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I would like to begin by thanking the Milieu team and in particular this year's Editor Greg White for undertaking an excellent job in compiling this range of research materials. It is no easy task soliciting, reading and editing this volume of material and as ever the devil is in generating interesting discussion whilst getting the detail right. Greg has led the team well and the fruits of their labours are now to be enjoyed and savoured. Student led geography publications remain a valuable and fascinating source of insight into the kinds of geographical imaginations, which Universities are honing in the contemporary period. Professor Chris Philo was so intrigued by the journal produced by Geography students at the University of Glasgow - titled Drumlin - that he in fact dedicated a whole paper to this topic in the journal **Progress in Human Geography**. Philo noted the ways in which the choice of research topics, research approaches, analytic styles, genres of writing, modes of expression, and so on contained in student journals always expose something fundamental about how students are picking up on ideas which are being generated and circulated by academic staff and wider geographical literature. Invariably the student's perspective anticipates developments in human geography rather than follows such developments - and indeed given some of the trends in contemporary human geography it is often the grounded views of students which provide the necessary corrective to ideas which are rather too esoteric and self indulgent to be valuable!

That NUI Maynooth students title their journal 'Milieu' and not 'Drumlin' provides in itself an interesting insight into the thinking of this geography community. Of course being so flat presumably the title Drumlin was never up for consideration in these parts! The genealogy of the term Milieu in the Maynooth mind may never be fully known - although for sure colleagues will have some interesting pet theories. Milieu of course might be traced back to humanistic geographical concerns that came of age in the 1970s in Geography. Then, notions of sense of place, ecumene, place and placelessness, home, and human(e) environments were being mulled over by people like Anne Buttimer, Ted Relph, Yi Fu Tuan, and John Pickles. The concept of Milieu resonates with the collegiality, which marks the Kildare/Maynooth experience. It is a fitting title for a town whose atmosphere and sense of place cannot be easily articulated but which is welcoming, comfortable, and comforting in equal measure. I like to think that it was this backdrop that gave birth to the journal.

Congratulations to all those who have written interesting pieces for this year's journal and to those that have undertaken the task of sifting and sorting to chisel everything into shape. You now join the halls of fame and perhaps one day your work too will be dissected and theorised as a small but valuable and insightful comment on the historical geography of geographical knowledge.

Professor Mark Boyle - *Head of Department of geography*

Editors Notes

The job of editing this, the 31st, Edition of Milieu was made very easy. The reason for being so was because of the fantastic work and effort from the MILIEU Committee.

The Milieu Committee include the following members of the NUI Maynooth Geography Society, Pamela Dore (President), Sandra Walsh (Vice-President), Brendan O'Reilly (Treasurer), Paul Geraghty (PRO), and Rebecca McGovern (Secretary).

I would like to thank Caroline McCabe for her help with the committee and a special thank you goes to Felix Schweikhardt. Felix has encouraged the efforts of other Erasmus students to write articles for this Edition of Milieu. He himself has two articles contained within the bounds of this book.

The Geography society in NUI Maynooth has stepped up again with this the 31st issue, last year's edition was the first to go to a gum bound hard cover, this year has the benefit of the inclusion of colour pages.

The Range of articles and topics has been as widespread as usual. We have a good selection from 1st, 2nd, & 3rd years plus postgraduates. We also have an article from a student from UCD. The inclusion of articles from lecturers again shows the strength of the Milieu as an Annual Geographical Journal.

We would like to thank the new head of Geography at NUI Maynooth, Professor Mark Boyle, for his Foreword to this issue.

The front cover of this issue and the NUIM Geography website has been created by a non-Geography student, James Doyle. We would like to thank and recognize all of your efforts that you have made to make things work behind the scenes. Thanks James.

I hope many students will enjoyably read this issue. I have enjoyed being a part of the Geography Society and especially of taking an active part in the Milieu committee. I hope the next Geography Society members and the next Milieu Committee will enjoy putting Milieu together as much as I have.

Greg White (*Editor*)

NUIM Geography Society: 2007-2008

Welcome to the 31st edition of Milieu, the annual journal of the NUIM Geography Society. Last year the society had the fantastic success of winning Most Improved Society 2007 at the Clubs and Society's Awards, and this year has seen an increase in membership to over 130 as the society continues to grow and build on last year's success. So what did we get up to this year? Well we started off early with the AGM making plans for the year, and we were away. A new bebo site was launched and the website was overhauled. The first event was a careers talk in UCD to hear what Geographers actually do once we leave the leafy Rhetoric House with our degree in hand. Back in Maynooth (after an interesting bus journey home) we continued talking of future prospects.

Over the midterm a GPS treasure hunt on South Campus was mapped by some committee members. You know what you should never say when crossing the rocks in the garden's pond on the south campus? "I'm always afraid I'm going to fall in" because inevitably you will, not naming any names of course. Several brave souls turned up on a very rainy and windy day and raced around South campus through some typical Irish weather and eventually found us with the aid of their trusty GPS. Our next main event was the Christmas Party in the Arts Block. The Doyle and Kelly families went head to head in Geography Family Fortunes, and the guest host led a very tight game with some interesting families! In the end the Doyle family emerged victorious, even if one of their questions "Name 4 geography lecturers from the UK" went to the only non-geography student contestant!

The first semester drew to a close, Christmas came and went too fast (as usual) and then it was exams time. Then we were back with a bang helping organising a 70's Charity night raising money for the Maire Keating foundation in collaboration with NUIM Snooker Club, NUIM Paintball Club and NUIM Gospel Choir on the 20th of February. It was a night filled with fantastic performances by the Gospel Choir and Elvis and Tina Turner impersonators with lots of money raised for a good cause. Of course getting Milieu together was the main focus of this second semester and we have a great mix of articles from first years to lecturers. Thanks to all those who were part of the production of Milieu, either by submitting an article or being on the committee and a special thanks to the Geography Department.

