L10 MARTINA MCCLOSKEY INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Interviewee: Martina McCloskey
Interviewer: Dr Fearghus Roulston
Interview summarisers: Dr Jack Crangle and Prof Liam Harte
The interview was recorded as a single audio file with no section breaks

L10 Martina McCloskey	**Start time: 00:00:00**	**Finish time: 02:13:19**	**Duration: 02:13:19**	**Brief description of content:**
00:00–09:59	She was born in Derry in 1974 and lived in the Dungiven area until 1981, when her family moved to Maynooth, then Leixlip and from there to Ardoyne in Belfast in 1986, by which point her parents had separated. Recalls being called a 'Brit' by some people in Maynooth, which she disliked as it 'never even occurred to me that I was British'. States that her working-class Catholic mother sent to her to a Protestant grammar school in Belfast and that Ardoyne was 'probably the worst place to live ever'. They later moved to Skegoneill, a heavily militarised area where they were subject to sectarian threats. She says that the sound of helicopters still triggers bad memories of this time and arouse anxiety in her.			
10:00–19:59	Recalls being chased and sometimes assaulted by Catholic schoolboys from the New Lodge area who assumed that she was a 'posh Protestant'. She has fond memories of school nevertheless and particularly enjoyed sport. Says that few of her peers would visit her house because it was in a 'rough area'. Her mother, who worked as a barmaid and was a Catholic unionist, tried to shield Martina and her younger sister from politics, although she 'spoke out against the hunger strikes' and would 'slag off' Sinn Féin and the IRA. Reveals that her father spent a year in Long Kesh/the Maze prison in the early 1980s for 'relatively minor' republican activities. Recalls 'being traumatised at going to the jail' to visit him.			
20:00–29:59	Explains that she has not been in contact with her father, whom she describes as a 'violent alcoholic', since she was eighteen. Recalls how common street rioting was during her years in Skegoneill, up until the early 2000s. Describes the culture of paramilitary surveillance and the policing of behaviour in Ardoyne, which was a profound contrast to her early rural upbringing. Recalls her family keeping a low profile during the marching season for fear of being attacked by loyalist groups and neighbours. Admits that she did not play in the street as a child, preferring instead to stay indoors and read, which meant that she became 'a real bookworm' as a result.			
30:00–39:59	Recalls enjoying the religiously mixed 'indie scene' in early 1990s Belfast when she was seventeen. She failed her A-levels first time around, but re-took them successfully in her mid-twenties and went to the University of Ulster at Jordanstown to study radiography. Remembers various casual jobs during her late teens and describes spending a year in the USA, after which she worked as a medical receptionist and developed an interest in healthcare work. Recalls a growing optimism among Catholics as the peace process developed. Credits Mo Mowlem for her empathic pragmatic approach to conflict resolution and for appreciating that 'for the majority of people it was about human rights'.			
40:00–49:59	Stresses how transformative the peace process was for NI Catholics' perception of themselves as equal citizens and for her own ability to claim an Irish identity, noting that the 'McCloskeys have been in Dungiven since 1197'. Explains that her mother moved to America with her new husband in the late 1990s. She herself considered moving to Melbourne, but opted for London instead because of its			

