their narratives offer insights to the emotions and meaningful experiences resonating throughout family biographies. We examine the distinct local and embodied knowledge and sense of place experienced through the hooker and hooker sailing. Hooker sailing today is no longer premised on economic livelihood, but is primarily practiced for pleasure, conviviality and an everyday active engagement with heritage. In this paper, however, we argue that the boat and its associated material culture continue to occupy a central role in cultivating what Bennett describes as ‘ontological belonging’ to place, as connection between past, present and future.<sup>3</sup> Linking with the literature on place experience and belonging, we provide some insights to the centrality of the hooker to the life of coastal communities

and the emotional and cultural connections which have become sedimented across generations.

We first offer a relatively brief context of the region's topography and economic history in which the hooker played a central role; followed by an overview of our research study. A discussion of key relevant concepts and selective literature used in our analysis then precedes the qualitative research findings and discussion.

### **Background to South West Conamara and 'Hooker Country'**

Our research study is located in the western region of Ireland, known as south west Conamara which is part of the Gaeltacht (where Irish is the spoken daily language) and spans approximately 150 miles of coastline (see Figure 3). More specifically, the interviews are with those who operated or still operate today in the bodies of water surrounding '*Ceantar na nOileán*' (translated as 'the region of the isles') and described as at the heart of "Hooker Country".<sup>4</sup> It comprises five islands connected by a series of bridges and causeways, linking each to the other and then to the mainland at a place called Béal a'Daingin (see Figure 1). There are approximately one hundred very small islands in total in the area. From these islands many others can be walked to at low tide or reached by a row boat (*an bád iomartha*).

While south west Conamara is noted for its rich natural, archaeological, historical and maritime heritage the region is made up of poor agricultural land and historically had few employment opportunities outside of small scale farm and fishing activity. Like many peripheral contemporary rural economies, it has higher than average levels of unemployment, underemployment, poverty and ageing demographic structure. The region occupies approximately 800 square miles on the west coast of Ireland, and has been described as "a land of mountains, bogs, lakes, intricate coastal bays and offshore islands".<sup>5</sup> It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west, by Galway Bay (Loch Lurgan) to the south and its interior border with the rest of Ireland is created by two great lakes: Lough Corrib and Lough Mask (see Figure 1). In 2016, the population of *Ceantar na nOileán* was 1,796 persons.

The proximity to the sea and the lack of any suitable roads on which to travel meant that all trade and travel within and without the region was, out of necessity, conducted by boat until the 1950s.<sup>6</sup> The Galway hooker is a heavily-built timber sail-

boat, described by Scott as ‘Sailing workboats of Galway Bay’ and by Collins as ‘the ubiquitous workhorses of Galway Bay’.<sup>7</sup> The hooker as a sail-boat falls into four different size classifications, whose different sizes reflect different carrying capacities and degrees of manoeuvrability. The larger hookers carried an average tonnage from 12 to 15 tons of vital supplies, comprising building materials, foodstuffs, animals and cargos of turf and seaweeds.<sup>8</sup> Speculation links the boat’s design origins with England, Norway, Spain and the Netherlands, but without credible documentary evidence.<sup>9</sup> After examining all ideas, proposals and claims, the noted hooker scholar Scott declares that “it is not unreasonable for Galwaymen to lay claim to the hooker as their own”.<sup>10</sup> With its unique ‘tumblehome’ (the ‘belly’ of the boat, to receive cargo), like two apple-cheeks, one either side, painted black and sporting the traditional maroon coloured sails, the hookers have a distinctive, aesthetically pleasing appearance.

Despite the lack of land routes throughout the region and to the main urban centre of Galway, there was a remarkable level of connectivity and exchange along the west coast over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many of the essential materials and supplies for daily life – from lumber, building equipment and materials, to foodstuffs such as flour – had to be brought to the area by boat. A range of shops dotted along the coastline of South West Conamara, from An Cheathrú Rua to Roundstone, were all served by the hookers. Some notable boats along with their *bádóiri*/owners were contracted to supply specific local shops on a regular basis, while other boats were owned by the shop-owners, with a skipper contracted to sail their boat. However, the primary commodity until the middle of the twentieth was the trade in turf, or dried peat, which linked the area to the rest of west coast region. Because of local geological features, Conamara held an abundance of turf, available as a fuel for heating and cooking while other areas such as the Aran Islands, South County Galway and County Clare had so similar natural resource to rely on. Such was the exclusive value of turf as a cash-resource to the communities of South West Conamara that as early as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the easiest-accessible “bogland near the coast had been stripped to bare rock”.<sup>11</sup> This forced the turf-cutters to travel further north in search of their resource and then ferry it southwards along a shoreline of incredible complexity to reach their customers and receive payment in cash or in kind. Another way to earn income throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was to collect and utilise the readily available seaweed in and around the plentiful shorelines of Galway Bay and the Aran Islands. Apart from its domestic usage to enrich poor soil, seaweed was in high

demand as a fertiliser among farmers in the rich farming country of East Galway<sup>12</sup> and to supply a local seaweed factory. Seaweed was also burned all over Conamara in kilns and allowed to fuse into dried molten blocks of kelp which were sold to agents and subsequently shipped to Scotland for the further processing of their chemical properties.<sup>13</sup> The hooker was also a means of providing passage for someone travelling to Galway and onto Queenstown (Cobh) for the emigrant ship to America, or those in search of work in Dublin city and Britain. As this brief overview suggests, there was constant hooker traffic sailing within Loch Lurgan/Galway Bay and in the 19th century, estimates suggest that 150 sailing craft were operating out of one of the larger bays in the area, known as Cuan an Fhir Mhóir or, in English, Greatman's Bay.<sup>14</sup>

- FIGURE 1 HERE –
- FIGURE 2 AND 3 HERE -

### **The Research Study**

This paper draws on a qualitative study conducted over a period of nine months during the 2013-2014 hooker sailing season, with those whose own lives and families have revolved around sailing. Thirty-three interviews were recorded, producing approximately thirty-one hours of interview material and 315 pages of transcribed interviews and fieldnotes. Interviewees were mostly men (twenty seven), reflecting a traditional dominance of men as hooker *bádóirí* and craftsmen in the region. A number of women whose families/husbands made a living from sailing and have a vast knowledge of hooker life were interviewed. Very few of the trading-*bádóirí* are still living and the interviews includes one of the last men (then aged 94 years, but now deceased) for whom sailing was his sole livelihood for most of his working life. The age range extends from the last of the trading *bádóirí* at 94 years old, through sons, daughters, grandsons and granddaughters of *bádóirí*, 28 of whom were aged over 30 years and 5 were younger. Interviews were conducted by Pádraig ÓSabhain who has lived in the area since 1997. He has been actively involved in local youth and cultural projects as well as part-owner of a Galway hooker built in the 1920s. Also a fluent Irish speaker, in a region where Irish is the predominant language, his experiences of many summers sailing and fishing and competing in the hooker races helped both to gain access to the interviewees and structure the interviews. Most interviews (twenty-four) were conducted in the homes of the participants, while four were interviewed in

the author's home. The remainder were interviewed in convenient locations. Access to participants was generated through a combination of personal knowledge and snowballing. Interviews were all conducted through the Irish language (Gaeilge), transcribed in Irish, analysed in Irish and then translated to English. Because all of the interviewees are fluent regular Irish speakers and because the culture and the vocabulary of the Galway hooker remains embedded in the Irish language, data generated in this manner were considered to be of higher quality than if conducted in English.