But the year is not over yet, as we wait to go to print there are guest lecturers, social nights, another GPS treasure hunt, Clubs and Society's Awards and the Green Globe Awards to launch Milieu still to come.

So enjoy these articles and enjoy the rest of our events this year, next year you could be the one writing this!

Pamela Dore – *President NUIM Geography Society 2007 - 2008*

‘TOWARDS TOGETHERNESS’ : THE CHALLENGE OF SUSTAINING COMMUNITIES IN CONTEMPORARY IRELAND

**Prof Mark Boyle and Dr Mary Gilmartin,
Department of Geography,
NUI Maynooth**

The Sustainable Communities Agenda (SCA) has become a central feature of public policy reform – and in particular has underpinned a number of urban policy innovations - in many advanced capitalist societies. Learning lessons from the failure of unfettered neo-liberalism, SCA argues that state intervention remains necessary and that urban disadvantage cannot be solved solely through the operation of the market. Reflecting on the failures of the Fordist Keynesian welfare state, however, it also claims that intervention must avoid creating a climate of welfare dependency. The solution offered is for the state to intervene only to the extent that communities can be rehabilitated so that they can stand on their own two feet and reproduce themselves autonomously in the market economy. SCA has been offered as a policy instrument capable of addressing challenges as diverse as crime and anti-social behaviour, welfare dependency, health inequalities, and community anomie.

How might research on sustaining communities be conducted in the Irish context ? Here we offer some thoughts on possible ways forward.

Our vision for research on Sustaining Communities in Ireland is based upon the claim that the rise to prominence of SCA is rooted in a particular set of social, economic, political, and cultural conditions in the advanced capitalist city. Given its genealogy, it is unsurprising that SCA should present three distinctive research possibilities; a practitioner approach seeking to build sustainable communities, a critical tradition charting relations between SCA and the wider neoliberalisation of (urban) policy; and a ‘redefining Sustainable Communities Agenda’ tradition which seeks to reclaim the agenda, broaden definitions of community, and pilot new and innovative theoretical, methodological, empirical, and political approaches. It will be important in future to build networks, infrastructures and research capacities within Ireland and between Ireland and the international research community so that each of these research traditions will be valued, nourished, critiqued and developed.

Prior to outlining the three research foci in more detail, we wish to emphasise the importance of Ireland’s unique history, geography and social, cultural, economic, and political formations. These might include the impact of the rise of the ‘Celtic Tiger’

on community life (commuting times, dormitory towns, ‘fabric of social life’, decline in active citizenship, rural re/depopulation); public discourses about this ‘problem’; different north-south contexts (legislative frameworks): how to bridge the North South border in this context; Ireland’s unique relationships between central, regional, and local government; Ireland’s strong NGO sector, partnership models, and the recent taskforce on active citizenship; the growing importance of environmental sustainability including climate change in the context of Green government, and the growing interest in Irish diaspora strategies and generating meaningful relationships within and between the diaspora.

Practitioner Approaches

SCA recognises the need to redefine concepts of citizenship – state intervention will be provided but in return communities are expected to be comprised of active citizens; welfare is to give way to workfare. To instil such active citizenry, attention needs to focus on rebuilding local social capital – taken loosely to refer to the vibrancy, intensity, and inclusivity of local social networks; greater social capital is presumed to be midwife to increased participation and the formation of more sustainable communities. Social capital can be nurtured in itself by a variety of interventions; urban design, social mixing, skills training, community empowerment and an enhanced role of the voluntary sector all play a pivotal role in germinating social capital.

In the United Kingdom, the ESRC/ASC Skills and Knowledge for Sustainable Communities Initiative funds independent, high quality, research and links new thinking, ideas, and knowledge to the development of skills and practice in the sustainable communities field. The focus is on enhancing the skills and knowledge that are needed to create and maintain better places, now and in the future. Ireland needs to develop a similar research strand. The practice of trafficking the sustainable communities agenda into Irish public policy constitutes a first research imperative. Attention will be given to the mobilisation and measurement of concepts in practice, the challenges of conducting policy impact analyses in this field, best practice from elsewhere and the difficulties of effecting policy transfers, practitioner competencies, skill sets and training needs, and community outcomes in terms of health inequalities, crime, employment, and community voluntarism. Ireland would benefit from a similar research programme.

Critical Approaches

Whilst professing a deep commitment to local empowerment, SCA can be recognized to constitute a new form of ‘governmentality’. SCA serves as a new kind of normative communitarian discourse shaping the ‘conduct of conduct’ of community and voluntary

groups: reifying concepts such as ‘sustainable communities’, ‘social capital’, ‘quality of life’, and ‘active citizenship’; introducing new infrastructures of intervention and a new community of regeneration professionals and associated practitioner literature; and promoting new measures and metrics of evaluation. In turn, these instruments of governmentality have exercised a strong disciplinary force on local communities, making use of a convoluted apparatus of rewards and penalties to impose moral assumptions about which forms of community are ‘good’ and ‘bad’/ ‘right’ and ‘wrong’/ ‘just’ and ‘unjust’ / ‘worthy’ and ‘unworthy’ and to establish the first contours of a new ‘shadow state’.