	proximity to Belfast. She secured a job at Guys and St Thomas's Hospital in 2004 and has worked there ever since. Recalls enjoying a vibrant social scene in London, where she encountered ethnic and cultural diversity for the first time.
50:00–59:59	Describes her expanding cultural awareness in London and how the city's liberal mores are more compatible with her feminist values than those of NI. Criticises the current political climate in NI, particularly the DUP's stance on same-sex marriage and abortion. Despite retaining a fondness for NI, she feels that overall she is 'very happy to be out of there'. Discusses her nephews' upbringing in Belfast and worries that they are being 'indoctrinated' into sectarian attitudes. Voices her sense of solidarity as an Irish person with Muslim people in England, based on a shared experience of being seen as second-class citizens, enemies of the state and terrorist threats.
01:00:00–01:09:59	Observes that the close-knit family networks that are common among Irish and Indian people tend not to be the norm among English people. Discusses her motivations for learning the Irish language and how attending classes in Camden made her feel more connected to the London-Irish community. Describes her recent interest in Irish history, which she was not taught in school, and mentions some books she has recently read. States that Brexit has made her identify even more strongly as Irish and thinks it has strengthened the case for a united Ireland, which she sees as 'the only sensible option'.
01:10:00–01:19:59	Discusses her experiences of living in different parts of London and says that she now feels quite settled in the city with her English boyfriend, who was raised in a household that was sympathetic to Irish nationalism. Explains that she 'did a lot of campaigning' in London for the 2018 Irish abortion referendum and was also involved in setting up the Women's Equality Party, but 'kind of lost faith in that, so stepped away'. She also canvassed for the Labour Party in elections and 'went to a load of hustings' is support of Jeremy Corbyn, whom she admires.
01:20:00–01:29:59	Further discusses her political activism and the camaraderie it fostered. Explains that taking part in Irish-themed campaigns in London made her feel more connected to home, yet also sparked a desire to improve her knowledge of Irish history. Says that her London experience has been positive, apart from 'the odd drunken idiot who'll make some comment about you being Irish or whatever'. Recalls celebrating the result of the abortion referendum in Belfast in May 2018 and feeling that it vindicated her being seen as the 'black sheep' of her family.
01:30:00–01:39:59	Discusses her sister's anti-abortion views and recalls how such attitudes were strongly promoted during her schooling in NI. Believes that while NI is 'slowly changing', socially conservative attitudes are still common, especially in relation to gender roles and the division of domestic labour. Regards her experience as somewhat unusual owing to her mother's unionism and her 'having moved so much'. Says she meets more people from the ROI than NI in London, which may indicate that fewer NI people now feel compelled to emigrate. Describes the diversity of people who attend the Irish language classes in Camden.
01:40:00–01:49:59	Describes the oppressive, militarised atmosphere of Troubles-era Belfast, which became 'normalised'. Recalls an incident as a child when British soldiers poisoned and killed her family's dog, arguing that such actions further alienated the community from the army. Discusses the continuing social and psychological impact of the Troubles, as evidence by the high rates of suicide and unaddressed trauma. Says that people in NI tend to suppress their emotions and that 'nothing is talked about'. Believes that NI would benefit from a structured peace and reconciliation process, as occurred in South Africa, to enhance mutual understanding and address the bitter social, political and religious divides.

01:50:00–01:59:59	Recalls the absence of petty crime during her Belfast upbringing due to a paramilitary-enforced system of vigilante justice. Describes how this system worked when her sister was being stalked by her ex-boyfriend, telling how local paramilitaries were enlisted to warn and 'put a restraining order on him'. Recalls her experiences of sexual harassment as a teenage waitress, which develops into a wider discussion of patriarchal gender roles in NI. Describes having 'to run the gauntlet to go to a Protestant area' to use a swimming pool and the 'absolute mortal fear' she once felt when she became stranded in a loyalist area in her school uniform. While she 'would still feel scared down the Shankill now', she loves visiting Belfast and delights in its becoming a more cosmopolitan city.
02:00:00–02:09:59	Further discusses the ways in which Belfast is 'becoming more of a normal place and a place that people, tourists will come to'. Says that while she would be open to moving back to NI, her boyfriend is unwilling to leave London. Argues that the groundwork for a united Ireland should be laid now, and should include a 'concerted campaign' to convince unionists that 'their culture will be respected and they can still have their bonfires and the marches'. Voices her irritation at English attitudes towards NI. Outlines her views of NI politics and her voting history in elections there. Explains how she once viewed Sinn Féin as 'extreme murderers', but now agrees with many of their policies 'because I'm a socialist'.
02:10:00–02:13:19	Reveals that she persuaded her mother to vote for Sinn Fein in the 2019 UK general election. Describes how her attitude to Martin McGuinness evolved from seeing him as 'murdering scum' to feeling that his death was a 'real loss' to NI. Expresses her admiration for David Latimer, the Presbyterian minister who befriended McGuinness and later wrote a book about how they worked together for peace.