The study adopted a Grounded Theory approach, originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), intended for "the purpose of building theory from data".<sup>15</sup> Based on the researcher's interaction with the participants, combining mostly what is said, with what one observes and feels, grounded theory process is an iterative one between data collection and analysis through coding. After the initial coding process was complete, fifty-five different codes, each related to Conamara life and the Galway hooker were elicited.<sup>16</sup> The software package NVivo was used to manage the analysis.<sup>17</sup> Once the initial coding was complete, a second-level coding known as 'Axial Coding' was undertaken. This second-phase coding involved much re-ordering, re-labelling and merging, and resulted in eight major codes, most of which contained many sub-codes (e.g. 'Skills and Knowledge around the hooker', 'Relationships enabled by the hooker', 'Wisdom in the oral tradition about places' and 'The Revival of the Hooker'). The final coding level is called 'Theoretical Coding' where the researcher gets to identify themes through some theoretical or conceptual framework.<sup>18</sup>

### **Literature: Maritime culture, place and belonging**

While many coastal communities today are not characterised by fishing occupational identity, a range of surveys on traditional working boats provides remarkable insight on the extent to which communities throughout Britain and Ireland in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries were characterised by considerably diverse cultural traditions of inshore and river craft.<sup>19</sup> Especially for communities in remote, isolated places where there was little alternative but to navigate the sea and coastal topography as the principal linking routes, the working boat played a central role in economic, social and cultural terms. Less attention has been paid, however, from a contemporary cultural perspective, to this broader maritime heritage as it endures within people's memories and sense of place belonging. It is in this wider context that our study



attempts to address the enduring, contemporary attachment that people experience towards a particularly symbolic aspect of family history and community culture - the 'hooker' boat. We aim to demonstrate that the boat continues to act as repository of 'authentic' meaningful embodied connection between past, present and future. Our position draws on authors who urge a greater focus on the felt and sensory connections towards one's material surroundings as part of people's life stories through time.<sup>20</sup> To fully appreciate the meaning of how some people experience a sense of place belonging, Bennett foregrounds the embodied and 'authentic' material relationships and encounters with specific places and objects as part of their biographies.<sup>21</sup> For her: "History moves through the lives of people and places; it is not stuck in the past but is constantly being brought into the present, inherent in the flow of life of people and things, material objects, and places".<sup>22</sup> She examines phenomenologically how such 'ontological belonging' instils an embodied responsibility to keep passing on the integrity and memories of places to future generations. Places become 'gifted' to the next generation in the way stories about these places are rendered personally meaningful and kept alive as well as through the care taken to preserve the integrity of material objects, property and heritage. Within farm succession, for example, research by Cassidy and McGrath on young adults from farm backgrounds demonstrates how the farm acts as repository for both personal and collective family memories, the latter built through stories passed down through generations.<sup>23</sup> As the authors note: "Emotive attachments to the farm are anchored in a temporal continuum, which position actors in a framework incorporating past, present and future generations".<sup>24</sup> Among these non-successors of the farm, there is strong expectation and trust placed in other family members to maintain and protect the family farm into the future.

In the process of remembering, Bennett has described the tropes of 'nostalgia' and 'authenticity' within family histories in creating a sense of belonging. While conceptually linked in her view, there are differences in the extent to which they reflect people's experiences and understandings about change and continuity with the past.<sup>25</sup> For her, "authenticity brings past and present together through ongoing, inalienable relationships often embedded within objects and places".<sup>26</sup> Within the family narratives she examines, what is of interest from our perspective is her interpretation of 'authenticity' as the tangible connections people experience with their material environment (e.g. historic buildings, ancestral home) as well as the active process of creating memories. As a form of identity work this helps preserve a sense of

‘ontological security’ and active belonging within the present. The active process of sharing memories and ‘memory talk’ through detailed stories of places, personalities and landmarks of the past serve to deepen the experience of place attachment.<sup>27</sup> For Degnen, “Memories are thus used and are worked to fashion a sense of continuity, of belonging and of self”.<sup>28</sup> The significance of ordinary people’s memory as central to the controversial meaning of heritage has been noted by Harvey who draws attention to a: “distinction between an elite institutionalised memory preserved in the archives, and the memory of ordinary people, unrecorded, and ingrained in the unspoken traditions and habits of everyday life”.<sup>29</sup>

As this work on memory, objects and place suggests, cultural transmission relies not just on memory as a detached cognitive process but is an embodied, habitual engagement and encounter with material objects and places. From our perspective it is also significant to note that transmission of culture often requires ongoing active engagement with practices, skills and forms of knowledge of material objects and technologies. This is well established within study of craftsmanship which demand prolonged processes of practical accomplishment, linking human bodies, objects, tools and technologies.<sup>30</sup> Martindale, in his detailed ethnography of fishing craft in Cornwall, demonstrates that it is only through active whole-body practical engagement with sailing traditional boats that local, historical knowledge and skills can be meaningfully transmitted.<sup>31</sup> It is also clear from studies of occupational identities such as fishing that tacit embodied knowledge is an intergenerational learning process:<sup>32</sup>

“There is a connection to the past through the skills that have been passed down through generations, skills that cannot be learnt in a textbook, such as how to get the boats up and down the beach, where to put the blocks under the boats, when you can run ashore and when you can’t. Boats, gear, knowledge and skills have been passed on from father to son for generations and there is a sense of pride in coming from a local fishing family”.<sup>33</sup>

The extensive literature on ‘landscape’, place and dwelling within anthropology, sociology and geography has also enabled us to understand how our environments are entered into as embodied, ‘more-than-representational’ encounters with nature, material objects, technologies, and other nonhuman artefacts.<sup>34</sup> The meaning of landscape changes over time as the nature of performed tasks (the ‘taskscape’ described by Ingold)<sup>35</sup> and technologies enable different forms of engagement and embodied experiences of the environment. While this may have consigned some objects and technologies which have outlived their purpose to the museums of heritage,

in other cases heritage and traditions actively endure through ongoing engagement, remaining ever present “through processes of memory and imagination”.<sup>36</sup>

In summary, this literature synthesis sets the stage for thinking about the hooker and ongoing tradition of hooker sailing through the lens of ontological belonging, where family histories and community culture are tightly woven within contemporary narratives and practices involving the hooker. We now turn to the narratives to examine the nature of the memories that endure and types of cultural knowledge that have been passed on over time.