Critical engagements with the ideological and political genealogy and effects of SCA will constitute a second research cluster. It will be important to encourage research into the fundamental theoretical and ideological origins and bases of SCA, looking at the meanings, practices, and effects of concepts such as social capital, workfare, and active citizenship. The political economy of SCA will be examined and its relationship with the neoliberalisation of urban governance and rise of Third Way politics probed, debated, and critiqued. The extent to which SCA forms part of new forms of ‘regulatory’ roll out neoliberalism will be scrutinised. Conflict, contestation and struggle over the grounding of SCA in particular communities will be examined. The moral politics of community and moral politics of place which SCA has the potential to create will be studied, and the circumstances under which moral debate is actualised and forms such debate takes will be foregrounded.

Redefining the Sustainable Communities Agenda

Beyond practitioner and critical research approaches, there exists a third vantage point; one which seeks to critically and creatively engage with SCA with a view to reclaiming the concept of sustaining communities, broadening the audiences to which it is attached, putting it to wider service, and innovating new political, technological, theoretical, and methodological angles in its study. Whilst to date the sustainable communities agenda has tended to serve as a policy instrument targeted at vulnerable residents in disadvantages areas of cities, it is clear that the concept might productively be brought to bear on the policy challenges which are presented by different communities with different geographies. Here, the role of technology, not least the practice of e-government and the use of novel forms of democratic participation, might emerge as a key research foci.

Questions about the relationships which exist between sustainable community policies, space, and technology, might be usefully asked in relation to different kinds of communities such as ; children, youth and young adults; immigrant communities and ethnic and racial minorities, Irish diaspora groups, both returnees and those living overseas; communities of affluence including those living in growth centres and affluent suburbs; traveler groups and mobile communities.

Environmental history: The influence of water in human history.

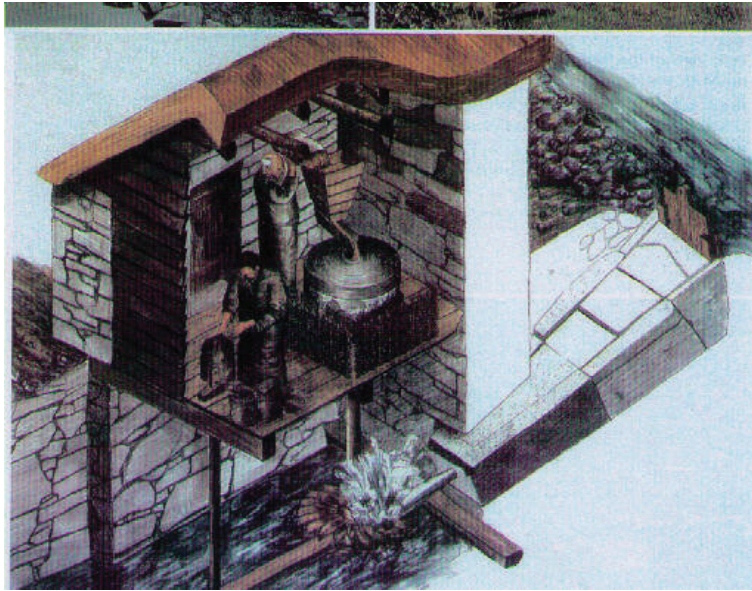
Andreas Boldt, Post Graduate, NUI Maynooth

History is usually written on nations, revolutions, discoveries, famous people or technical developments. In general the interconnection of history with the environment, in which humans live in, is omitted, although human societies evolve from interactions with their environment. I want to look into this interconnection of humans with their environment and the element of water has been specifically chosen. Water is an important issue to societies and without it human settlements or agriculture would not exist.

In northern Germany there is a saying that water can give but equally also take away property and lives. Certainly it was life giving when the first known civilisations evolved. These civilisations developed near sources of water, such as rivers, lakes or the sea, which not only supplied settlements and fast growing cities with fresh water, but also served as fertilizer for farming and functioned as trading channels. Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and China are examples of early civilisations and they are cultures everybody learned in school, although the influence of water within these cultures is often underestimated.

Water had not only a major influence on early civilisations, but also on later states, their history and cultural development. Let us take Ireland as an example. Early Christianity had strong connections with the element of water, some famous locations like Skelling Micheal on the Great Skelling island near Co. Kerry would not have existed if water had not given the possibility of isolation and undisturbed concentration on religion. This may be the reason why Irish monasteries preserved the early Christian religion and the art of writing so well. Excavations in Co. Down revealed one of the earliest European tide powered mills. Water did not only help to increase spiritual life in monasteries, they were also able to construct technologies which were lost after the onslaught of the Vikings. Even until today it is difficult to use tidal power; so that even where it is sufficient, like in Bristol or the North Sea, it is not used. Nevertheless Irish monks were able to construct a tidal mill from 619 to 621, which was replaced by 787 by a much more sophisticated stone based mill. It is thought that the mill was in operation until the 9th century.¹

1 Thomas McErlean, 'Tidal power in the seventh and eight centuries AD', in: *Archaeology Ireland*, issue 56 (2001), pp 10-14.



Reconstruction of the water mill (*Archaeology Ireland*, issue 56 (2001), p. 12).

