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Auditorium di Città degli Studi

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I always learn more about my own country when I go abroad than when I am at home. I love Italy and that love has been confirmed by the passion and the intellect which has been on show at this meeting. We come to conferences to learn, so I've been wondering "What have I learned?". There were four days and so much, but one thing I can take home in my little bag, is that on Friday someone said: "The core and the meaning of ecomuseums is in the 'e' – [*I presume this will appear in the original Italian – where it makes much more sense*] - in English in the 'And', and I think that gets us a very good definition of ecomuseums, which is the most useful thing, because of the joining, as Peter said, of this clasp. I will go one step further than professor Davis because he said that ecomuseums are about the present, but one of the things which really excites me about museums, is that they are also about the future. Not just the present, not just the past, but making a circle through generations.

There are very few things we do in our society that mean we can look forward to making a difference in the future, for future generations and perhaps for hundreds of years. And to me that is the real core - the real importance and one of the reasons why I work in museums.

In some ways Ireland and Italy are very similar. Though in Ireland it rains a lot and it doesn't rain so much in Italy. But both countries are full of the past, both countries define themselves by the landscape, by the countryside. I have learned to admire the way in Italy you have the overlapping civilisations of the Greeks, the Romans, the Quattrocento. Great histories known and famous everywhere

But what do those things mean to the people? People are defined by their lives, by the landscape, and in Ireland it happens just the same way. The official history, the identity which is forced on people, is perhaps not their own identity. It is the identity which they've learned, it's not always what they have in themselves. And perhaps one of the things we in Ireland might be able to offer [something to you] is that Italy on a local and on a regional level is a consensual society: people knew who they are, and where they are. Ireland, as you know, and we have the scars to prove it, is a conflicting society, so we might be more open to varieties of identity, to diversity, to seeing the many different identities which each of us has within us.

We have male identities, female identities, the identity we have when we go to work, the identity we have when we come at home, the identity we have when we go to the bar, and one of the things I thought was perhaps missing here was an acknowledgement that in the present, in the future, our societies are becoming more diverse. Even in the past perhaps there are hidden differences within our history, little things which are suppressed, and we need to bring those out if we are to tell the truth.

That is something that perhaps I should not have said, so I finish by speaking from my heart and saying thank you, this has been a wonderful experience, I will come back to Biella, I will come back on holiday, I will look at your ecomuseums, I will eat more of your wonderful food, and I will certainly drink more of your superb wine. Thank you.