*“Níor fhág sí riamh muid gan builín aráin nó muigin tae”* (she never left us without a loaf of bread or a mug of tea) (Síle, 17)<sup>37</sup>

The extent to which the hooker proved central to the economic survival and security of family and community life over such a prolonged period of history is foregrounded throughout the narratives. As described earlier, for isolated communities in earlier times the hooker was the focal interest upon which the entire community depended. In recalling their earlier lives and those of previous generations, some interviewees recounted that the welfare of the hooker took precedence over all else as a matter of necessity. Some of the sayings used to illustrate its everyday survival included: *“An té a raibh aige, bhí punt ina phóca i gcónaí”* (the man who had a hooker always had a pound in his pocket) (Tomás, 33), (Micil, 02); *“Má bhí bád sa teach, bhí an teach sin coinnithe”* (If there was a boat in the house, that house was safe), and *“An chlann a raibh bád nó leath-bhád acu, bhí siad in ann builín a cur ar an mbord”* (the family that had a hooker or even a leath-bhád could put a loaf of bread on the table) (Colm, 16). For a family that owned a hooker, its care and upkeep were of paramount importance. One interviewee noted that it appeared to be more important than anything else in the household, including even basic essential repairs. Recalling the partly leaking roof on their house, which had been originally installed in 1912, he noted:

*“chuile oíche beo le stoirm gaoithe nó báisteach ag teacht isteach, bhí faitíos ar mo mháthair go n-imeodh an cloigeann den teach an oíche seo”* (Every night my mother was scared that the roof would be lifted from the house with each passing shower of rain, water coming in and with every passing gale of wind.

Constant requests to have it repaired were repeatedly ignored by his father, yet if the hooker had any piece of wood, any line, block or sail in need of repair, replacing or repainting, it was given priority and completed promptly (Colm 16). For Colm and his siblings who were all “born into it”:

*“Sin mar a tógadh muid, nuair atá sé istigh faoi do chosa sa teach agus an rud ag dul ar aghaidh, tá sé ag fás istigh ionat agus níl a fhios agat é.”* (that’s how we were reared, when it’s under your feet at home and part of your life, it’s growing within you and you’re not even aware of it).

Another, somewhat jokingly, explained that such was its value that the boat was looked after almost better than the children sometimes: *“Faoin mbád dúradh ‘nuair a bhí mise ag fás ainíos bhíodh sé fíor-thábhachtach, is dóigh gur féidir a rá gurb’é an rud ba thábhachtaí é taobh amuigh go t’athair agus do mháthair”* (When I was growing up the hooker was the most important thing in our lives, outside of our father and mother) (Micil, 02). In conveying his family’s deep attachment to the hooker, one man recounted a personal story of his mother’s final hours before her death in a hospital bed. As family members gathered by her bedside, engaged in conversation about changing the position of the mast on the hooker, he remembered her final moments as she opened and then finally closed her eyes:

*“Táim ag ceapadh nuair a chuala sí muid ag caint ar an mbád go ndúirt sí léi fhéin, ní theastaíonn mise anseo níos mó, tá siad ar a seanléim, tá chuile shórt ceart anseo, tá sé in am dom bóthar a bhualadh”* (I think when she heard us talking about the hooker she thought to herself that ‘there’s no need for me here anymore, everything is as normal and it’s time that I was moving on’.

He felt that had been the story of her life, their family and community: “everything was about the hooker” (Cathal, 19).

### *Emotional attachments and communication*

While the vast majority thirty-three interviewees could trace a hooker across generations - many had one on both their father’s and mother’s sides of the family - such was the collapse in the trading life of the Galway hooker that there are only three families renowned for having held onto their boats across every generation since the boat was built for their family.<sup>38</sup> A particularly poignant narrative and sentiment

expressed throughout many interviews concerned the pain and sacrifice of both losing and retaining a boat within the family line. One older interviewee stood out particularly in his expression of love and heartache for a hooker he was forced to sell through difficult circumstance fifty years earlier in the 1960s, just before emigrating to the United States. The boat, a small *leath-bhád*, had been built in 1885, for his great-grandfather and in 1963, the *bádóir*, who was part-owner, sold his share to his *leath-bhádóir* (the other part-owner and family member). Discovering afterwards that the boat had been sold out of the family, he made several unsuccessful attempts to buy it back when he returned to Ireland. It was evident in the interview that this *bádóir*, now quite old, continued to grieve for his boat more than half a century later, declaring that, “*Dá mbéadh a fhios agam go mbeadh sé á dhíol, ní thabharfainn aghaidh ar Mheirceá, mar bhí an cion agam uirthi, tá fós. Caithfidh mé dhul ag breathnú arís uirthi gan mórán achair !*” (had I known that the *leath-bhádóir* would sell the boat I would never have emigrated to America. I must go back to see her again soon) (Liam, 01), as he looked nostalgically at a photograph of the boat hanging on his sitting room wall. His son later conveyed that his father’s heart is broken since the boat was sold out of the family: “*Bhuel tá sé féin briste, tá a chroí briste ón t-am a díoladh í*” (He is broken himself, his heart is broken since she was sold). He further explained “*Ba mhaith liom dá mbeadh sí ar ais sa gclann arís agus bhféadfainn í a thabhairt do mo mhac fhéin*” (I would for it to be back in the family again and that I could be in a position to give it to my own son) (Micil, 02). He went on to explain how the hooker and the *bádóir* were ‘as one’, holding great pride about their boats.

### *Keeping the boat in the family*

Another *bádóir* remembered the excited expression used by his mother, upon witnessing him buying back the boat that had belong to them throughout her younger years: “*Sin í an bád a thóg muid*” (that’s the boat that reared us / kept the family alive) (Seosamh 09). The boat, a *gleoiteog bheag*, was built in 1916. While the boat had been sold to a fisherman and had endured many years of disrepair and neglect, the new owner agreed to sell it back to the family: “*ar an gcoinníoll go mbeidh sí deasaithe agus coinnithe. Dúirt sé, dá mbéadh sí ligthe le titim níos faide, nach raibh sí le díol*” (on condition that it be repaired and sailed again. He said if it was going to be left to fall further into disrepair, then it was not for sale) (Seosamh 09). It was subsequently bought, repaired and has been sailed continuously since. To the dismay of his family,

he had recently proposed that they sell this gleoiteóg beag to buy a bigger boat to accommodate their larger family. Their response was a resounding refusal to sell, insisting “níl an bád sin ag dul in aon áit” (that boat is not leaving the family again) (Seosamh, 09B).