On the other hand, water was not always used for technical developments. Bigger settlements were protected by ditches filled with water or natural streams and rivers. With the arrival of the Normans in Ireland new defensive castles were built either on hills or near rivers: Maynooth Castle is such an example. Maynooth evolved with the Fitzgerald dynasty to the alternative capital of Ireland and only the rebellion of Silken Thomas brought the legacy and stronghold to an end. If we look today at the two streams of Maynooth, the junction of the Lyreen River and a smaller tributary,² it is not fully imaginable that these two streams once protected the castle. But we cannot overlook the fact, that at around 1200 the climate was much different than today, and the streams were much wider. Furthermore, the castle was built on a hill. Today we cannot see this hill at all, but the building site of 'Maynooth Mill', a new development site for apartments and shops, made it possible for a few weeks to see the location of the castle in a different perspective in summer 2004. The castle is located on the edge of a hill, which roughly forms a triangle enclosed on two sides with streams and one side by land. This was a perfect

2 Arnold Horner, *Irish historic town atlas, no. 7, Maynooth* (Dublin, 1995), p. 1. On a map from 1781 by Thomas Sherrard published by Horner, map 7, Lyreen is called Rye Water. Following Mary Cullen, *Má Nuad, Maynooth, a short historical guide* (Maynooth, 1995), p. 24, the second river was called Joan Slade on an eighteenth century map. The same name is used by John Drennan, *Cannonballs and roziers, a history of Maynooth* (Maynooth, 1994), p. 14. David Sweetman, *Medieval castles of Ireland* (Cork, 1999), p. 37, mentions the smaller river as Owenslade.

location for a castle around 1200 to defend English rule in a still hostile country.³

To bring another example we need to move our attention from Ireland to Northern Germany. Like in Ireland, Northern Germany has large bog and marsh lands, but unlike Ireland it is under permanent threat by the North Sea with storm tides causing in the past thousands of casualties. Dikes are needed to keep large areas dry and the fight against the water has shaped the community over the last 1500 years. One of these forms is the calling of defence. If there is a dangerous situation, men are called in by the sound of a horn to protect the dikes and they say good bye to their family members as they might not see them again. The men do not pray to God while fighting against storm tides, but after the flood the whole community ensembles either to thank God for not flooding their land or to say farewell to the casualties. The last such gathering was in Hamburg in 1962, when hundreds of people died.⁴

The floods of the North Sea could give the farmers in one night new land of the size of half of Leinster, but it equally could take twice as much. In one of the most important drain pump stations of Bremen one can find inside a large plaque which expresses this system of giving and taking and the danger of floods:

**Water is Segen, Water is Not
Lot us den Segen, wohr us vor Not.⁵
(Water is blessing, water is anguish
Leave us the blessing, protect us from anguish)**

On the other hand the sea was the most valuable gold for the people in the north. Floods were fertile for the fields and for centuries Northern Germany was regarded as the *Kornkammer* (granary) of the German lands and remained until the 19th century the richest region.

3 Further details on Maynooth Castle: Cullen, *Maynooth, a short historical guide*; Drennan, *Cannonballs and crosiers*; Horner, *Irish historic town atlas*; H.G. Leask, *Irish castles and castellated houses* (Dundalk, 1995); Denis Meehan, *Window on Maynooth* (Dublin, 1949); Sweetman, *Medieval castles of Ireland*; Andreas Boldt, 'Maynooth Castle' (archaeological project, Maynooth, 1999).

4 Further details in: Hoffmann, *900 Jahre nasse Füße. Landschaft aus Deichen und Gräben* (Bremen, 1990); Kramer, *Neue Deiche, Siele und Schöpfwerke zwischen Dollart und Jadebusen* (1969); Andreas Boldt, 'Küstenschutz in Norddeutschland. Eine Untersuchung über die Deichverteidigungsmaßnahmen sowie deren aktueller Stand anhand des Beispiels der Großregion Bremen' (Paper, Bremen, 1997).

5 Wolfgang Pfeifer, *Bremen im Schutz seiner Deiche, Dokumentation zur großen Sturmflut vom 16. und 17. Februar 1962* (Bremen, 1963), p. 9.



Breach during the Oder catastrophe in 1997 (from private collection of Andreas Boldt).

Water in the form of catastrophes can also have political impacts. As an example I have chosen the Federal Republic of Germany. During the flood of 1962 hundreds of people lost their lives, and it would have been more, if Helmut Schmidt, senator of Hamburg, had not called in the army for help. Although he performed an illegal action, only generals or the chancellor can direct the army, his actions were not forgotten, and in 1974 he was elected the chancellor of Germany. Floods also helped the former chancellor Gerhard Schröder. When in 1997 the Oder catastrophe flooded large areas of Brandenburg and Poland, he gave as the minister president of Lower Saxony immediate help to Brandenburg to deal with the flood. As the Helmut Kohl government reacted slowly to the events it was regarded as one of the factors, why Schröder was elected to the chancellors office in 1998. And again in 2002 the Elbe flood helped the re-election of Schröder due to his fast reactions and he was regarded as the best crisis manager. In regards to the tsunami at Christmas 2004 Schröder proved again, that he was able to deal with a crises. Although his splendid offer of €500 million for help can also be understood as a political statement to the UN, where Germany tries to gain a permanent seat in the security council.

When the tsunami happened at Christmas 2004 the whole world was shocked that such strong waves could run for thousands of miles within a very short time period. Nobody could imagine that a wave like that could destroy so much and kill so many people. When I was in Germany at that time, my grandmother told me, that it is such a flood she imagined that the biblical Great Flood must have been. This raises the question of what

the biblical flood has to do with the recent one.

Although his theories are not taken seriously by many established archaeologists, and without me supporting all of his theories, Graham Hancock claimed to have found recently new answers to such questions in the area of sea archaeology. He found a number of sites, which are much older than the first known civilisations. About 10 000 BC the sea level rose due to the end of the Ice Age by about 400 feet until today. Hancock found south of the Onaguni Island (Japan) a large archaeological site. The location is called Iseki Point and is about 300 m long and 23 m high. Its structure indicates that it was once a harbour. Another site is Kerama Island (Japan), where religious monuments can be found under the sea. Hancock describes these lost cities as flooded kingdoms, they appear to have been flooded as a result of the Ice Age. Pottery finds with the age of about 16 000 years seem to underline his thesis that there were once important civilisations which seem to have been swept away by a large flood and increasing sea levels. This experience has survived in Japan in a number of different myths of great floods and darkness until today.⁶

In his research Hancock pointed out that similar experiences repeated a number of times in human history, and he found it astonishing that after such floods humankind had to start from scratch. He explained that after such floods humankind fell back to a stage of an infant, from where it will take centuries before they would have reached the old knowledge again. Past floods, such as the one following the Lisbon earthquake in 1755, and the recent tsunami have shown that at any stage civilisations could be destroyed. Human mythology refers to a number of floods. The best known ones are the flood of Atlantis from the Greek mythology, and the other one is the Great Flood described in the bible. It seems that the experience of such large floods like the one in Asia was carried over by oral tradition from generation to generation, until a scholar wrote the myth or legend down. Thousands of years ago people must have viewed a flood like the one in Asia as a God-given sign, it was impossible to explain such an event with their limited knowledge of the earth, except by the use of a mythical being.

Before I came to Ireland I studied the Geography of the region of Bremen. There I researched bogs and security systems of dikes. It did not take long to realise, that history was an important factor to understand the safety of dikes and I used historical experiences of humans in order to develop a system of storm tide management. Through this research it showed very clearly that dikes in Northern Germany were only strengthened after enormous floods, were kept in check for a while, and were then not looked after for decades. People forgot what it meant when the call came "*Das Wasser kommt!*" (The water comes!).⁷ History seems to repeat itself, the same human weakness of forgetting

6 Graham Hancock, 'Flooded Kingdoms of the Ice Age' (RTE 1, 2004), TV presentation.

7 Andreas Boldt, 'Die Gefährdung der Moore am Beispiel des Teufelsmoores aufgrund anthropogener Einflüsse' (Jugend forscht, Bremen, 1995); Andreas Boldt, 'Sicherheit gewährleistet? – Die Situation der Deiche in Bremen und Umgebung' (Jugend

happened now in Asia, where such large tsunamis did not occur for a long time. In the case of flooding along rivers, it is claimed that data is only available since 1850. This is not quite true. Alexander von Humboldt included in the appendix of his *Kosmos* a number of maps, graphs and illustrations of river heights and peak levels from 1731! In some cases he also added data from the 17th century.⁸ This shows that information was there. It will take further research from both geographers and historians to find out historical patterns of flooding and how they could be prevented. Flooding along rivers or coastal lines were in the past nothing unusual and this will not change for the future as the tsunami 2004 has shown.

8 Alexander von Humboldt, *Kosmos. Entwurf einer physischen Weltbeschreibung*, 5 vols. (Cotta, 1845-62), reprinted and edited under the same title by Hans Magnus Enzenberger (Frankfurt am Main, 2004); Appendix: Sammlung von Karten, auf denen die hauptsächlichsten Erscheinungen der anorganischen und organischen Natur nach ihrer geographischen Verbreitung und Vertheilung bildlich dargestellt sind, reprinted edition (Frankfurt am Main, 2004), pp 28-31, 46-59.

Alternative Geographies: Popular music and the Evocation of the Urban Landscape.

Christine Salmon, 3rd Year, NUI Maynooth

The portrayal of landscape and the significance of place in literature, visual arts and film have been given great importance by academics in the discipline of geography. Rather less attention has been directed towards the medium of popular music as a source of geographical data. However, lyrical content of music can provide the cultural and physical phenomena unique to the urban cityscape as well as demonstrating the power that popular music can have on the perceptions of place in general. (Whiteley, 2004) Indeed ideas of space, place and environmental themes are most definitely reflected throughout popular music.

During the 1980s, the alternative Manchester band The Smiths, captured the essence of urban decay and dereliction in the city of Manchester. The city has undergone decades of deindustrialization since the 1950's with the closure of the city's manufacturing industries. The Smiths' geographical references are inspired by a Manchester that is well known for its characteristic landscape of red brick terrace housing and dark satanic mills from the city's manufacturing days. The Smiths map a city in industrial decline and a place where its effects are etched on its urban landscape. Iron bridges, dark underpasses, dilapidated

railway lines, and polluted rivers of Manchester are brightly conveyed through the joyful yet melancholic music of The Smiths. "In the river the colour of lead"-This night has opened my eyes.

Dreams of escape from the Mancunian city are also closely connected with The Smiths song book. The Smiths display a deep connection with Manchester yet realising the desperate need to get away. The Smiths' lyrics written by lead singer Morrissey claim to speak for working class people forced to travel, in an attempt to escape the poverty and mass unemployment of a post-industrial Manchester. This appeared to be in stark contrast to the desired freedom awaiting in the 'swinging' capital city of London "When a train goes bye, it's such a sad sound"-Nowhere Fast /"Train, heave on to Euston/Do you think you've made the right decision this time?"-London

Probably the most epic Smiths' album 'The Queen Is Dead', depicts a grim Mancunian urban landscape which offers little hope or fulfillment to its inhabitants. "Past the pub who saps your body/and the church- all they want is your money"-The Queen is Dead/"When you walk without ease on these streets where you were raised"-Never had no one ever.

The Smiths demonstrate the power and capability that music can have in portraying an urban landscape. Although the city of Manchester has undergone massive regeneration since the 1990s, The Smiths' songbook still paints a strong sense of place with powerful images of a city in chronic industrial decline.