The phrase “*Ná lig di titim*” (“Don’t let her fall apart”) is a sentence that was often communicated through family generations, especially during the hooker trading years. Almost all interviewees claimed that a family owning a hooker would do all in their power to ensure it never fell into a state of disrepair. One of the older interviewees said that those boats retained through family generations were held in especial regard: “*“Má bhí an bád sa gclann le cúpla gliún bhí a sheacht n-oiread ómóis dhon bhád”* (If the boat was in the family for a few generations, it’s honour multiplied exponentially) (Aindí, 07). One of the younger interviewees lamented, however, that despite this obligation being instilled within his family some generations previously and against the wishes of the dying *bádóir*, the boat was left untended and fell apart (Eamonn 30). However, some generations later when another member of the family (the father of the interviewee) was commissioning to build a new boat he sought out the best remaining ‘good timbers’ from the original family boat to use as the ‘deadwood’ within the new boat, ensuring that part of the old family boat is still sailing within the newer boat today. Such ‘deadwood’ symbolically helps to embody the ontological connection to their past.

The knowledge needed to both construct and sail the hooker was passed down through the generations and learned on-the-job from a young age. A boat was usually left to the son who showed most interest and most promise or ability in handling it (John, 15; Liam, 01).<sup>39</sup> For those who acutely felt a strong obligation to remain active in hooker sailing, this effectively tied them to the locality despite any substantive prospects for earning a viable livelihood. For many in the impoverished West of Ireland, emigration was the typical exit route for several centuries.<sup>40</sup> One man felt he could never leave home the way his siblings and cousins did because “*ní fhéadfainn gan í a fheiceáil ar a bhfarraige*” (I could never ‘not see’ the boat on the water (Tomás, 33). From his childhood, he also recalled “an almighty war between” his father and uncles, over his father’s decision to sell the boat when he was quite old. Despite the family dispute and the boat being held onto in the family, none of his uncles took over its running after his father died. This responsibility lay with the son, who says he is quite happy with how events turned out for him and always looks forward to each new

hooker season. Like many other *bádóirí*, he expressed a common sentiment that “*ar feadh an Gheimhridh, bíonn an dúil ag teacht orm*” (throughout the winter the craving (for sailing) begins to overcome me) (Tomás, 33).

*Spiorad an Bháid: Affective connections with the boat*

It was acknowledged that the level of respect and reverence for the hooker was based on a very personal relationship between the *bádóir* and their boat. Spending so much time in their boats meant a communicative awareness with them was palpable and it was commonly said of the older *bádóirí*: “*bhí sé íontach le bád seoil, an bhfuil a fhios agat?, bhí sé in ann an bád sin a chur ag caint*” (he was wonderful with a sailing boat, do you know? he could make that boat talk) (Micil, 02); “*sin mar a tógadh iad agus a muintire rompú*” (it was how they were brought up and their fathers before them) (Colm, 16). Yet another interviewee said that “*Sé chaoi go mbíonn an bád adhmaid ag déanamh go leor torainn éagsúil, mar a bheadh sí ag clamhsán nó ag iarraidh caint leat, beagnach ag anáil agus í beo*” (it’s the fact that the boat creaks and groans and makes all sorts of noises, it’s a living breathing thing almost) (Síle, 17). A common experience among the interviewees, young and old, was a feeling of being in communication with their forefathers while sailing the hooker. Some spoke of seeking guidance from them, the hooker having its own ‘spirit’ and capacity to help the *bádóir* make the right decision as they attempted to navigate. A very palpable sense of pride was evident in being able to sail and care for those same boats that their fathers and ancestors used before them to ensure families could dwell in the Islands Region. One of the older interviewees knew other *bádóirí* who would rub the side of their boats affectionately and speak directly to them, as one might with another person (Aindí, 07). He suggested that the boat was akin to a lady in the house, always addressed to as she/her and her sails were her clothes (*éadaí*). When they were preparing to sail they would say “*cur uirthi a cuid éadaí*” (put on her clothes); suggesting to him that the boat felt ‘alive’ to the people (Aindí, 07). This affective reference to the boat in female terms is common within the maritime tradition. Another interviewee, a *saor* (boat builder), said that one must always listen to the boat and for the *bádóirí* “*bheadh a fhios acu faoin torann atá an bád ag déanamh, an bhfuil chuile shórt ceart. Feicfidh tú ón gcaoi atá an bád ag luí ar an bhfarraige an bhfuil sí trimmeálta i gceart* (They would know by the noises that a boat makes if everything was okay, how a boat sits on the water tells you if she’s trimmed properly) (Cathal, 19). It is unsurprising to see the

tendency to anthropomorphise the hooker, attributing it with human-like characteristics and communicate with it. The process of anthropomorphism has been described by Epley *et al* as: “Imbuing the imagined or real behaviour of nonhuman agents with humanlike characteristics, motivations, intentions, and emotions.”<sup>41</sup> Where one feels so ‘at home with’ or attached to an animal or material object, the anthropomorphised agent will be treated with “respect and concern” whereas the non-anthropomorphised agents remain treated “merely as objects.”<sup>42</sup> Anthropomorphised agents can constitute or replace a strong social connection, especially where “human connection is lacking.”<sup>43</sup> This would have been the case where long days were spent at sea with no one else apart from a fellow *bádóir* at considerable distance in the opposite end of the boat.

### *Embodied knowledge of the boat and seascape*

The older *bádóirí* are revered today among the younger ones for the depth of embodied kinaesthetic knowledge and almost instinctive ability to understand and navigate the boat in relation to nature’s elements as well as their intimate knowledge of place and coastal topography. Considerable kinaesthetic skills of balance, positioning and movement were vital in being able to navigate both the intricacies of the coastline and harsh conditions on open water. A *saor* amongst the interviewees explained “how a boat sits on the water tells you if she’s trimmed properly” (Cathal, 19). He was referring to the ‘balance’ of the boat, especially in relation to where the ballast is placed, since this exerts a drag on the boat as it moves through the water. While balance and stability are necessary to sail, to minimise the drag was/is also sought to aid the faster delivery of turf or goods, and in later years, a faster sail in the regattas. The trim/balance of the boat is so important that some *bádóirí* actually instruct their crew ‘exactly’ where to sit or stand when sailing, so that the balance is not hindered by body weight, resulting in more drag and slower sailing pace (Pádraic, 11). The practiced ease with which the experienced *bádóir* is able literally to sense balance represents a typical example of tacit and embodied knowledge (see Figure 4). The image of walking within a moving space appears “sedimented” within the body<sup>44</sup>, demonstrating: “continuous awareness and presence to the minute and subtle shifts of wave, water, elements, body, board or vessel”.<sup>45</sup> Others have also described this ability among fishers to skilfully handle the modern boat, its gear and machinery as a form of ‘embodied cultural capital’.<sup>46</sup>

One of the older *bádóirí* indicated that when rounding one notable landmark, Golam Head, in certain tides: “*d’fhéadfadh í a fháil aníos chomh gar dhon carraig, ná*