More recently, contemporary British bands have provided critical representation of the contemporary cityscape. This has certainly been the case with the Oxford based band Radiohead. In their widely acclaimed Fake Plastic Trees, this song according to the lead singer Thom Yorke refers to the east end area of London (Canary Wharf) in particular. This part of London, a once thriving dockland region has undergone significant gentrification since the early 1980s, resulting in massive amounts of capital investment resurfacing into the area. (Budd & Gottdiener, 2005)However, the lyrics evoked by Radiohead retaliate against the artificiality and emptiness of commercial development. "Her green plastic watering can/ For her fake Chinese rubber plant/ In fake plastic earth."-Fake Plastic Trees. This particular evocative image demonstrates how the beauty and authenticity of nature has been lost and commodified in the urban environment.

The urban city landscape has also been documented by other contemporary London bands such as Bloc Party. In their most recent album entitled "A Weekend in the City", the nightscape of London is revealed as place of hedonism, play and consumption for young adults. Over the past decade or so, there has been a revitalization of the city centre, with global corporations transforming spaces to accommodate for an expanding market of active consumers that seem to be up all night.(Chatterton and Hollands,2003) However Bloc Party's depiction of the urban nightscape is not necessarily, by any means complementary. "East London is a vampire/It sucks the joy right out of me"-Song for

Clay-Disappear Here. There is an implication here that these new spaces of consumer culture lack true meaning or fulfillment for the young urban dweller. This certain dissatisfaction with the contemporary urban nightscape has also been exhibited by the well known Leodiensian band, the Kaiser Chiefs “Watching the people get lairy, it’s not very pretty, I tell thee, walking through town is quite scary”-I Predict a Riot appears to be inspired by the city centre at night.

Ultimately, popular music has the power to provide a vivid soundtrack to the contemporary urban setting. Popular music which carries a strong sense of place has the ability to help create and reinforce our images of these places. The influence of geography on music is definitely inescapable. It is therefore fair to suggest that music should be seen as a useful tool in attempting to interpret, understand and analyse contemporary urban landscapes.

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Discography

The Smiths ‘*The Queen is Dead*’ (1986) Warner Music UK

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Pictures, Pictures, Pictures.

Darren Hassett, 1st Year, NUI Maynooth

The Oxford Dictionary defines Geography as the ‘study of physical features of the earth and of human activity as it relates to these’. As we are educators and practitioners of Geography we must have a broad understanding of both human and physical activities. I myself have regularly overlooked our source of understanding and interpretation. The source being pictures.

The study of Geography is juxtaposed with space and the occupation of space. This idea of space has sculpted ravishing mountains, rivers, deserts and forests. In our occupation of this space we too have created beauty in engineering, in travel, in discovery, in the

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formation of cultures and in art. It is not our ability to see these feats I am questioning, it is our appreciation and lack of recognition for the availability of these reflections of beauty I find criminal. We have an opportunity to see splendor a thousand miles away in pictures and drawings all as a result of the Geographical Photographer. As practitioners we avail of such pictures yet we abuse them by not acknowledging their source and their importance.

In terms of education and learning the promotion and understanding of Geography is strengthened by seeing the deforestation of the Amazon rain forest in a lecture theatre. Hence pictures are paramount to the understanding of Geography. A first year arts student can see the limestone pavements of the Burren, County. Clare or the Innuits of Alaska without having left Kildare county. It is precisely this opportunity we must not overlook. If we did the fundamentals of Geography will become vague and complex.

The Geographical Photographer is most times unaware that they are in fact being geographical. Photographers take pictures for their meaning. They can portray positivity and negativity. Nevertheless the pictures offer us an image which we can use to better understand the flow of meanders or contrasting cultures. Pictures can transport us to places and spaces we had otherwise perceived to be non-existent or beyond our understanding.

The dependability of such pictures is great. Landscapes don't lie. Hence a picture is an unbiased view. Thereby strengthening its forcibility in academic studies and encouraging Geographers to employ such sources in their publications and works and ultimately while educating students and academics.

What can we see? Pictures, pictures, pictures. The popularity and growth of Geography is bestowed upon people and their understanding of what Geography is. Pictures not words can be the catalyst. Why travel when the Mississippi is on your book shelf. If we are to understand what we study we must first see it. Pictures are imperative to our understanding. They will also become sightless and negligible if we do not appreciate them and their creator.

Field Trip, Dublin –Laois. 16th, 17th February 2008.

Elaine O Beirne Morrissey, 2nd year, NUI Maynooth

Early Saturday morning thirty eight students and two Geography lecturers, Adrian Kavanagh and Alistair Fraser set out on the first day of a two day field trip. Alistair was in charge of the proceedings on Saturday and he surprised us all by telling us that our first stop was to the Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland, and the Mosque that is situated on Roebuck road, Clonskeagh. The centre is a magnificently ornate one storey building; a central copper dome and a minaret adorn the roof. Black marble with gold inset squares form a border around the top of the building and black and gold ironwork decorate the walls. The building and its' surrounds are beautifully maintained, and are situated in one of the most expensive parts of south county Dublin ,so it was no surprise to discover that it had been sponsored by a wealthy Sheikh from Dubai.

We were met by our guide, Ms. Patel, who spent the next hour explaining the history of Islamic belief and what is expected of a practicing Muslim. Islam is not a religion for the lazy; it is much disciplined and involves fasting and pilgrimage. The Koran contains 140 chapters, and is a guide to the way of life of Islam. If a Muslim can memorise the Koran he/she is guaranteed a place in paradise. She told us that Islam was centred on the five Pillars of Islam, which are to believe in Allah, Prayers, Charity, Fasting, and Pilgrimage.