*sáil an bhróig agat*” (there wouldn’t be more than the thickness of the sole of your shoe between the bottom of the boat and the rock) (Liam 01). Their ability to understand the rhythm patterns have been documented elsewhere.<sup>47</sup> So intimate was the local knowledge possessed by the sean-bhádóirí (older boatmen) that they knew the names for every rock, every passage, every swell and every tide that they engaged with (Joe, 05). This knowledge was never acquired from books or charts, but through a working engagement that engendered respect for (and fear of) these elements. On the land also, where they built their houses, every field, every outcropping rock, every hill and ‘bóithrín’ (narrow road) had its own name. Invariably the given name had a story behind it, a story born of knowledge concerning that place. Every bádóir had his own or his family’s landmarks (*‘marcanna talúna’*), to guide one’s boat safely through narrow passageways or perhaps short-cuts. These were chosen markers (such as chimney pots of houses, lines of stone walls and such, or in latter days telegraph poles) on the landscape that were visible to the eye from the sea. When these markers were correctly aligned and intersected with one another, they would display a line of safe passage for the boat through a narrow or shallow straight between, or clear of, rocks and other such hazards. These markers were passed down through generations, sometimes changing as the surrounding topography changed, but more often than not remaining the same. All of the older *bádóirí* could draw upon a store of such landmarks for every bay and inlet in which they worked and/or travelled. These marks represented a vital knowledge for them: “*b’é an chéad rud a bheinn a iarraidh faoi áit nach raibh mé ag seoladh cheana ann*” (it’s the first thing I seek to learn about a place that I had not sailed previously) (Seosamh, 09). *Bádóirí* asked each other about landmarks for areas they had not previously been to or sought out bádóirí who had been there to accompany them on their first voyage there. Another interviewee said that “*ní ligfeadh an faitíos duit é, bealach a thriáil gan é a bheith déanta cúpla geábh i dteannta le duine a bhí fios a graithe acu*” (fear alone wouldn’t let you try a passage or short-cut until you had done it a couple of times with someone who knew their way) (Joe, 05). The elder *bádóirí* today esteem highly the bádóirí who went before them and the store of such knowledge that they had accumulated throughout their lives. Because they sail for leisure during the summer months, they openly admit that they now have comparatively little of this knowledge due to much less time spent on the sea and regret that their *seanbhádóirí* [the old boatmen] have passed-on and taken with them much of this collected local knowledge (John, 15).

### *Cultural continuity – language and local knowledge*

In the post-1950s period, significantly improved road infrastructure, the decline in demand for turf and new forms of fuel were among the factors to signal the death knell in the hookers' economic significance, resulting in the abandonment and neglect of much of the fleet. Despite this, a seminal boat race was organised in 1976 to celebrate the 16<sup>th</sup> July, an important day in the sociocultural calendar of the region - Féile Mhic Dara (The Feast of St. Mac Dara) – and would ultimately kickstart a renewed collective concern for the future of the hooker. This key catalysing event, in which only four boats took part, is credited with igniting the revival of hooker racing and ultimately with the preservation, regeneration and maintenance of the Galway hooker fleet.<sup>48</sup> Two years after the initial race at Oileán Mhic Dara, *Cumann Húicéirí na Gaillimhe* (The Galway Hooker Association) was set up to manage the restoration and the preservation of the boats.

As one older man recalled the 1970s: “*nuair a tháinig an athbheochain thug sé ugach don phobal uilig*” (when the revival came it gave the entire community a lift) (Aindí, 07). Like many of those interviewed, his sense was that the boat had been re-awakened in the ‘hearts and minds’ of the people of Conamara (Aindí, 07). Another interviewee supported this observation, saying “*manna from heaven é ath-bheochainn na mbáid seol, ní raibh caint ar aon rud eile sa bpobal*” (when the revival began there was an excitement about the community and people would talk of nothing else). He also said that “*tiocfaidh uncail liom ar cúirt chuile maidin Luain chun caint faoi na rásaí amháin*” (my uncle would visit every Monday morning, solely to discuss the races of that weekend) (Noel, 06). One interviewee admitted to cajoling and questioning his father about different sailing manoeuvres and how to accomplish these. He would then go out on the sea the next morning and keep on attempting the described manoeuvres until they were mastered. He claimed to have spent two years on the water like this, in all weathers, as if on a ‘crash-course’ in hooker sailing (Micil, 02). For many old *bádóirí* and their families the revival of the hooker races gave them new impetus to repair, maintain and sail once more in the boats that had ‘reared their families’ (Seosamh, 09), whereas before there was little incentive to spend money they couldn't afford to.

Particularly significant to the revival was the survival of old hooker sailors who were able to oversee the restoration work on many of the hookers and who ensured that

the sailing knowledge and the working-boat terminology as passed on. It was acknowledged that these experienced men returned to the boats and willingly shared their knowhow and wisdom with anyone with a keen interest in the boats. Consequently, the language spoken in and around the hookers has never changed to English, which is notable in the context of a region which, albeit bilingual, is experiencing difficulty in the “intergenerational transmission of Irish” according to a linguistic study of Irish use in the Gaeltacht.<sup>49</sup> What is of interest to us is the strong preservation of Irish in the everyday world of Galway hookers and the natural association between the language and hooker sailing that several felt was significant to maintaining cultural connection and continuity. Dara, when speaking about one of the older hooker sailors expressed it as follows:

*“ba mhaith liom a bheith chomh maith leis ó thaobh na teanga dhe, ó thaobh na foclóireachta dhe, tá sé thar cionn ar fad, a leithéide”* (I would like to be as good as them, not alone in their skills of sailing, but especially so in their knowledge and use of the old hooker sailing vocabulary) (Dara, 14).

He supported its importance by saying that the majority of what is said within and about the hooker is expressed through the Irish language and had been established over the centuries in the region. He felt that this tie with the hooker community must be promoted and supported (Dara, 14). One of the younger interviewees claimed that the only language that he has ever heard in the many hookers he has sailed in has been ‘An Ghaeilge’ the Irish Language. He explained that if a stranger or outsider arrives at the football field, everything turns to English out of politeness to the visitor, but ‘not so’ with hooker-sailing: “it’s An Ghaeilge, all the way”. He said “b’fhéidir go labhrófa Béarla leis a gcuaríteoir, ach i measc críú an bháid déantar gach ní as Gaeilge, sin í an teanga a úsáidtear nuair a thosaíonn an rása” (perhaps you might speak English to the visitor, but amongst the others on-board everything is done in Irish, that’s the vocabulary that the *bádóirí* have on the tip of their tongues when the action begins) (Learaí, 20). Similarly, another man explained that in his role as a local school teacher he had noticed the decline in the social use of the Gaelic language amongst his pupils. However, to illustrate the power of hooker connection with language renewal, he remembered one particular boy who would never speak a word of Irish to him twenty years ago but since becoming more involved with the hookers will now *only* speak with him in the language (Dara, 14B).