Our Guide showed us inside the Mosque, we were all requested to remove our shoes before entering and females had to have their legs and arms covered. Thankfully it was a cold day and we were all well dressed, however there were a few pairs of mismatched and holey socks on show! Inside the Mosque was surprisingly plain and devoid of any decoration except a very large Waterford crystal chandelier hanging from the ceiling and the carpet was made using the colours of the Irish flag. The first Muslims to come to Ireland arrived in the 1950's, mainly from South Africa, where they were oppressed by the Apartheid rule. Today there are over 40,000 Muslims living in Ireland, and it is a multicultural community. We left the Mosque and journeyed a short distance to "The Goat" for lunch, the thoughts of fasting from sunrise to sunset had made us all feel quite hungry and the delicious food did not last long on the plates.

Satisfied and replenished we returned to the bus and headed to Sandyford where we met a local Labour Councillor Aidan Culhane. He explained the original reasoning behind the recent development of Sandyford and how it had gone from a suburban village located at the foot of the Dublin Mountains, to a largely business area comprising of high rise apartment blocks and office blocks. Aidan explained that re-zoning had taken place to allow this development, but the amount and type of development was unforeseen by the councillors or the residents. There is no social structure, no facilities, no playground, and

no green areas for these new residents. Fundamental mistakes made at the planning stage have led to severe congestion during business hours, and pressure on local resources such as the water supply. Recently there was a moratorium put on any further development in the area in a bid to rescue it from further disastrous planning and salvage the area in a hope to provide a sustainable future for all the residents. When Aidan left we were dispersed in groups to look around Sandyford, and make our own minds up about the area. At this stage we were all very cold and most of us managed to use our vast geographical skills to locate a Londis and heated ourselves up with cups of coffee, which sustained us as we wandered among the skyscrapers. Back on the bus Alistair questioned us about our findings, satisfied that we had observed enough we settled back to listen to the football highlights, as we headed back to Maynooth.

Sunday morning was one of the coldest mornings of the year so far, and after I defrosted my windscreen (twice), I crawled through thick fog and minus six degrees to reach Maynooth; we boarded the bus that proceeded to trace my exact journey and pass my home in Kildare! (Typical). We were bound for the centre of the universe, the County of Laois. Needless to say we were unable to observe the wonderful scenery of Kildare as we passed through, due to dense fog, so most of us took the opportunity to catch another hour's sleep. Adrian woke us all with a triumphant cheer as we crossed the river Barrow and were finally in County Laois, and he proceeded to wax lyrically about the wonders of the County, however the fog was still dense and we could only take his word for it. We passed through "The Heath" which is a low lying common land that was formed during the last glaciation period as the glacier receded. On our way to Stradbally Adrian explained that the small hills on the landscape were known locally as "The Hums" which are limestone hills, which were left standing when overlying rock collapsed. One of these Hums is called the Rock of Dunamase and is the site for the remains of a Medieval Castle.

The Castle itself was defeated by Oliver Cromwell in 1649, and blown up to stop further use of the strategic site by the locals. Luckily the fog cleared just as we were approaching the site and we were afforded a wonderful view of this lesser known Historical site. We continued on to Stradbally to observe the layout of the planned model estate village. We disembarked from the bus and provided the locals with an early morning parade as we walked up and down the wide main street, which hadn't seen so much action on a Sunday morning since Electric picnic was held on the Cosby Estate. After considerable pointing at the Big House at one end of the town, the Church of Ireland at the other, the Market square in the middle and commenting on how tastefully the old mill had been converted into apartments, we boarded the bus once again.

This time we were on route to Clonbar one of the raised bogs that is still used by Bord Na Mona for peat extraction. This is also the Site of a Monument to the memory of the local brigade who demolished part of the railway line in order to disrupt the English Army during the War of Independence. There seems to be a number of versions of this

event and most include alcohol, a gun and a poor dead donkey! However the local Fianna Fail party keep the monument shining and have a little ceremony each year. All this clean Laois air was making us hungry so we gladly adjourned to Treacys' of the Heath for a lovely lunch.

After lunch we travelled through Portlaoise where we witnessed the impact of the Celtic Tiger on a commuter belt town, the town of Portlaoise has seen an increase in population of over 20% between 2002 and 2006. We also passed the prison that was once synonymous with political prisoners but now seems to have lost its imposing symbolism. During the Journey Adrian kept us informed of historical GAA fixtures between rival parishes and dismissed claims of cheating by his home parish in a 1982 under 12 final. We were also entertained by details of local and National politics in the area, and how the county was a Fianna Fail stronghold.

On to Emo Village and the Emo Court Estate that was handed to the state by the last owner. The house is a magnificent example of work by the famous architect Gandon, who designed structures that allowed landlords to flaunt their immense wealth. The estate is a beautiful recreation facility and I will return when the weather is more favourable and the coffee shop is open, to explore the landscaped gardens further.

We journeyed on to the town of Portarlinton situated on the river Barrow and the border with Offaly. Here we were given a list of questions about the town and we set off in our groups to find the answers, and hopefully learn something about this rapidly expanding commuter town that has a historical French influence. Back on the bus again the scores were counted and the winning team were presented with the coveted prize of a bag of hula hoops.

The day was nearing to an end but a very important issue had to be settled on the journey home, a panel of male judges presided over an X Factor style competition to find the best Wellie boot on the bus! Darina Walsh won hands down with her inherited black and white wellies. All too soon we were back to Roque lab for a final assessment of our knowledge gained over the weekend. The Field trip was very enjoyable and a great opportunity to meet fellow geography students. The expertise of our two lecturers was second to none and their enthusiasm for the subject kept us interested at all times.