The use of Gaelic is also intimately tied to the region's cultural, social and natural history. Where Irish is used in naming the local coastal topography and places it preserves the origins associated with those places in more meaningful ways than English translations, and these names usually reference some distinct feature of the landscape or a particular legendary tale, acting as an "interlock of landscape and language" as termed by Robinson.<sup>50</sup> The naming of headlands, fields and passageways constitutes a form of intimate local history which is only retained if passed down through generations of family and community. What is noteworthy is the extent to which the *bádóirí*, especially, though not exclusively, the older ones, hold considerable knowledge of the tales and histories attaching to place names throughout South West Conamara, which have been passed down through generations, albeit a degree of this has undoubtedly been lost. Some simple examples to illustrate include: 'Carraig Bhéal a' Chuain' ('rock at the mouth of the bay'); 'Carraig na nGall' ('rock of the foreigner'), 'Carraig na bPortán' (rock of the crabs); 'Bealach na Srathrach' ('a straddled way' or 'a way of different depths') and 'Maidhm an Úrláir' (the Swell of the Floor). Some of the elder *bádóirí* seemed to retreat in their minds to their often visited sailing spots and would verbally describe these places, such as "*Á! Ceann Gólaim, droch áit!*" ("Ah! Golam Head, a bad place") (Liam, 01). One of the younger interviewees, introduced to hooker sailing through the sailing courses organised by a community arts project in Conamara, known as Pléaraca, related how his two sailing instructors held an intimate knowledge of the entire area within which they sailed. He was impressed by their stories of every small harbour and bay, every hillock and prominent rock and the distinct place names and superstitions about everything. Traditional oral tales, legends, songs, proverbs, prayers, charms, riddles are all part of an oral tradition characterising many rural and isolated communities. As relayed by Seán:

"bhí saibhreas éicint ag baint le seo, bhí scéalta ag John agus Michael faoi chuile chuan beag, faoi chuile chrompán, faoi chuile charraig amuigh, bhí a fhios acu chuile rud. Bhí ainmneacha faoi leith [acu]. Bhí piseoga faoi leith ann, sí-scéalta bainteach leis agus saibhreas aisteach ar mo thairseach, nach raibh a fhios agam gur thosaigh mé ag seoladh" (John and Michael (*bádóirí*) had stories about every little bay, every creek and every rock out there, they knew everything and every particular name. They knew the old superstitions and seemed to have fairy stories and altogether a great wisdom about another world that was on my doorstep, but I had not known it until I started sailing) (Seán, 03).

He explained that he could travel throughout the region and at every quayside along this route, there are those who can explain in great detail aspects of local historical knowledge connected with the hooker: “*Tá scéalta acu maidir leis an móin, an drochmhóin, na fataí, na hAran Banners, an bhfuil a fhios agat? Agus gach rud a bhain leis na báid seoil*” (they have stories of the turf, the bad turf, the potatoes, the Aran Banners, do you know? And everything related to the sail boats) (Seán, 03). What is clear in our view is the extent to which an enduring sense and knowledge of local place, history and culture – tied to the Irish language – remains naturally practiced at the everyday level of hooker sailing. In terms of ontological belonging, such aspects of the ongoing connection to language and culture matter to people’s sense of place and history, especially when we consider that the significant collapse in activity prior to the 1970s revival may well have been irretrievable.

### *Discussion and Conclusion*

While the hooker collectively performed a distinctive livelihood role and function for a particular period of this coastal region’s history, drawing on contemporary narratives reveals the deeper emotional connections and cultural continuities that this material object continues to evoke and carry through to the present. The longevity of these boats across generations contains through them intimate stories and memories, sustaining connections to a way of life and livelihood that no longer exists. In a region of considerable rural poverty historically, it is well acknowledged among today’s *bádóirí* that the economic survival and security of their descendants depended on the welfare of the hooker which not surprisingly meant it took pride of place within the household. The nature of hooker sailing is very different in today’s context, having shifted from this economic function towards pursuit of leisure. Beginning with the revival of sailing in the 1970s, today’s hookers are actively sailed and this practical engagement ensures the continuity of embodied sailing skills, language and local knowledge transmission. It has ensured, in other words, an active continuity between the past and present. It is also with an eye to the future that many of today’s *bádóirí* are conscious of the need to purposefully keep the craft of sailing alive within their families and communities. Among the younger generation of hooker *bádóirí* there is considerable awe and reverence for the scale of knowledge, wisdom, skill and tenacity of the older *bádóirí*, before the advent of modern technology and safety. In this paper we have highlighted

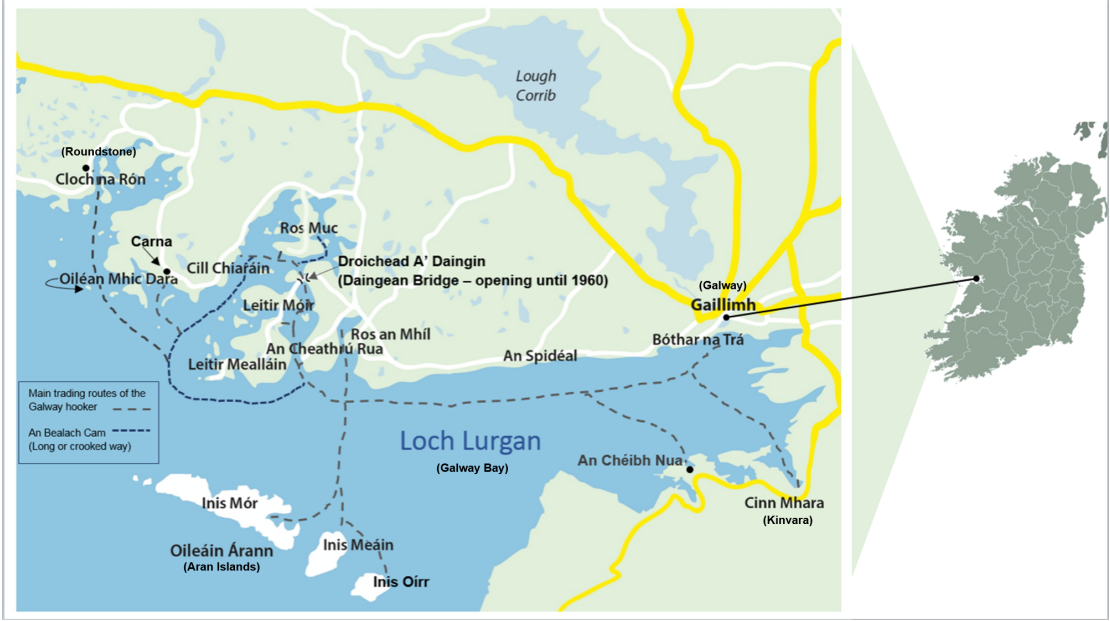
the intimate connection and human-like relationship that many older *bádóirí* appeared to experience with their boats, which signals to today's *bádóirí* the level of respect and care with which they were and continue to be rightfully held.

The material culture transmitted through hooker sailing has served to maintain wider cultural features of the region, namely through the Irish language, knowledge of places and local folklore. In terms of cultural continuity, the living language of the hooker community remains the Irish language, including all terms associated with the craft, as well as the place-names through which the boats travel. Place-names and landmarks represent an important well of local knowledge within a community often relating to what happened there; a “literacy of the land”<sup>51</sup>, inhering in the names of all that which mattered in rural people's lives - every field, stream, track or passage-way and every large boulder that would act as a way-marker, as well as landmarks where important events transpired. As the nature of ‘taskscape’ (Ingold 2000) connecting people to the land and sea are transformed, such cultural aspects face the threat of loss. In a scenario where there are linguistic and cultural concerns about the future of the Gaelic language in the Gaeltacht regions, the Galway hooker represents for us a domain of inseparability between language, culture and sailing, thereby sustaining distinctive dimensions of family and community identity.

In this paper we have foregrounded some of the ways the hooker boat has endured as the central material/tangible object through which family histories and community culture mattered within people's biographies. The narratives here reveal the range of emotions and meaningful experiences resonating throughout family biographies: stories of sacrifice, loss, obligation, love, reverence and excitement. The hooker was and remains that tangible part of culture through which a distinct local and embodied knowledge and sense of place was/is practiced. In tracing the family histories of the hooker it is our sense that the hooker and its material culture confers a sense of ‘ontological belonging’, meaning a tangible form of continuity and connectivity to one's place and culture over time. For us, the hooker “embodies the past experiences and relationships that they have been part of, and facilitates some kind of ineffable contact with those experiences and relationships”.<sup>52</sup> When we think of the efforts to revive hooker sailing and today's active involvement in sailing, in whatever form (competitive or not), we can see in practice a moral duty that people experience for objects and material culture that matter to them. When cared for, respected and

remembered, it can assume, as Bennett describes, a type of “inalienable gift” between generations.<sup>53</sup>

**FIGURE 1: Map of South West Conamara coastline and main trading routes<sup>54</sup>**





**FIGURE 2:** The 'Mount' at Ros-a-Mhíl in 1963 . Only the bádóir and his leath bhádóir on board, as was usual for a turfboat at the time. The hooker was owned by the Griallais Family of Muiceanach and sailed by Pádraic Ó Griallais (1909-1966). It was built by Marcus Connolly of Cladhnach. Source: Used with the kind permission of Sarah Ghriallais, daughter of Pádraic.



**Figure 3: Morning Star, An Tonaí, Naomh Cáilín, Mac Dara, An Mhaighdean Mhara taking part in a Hooker Race.**



Source: Petroni and Dossena.<sup>55</sup> Used with permission.

**Figure 4: Micil Pheter Bailey stepping between hookers.**



Source: Photograph by Eric Luke; used with permission

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.galwayhookers.ie/>

<sup>2</sup> We give primacy to the Irish language terms to emphasize that the working language of the boats has always been, and continues to be, Irish. The term *bádóir* also carries the idea of ownership. Someone called a *bádóir* typically owned or had a share in the boat he sailed. The *leathbhádóir* – companion sailor, might have had the other share of the boat. *Saor* – wright or craftsman (especially in wood) - also connotes the idea of nobility in the older Irish language, synonymous with the term *uasal*. For an interesting discussion of how the word ‘saor’ changed over time see: S. Arbuthnot, M. Ní Mhaonaigh and G. Toner. *A History of Ireland in 100 Words* (RIA, Dublin, 2019) pp. 224-5. Our thanks to Lillis Ó Laoire for this reference.

<sup>3</sup> J. Bennett, ‘Gifted places: The inalienable nature of belonging in place,’ *Environment and planning D: society and space*, 32:4, (2014), 658-671.

<sup>4</sup> C. Mac Carthaigh, ed., *Traditional Boats of Ireland: History, Folklore and Construction*. (Cork: Collins Press, 1991), p.151.

<sup>5</sup> T. Wilde, *The Natural History of Connemara*. (London: IMMEL Publishing Limited 1994, p.9

<sup>6</sup> R. Ó Tuairisg, ‘Saol an Bhádóra’, *Pléarácha*. (Indreabhán, Co. na Gaillimhe: Clódóirí Lurgan, 2001), pp. 12–19. Wilkins, N. P., *Alexander Nimmo, Master Engineer, 1783-1832: Public Works and Civil Surveys*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009).

<sup>7</sup> R.J. Scott, *The Galway Hookers – Sailing Work Boats of Galway Bay*. (Limerick: A.K. Ilen Company, 2004); T. Collins ‘From Hoekers to Hookers: A Survey of the Literature and Annotated Bibliography on the Origins of the Galway Hooker’, *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, 53, (2001), 66-83, p.68.

<sup>8</sup> Scott, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> According the Galway city museum, a common theory is that it can be traced to a seventeenth century Dutch boat called the ‘Hoeker’ and the practice of ‘hook and line’ fishing (see [www.galwaycitymuseum.ie/galway-hooker/](http://www.galwaycitymuseum.ie/galway-hooker/)).

<sup>10</sup> Scott. p.40.

<sup>11</sup> T. Robinson, *Setting foot on the shores of Connemara & other writings*. (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1997). p.17.

<sup>12</sup> Mac Carthaigh.

<sup>13</sup> Robinson, pp.199-200. It is also noted by Moran that in the 1870s, kelp made a significant contribution to the economy of Conamara, see: G. Moran. "Near famine: the crisis in the west of Ireland, 1879–82". *Irish Studies Review* 5, 18 (1997): 14-21.

<sup>14</sup> T. Quinn, *Turfboats - The Story of Cruinniú na mBád*. Kinvara, (County Galway: Cruinniú na mBád Teo, 2003), p.14.

<sup>15</sup> J.M Corbin and A.C. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. 3rd edn. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

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Publications, Inc, 2008), p.1.

<sup>16</sup> Coding is a systematic way of deducing rich common themes from the primary data gathered within the transcribed interviews. Examples of initial codes were ‘Marcanna Talúna’ (Land Marks), mentioned thirty times within fourteen interviews, and ‘Foghlaím Seoltóireachta’ (Learning to sail), was mentioned one hundred and twenty-five times within twenty five interviews. ‘Saor Báid’ was mentioned one hundred and three times within twenty-one interviews.

<sup>17</sup> NVivo is a qualitative data analysis computer software package produced by QSR International.

<sup>18</sup> R.E. Boyatzis, *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development* (London: Sage, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Mac Cárthaigh; M. Smylie, *Traditional Fishing Boats of Britain & Ireland*. (Gloucestershire: Amberley Publishing Limited, 2011). B. Greenhill, 2013. *Inshore Craft: Traditional Working Vessels of the British Isles*. (Barsnley: Seaforth Publishing, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> Bennett, 2014; J. Bennett, ‘Narrating family histories: Negotiating identity and belonging through tropes of nostalgia and authenticity,’ *Current Sociology*, 66:3, (2018), 449-465; T. Blokland, *Community as Urban Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017); J. Mason. *Affinities: Potent Connections in Personal Life*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> See also M. Haldrup, M. and J. Larsen, ‘Material cultures of tourism,’ *Leisure studies*, 25:3 (2006), 275-289.

<sup>22</sup> Bennett 2014, pp.669-70.

<sup>23</sup> A. Cassidy, A. and B. McGrath, ‘The Relationship between ‘Non-successor’ Farm Offspring and the Continuity of the Irish Family Farm’, *Sociologia Ruralis*, 54:4, (2014), 399-416. See also Bennett, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Cassidy and McGrath, p.10.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Nostalgia’ has been the subject of some discussion within literature on ‘community’ and narratives of change. See for example L. Back, ‘Researching community and its moral projects’, *Twenty-First Century Society*, 4,2 (2009): 201-214; T. Blokland, ‘Bricks, mortar, memories: neighbourhood and networks in collective acts of remembering’, *International journal of urban and regional research*, 25, 2 (2001): 268-283. J. Karn *Narratives of neglect*. (London: Routledge, 2013). The notion of ‘authenticity’ is also subject of considerable debate and disagreement. In this paper, we are adopting Bennett’s use.

<sup>26</sup> Bennett 2018, p.453.

<sup>27</sup> Blokland, 2001; C. Degnen, ‘Relationality, place, and absence: a three-dimensional perspective on social memory’, *The sociological review*, 53:4, (2005), pp.729-744. C. Degnen, ‘Socialising place attachment: place, social memory and embodied affordances’, *Ageing & Society*, 36:8, (2016), pp. 1645-1667.

<sup>28</sup> Degnen 2005, p.1663.

<sup>29</sup> D.C. Harvey, ‘Heritage pasts and heritage presents: Temporality, meaning and the scope of heritage studies,’ *International journal of heritage studies*, 7:4 (2001), 319-338. p.326.

<sup>30</sup> R. Sennett, *The craftsman*. (London: Penguin Books, 2008); E. O’Connor, ‘Embodied knowledge: The experience of meaning and the struggle towards proficiency in glassblowing,’ *Ethnography*, 6:2, (2005), 183-204.

<sup>31</sup> T. Martindale, *Livelihoods, craft and heritage: Transmissions of knowledge in Cornish fishing villages* (Doctoral dissertation, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2012).

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<sup>32</sup> G. Pálsson, Enskilment at sea. *Man*, (1994), 901-927; J. Urquhart. and T. Acott, 'Constructing 'The Stade': Fishers' and non-fishers' identity and place attachment in Hastings, south-east England'. *Marine Policy*, 37, (2013), 45-54.

<sup>33</sup> Urquhart and Acott 2013, p.51.

<sup>34</sup> See for example: C. Tilley, *A phenomenology of landscape: places, paths, and monuments* (Vol. 10) (Oxford: Berg, 1994); T. Ingold, *The perception of the environment* (Oxford: Routledge, 2000); P. Cloke and O. Jones, 2004. 'Turning in the graveyard: trees and the hybrid geographies of dwelling, monitoring and resistance in a Bristol cemetery,' *cultural geographies*, 11:3, (2004), 313-341. M.S. Carolan, 'More-than-representational knowledge/s of the countryside: how we think as bodies', *Sociologia Ruralis*, 48:4, (2008), 408-422; Haldrup and Larsen, 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Ingold 2000

<sup>36</sup> Cloke and Jones 2001, p.649.

<sup>37</sup> For quotes, we use pseudonyms for the participants and include a number to distinguish the order in which the interview was conducted/analysed. In this excerpt, Síle is recalling the words of renowned bádóir in the region, Johnny Pheter Bailey, proudly describing his hooker, An Capall.

<sup>38</sup> The hooker 'An Capall', built around 1860 and still in the ownership of the Bailey family for whom it was built, and which continues to be sailed by the fifth and sixth generations. Another is the hooker 'An Mhaighdean Mhara', built around 1852/53, and still in the ownership of the Mac Donnchadha Family for whom it was built, and continues to be sailed by the fifth and sixth generations. The Barrett Family in Fuirnis, Leitir Mealláin had a púcán built in 1928 for Maitias Bairéad, the grandfather of the present owner of the same name, who still sails it with his adult children today. Another hooker, An Tonaí, was bought by Máirtín Ó Brien in the early 1900s, having been built in 1892, and has remained in this family for more than one hundred years.

<sup>39</sup> This is in contrast to the way succession of the family farm operated in Ireland throughout history whereby the oldest son only inherited (see Cassidy and McGrath 2014).

<sup>40</sup> D. Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland 1900-2000*. (London: Profile, 2005). pp.44-7.

<sup>41</sup> N. Epley, A. Waytz and J.T. Cacioppo, J. T. (2007) 'On seeing human: A three-factor theory of anthropomorphism', *Psychological Review*, 114:4, (2007), 864-886, p.864. See also N. Epley, A. Waytz, S. Akalis, S. and J.T. Cacioppo, J.T., 'When we need a human: Motivational determinants of anthropomorphism,' *Social cognition*, 26:2, (2008), 143-155.

<sup>42</sup> N. Epley et al, 2007, p.864.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> P.R. Couper, 'The embodied spatialities of being in nature: encountering the nature/culture binary in green/blue space'. *cultural geographies*, 25:2, (2018), 285-299. p.289.

<sup>45</sup> B. Humberstone, 'Embodied Narratives: Being With the Sea', in M. Brown and B. Humberstone, (eds) *Seascapes: Shaped by the Sea*. (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2015), 27-40. p.31

<sup>46</sup> M. Gustavsson, M. Riley, K. Morrissey, K. and A.J. Plater, 'Exploring the socio-cultural contexts of fishers and fishing: developing the concept of the "good fisher"'. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 50, (2017), 104-116.

<sup>47</sup> P. Ó'Sabhain and B. McGrath. Traditional sailing boats, embodied knowledge (s) and dwelling in coastal rural communities: The case of the 'Galway Hooker' in South West Conamara, Ireland. *Journal of Rural Studies*. 72, Dec (2019), 228-39.

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<sup>48</sup> Scott, p.75.

<sup>49</sup> National University of Ireland, Galway. Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge, C.Ó Giollagáin et al. *Comprehensive linguistic study of the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht: Principal findings and recommendations*. (Dublin: Stationery Office; 2007). p.27.

<sup>50</sup> Robinson 2007, p.155.

<sup>51</sup> R. Macfarlane. *Landmarks*. (UK, Penguin Books, 2015). p.23

<sup>52</sup> S. Jones. Negotiating authentic objects and authentic selves: Beyond the deconstruction of authenticity. *Journal of material culture*. 15(2) 2010:181-203. p.189

<sup>53</sup> Bennett 2014, p. 659.

<sup>54</sup> Our thanks to Mr Seán Ó Grádaigh of the Department of Education, NUI Galway for generating the map of the region.

<sup>55</sup> E. Petroni, E. and G. Dossena. ‘Húicéirí’, (Galway: Seanchaí Editions, 2016). p.111.