EXAMS – MR. ANGRY STYLE

I.B. Crawley and L. Ackey

“For this to be the greatest every *Milieu* in the history of mankind” intoned our noble editor, Greg White, as he sat on a throne stroking a white cat, “I need an article about exam techniques. Good one. Views of someone who knows the ‘ins and outs’ and doesn’t beat around the bush in telling you. No waffle, if you know what I mean. Get me an interview with one of the staff!” “Oh you want us talk to our kindly northern lecturer, Dr. Gibson?” we asked. “That goody-goody?” spat Il Duce, “He’ll probably just get the Kleenex out. No, I want you to talk to Mr. Angry.” We gulped. The rants, threats and downright *insania* (Andre, 2004) of this particular lecturer were famed throughout the university, and were the sole reason why a Psychology Department had been established here. We dolefully made our way up the flights of stairs to the Geography Department, bumping into the Head of Department en route. “Och aye the noo” he said, munching a haggis, “Wit about ye?” We didn’t understand what he was saying, but told him we were on the way to see Mr. Angry. “May God have mercy on your souls” he solemnly intoned, suddenly becoming pale-faced, and he ran away down the stairs. We approached the dreaded door of Mr. Angry’s office with terror, noticing how every living thing in the area had withered away and died. We noted that there was someone in the office ahead of us.irate roars could be heard inside.

“...AND IF YOU DO THAT AGAIN I WILL PERSONALLY RIP OUT YOUR SPINAL CORD, REPLACE IT WITH A BAG OF RATS, AND ALSO EXPUNGE ALL EVIDENCE OF YOU HAVING EVERY EXISTED!!!”

A terrified student ran out of the office and past us....

“JUST REMEMBER, AFRICA IS A CONTINENT, NOT A BLOODY COUNTRY!” Mr. Angry shouted after him.

For a moment, we thought about also making a run for it, but we knew our editor was a man who didn’t take no for an answer and also knew 87 different means of torture involving snooker cues, so we knocked on the door.

“Yesssss?”

We knocked again.

“THAT ‘YES’ MEANT ‘BLOODY WELL COME IN’!”

We ran into the office, in the process knocking to the ground Mr. Angry’s much cherished origami display. He shot us a look of deep loathing and seemed about to tear us limb from

limb, but then a weird sense of unbalanced calm fell upon him. “That display took me 23 years to complete, some say it was the only thing keeping me sane” and he bunged it into the recycling bin, then sat back down, shooting us a nasty smirk. “So you’re White’s go-to...ha!...guys? Is he still referring to himself as ‘Perry’?” he sneered. We just stared at him, like open-mouthed goldfish in a bowl. “Perry White? ‘Daily Planet’? Superman?” he snorted. “Oh is that something covered in Dr. Sweeney’s Climate Change?” we asked. A volcanic upsurge of irritation came across Mr. Angry’s face, and he put his fist through the wall. Then he calmly looked at us. “So what do you want to ask me?” he said. “Oh, how to do a good exam” we said. “Simple, write the correct answers. Good bye” he snapped. “No, no, sorry, we actually have a list of exam-related questions from the loyal *Milieu* readers!” we cried. “What, all two of them?” sneered Mr. Angry. “No, one of those two has also stopped reading this rag!” I.B. cried, only to get a dig from his female compatriot. “Well, get on with it, I need to get out of here in a hurry today” growled the lecturer. We gulped and started asking the questions:

I.B. Crawley: *Here’s our first question from ‘Chilled from Tullamore’, it says “Dudes, I’ve found it very difficult to get to my lectures this year. Too many early lectures at 12.00 and too many lectures on a Wednesday at the end of the week. What can I do to ace my exams?”*

Mr. Angry: Look I don’t speak ‘dole-cheat’ so can’t really make out what that waste of my taxes is saying, but basically the only advice I can give him is that he needs to make plans to get accommodation in Maynooth for the Autumn repeats. Chances are that this Awfully ‘dude’ will fail, big time...a real case of “bummer man”...and will be back next year repeating in the Roost again. On average, regular lecture attendees get 20% more in their exam results than those who don’t turn up. And that’s an average. It doesn’t allow for the fact that some of the dossers might actually be intelligent...lazy but intelligent... and have enough brains (and lecture notes from ill-advised mates) to scrape a bad pass. The sort of ‘bad pass’ degree that is about as attractive to employers as primary level education was back a few decades ago. It also doesn’t allow for the fact that some of the regular attendees might find the material difficult or have bad examination techniques and so not get the marks that their hard work deserves. You also have students who turn up to lectures but spend their time talking with their mates or texting or sleeping, and then they wonder why they’re failing their exams! Shut up and listen you morons is what I say, do you expect that the lecturer’s words will magically descend on you and lodge in your brains just by you being present in the room?

L. Ackey: *Righhhht. OK, a question from “Stressed from Coolmine” asks “Every time I do an exam I can never get my ‘head right’ and I’m all over the place. What can I do to be at my best going into the exam?”*

Mr. Angry: To use the terminology of the previous effort-challenged correspondent, you need to try and chill out a bit – if you’ve been at your lectures and doing your work

then you should approach the exam with confidence – if you haven't then it is time to PANIC!!! Avoid the temptation to stay up until the early hours the night before an exam – you'll lose out more by approaching the exams in a tired manner than you will gain from a mass last-minute swotting session. Make sure to arrive at the university in good time. 'Stressed from Coolmine' should not rely on the 8.30 train to get her in to the exam on time – because next thing you know it's 9.30 and you're still standing at Coolmine station listening to the usual idiotic 'Iarnróid Éireann would like to apologise for the delay to...' excuse – you're better to play it safe and get the earlier train. Make sure you have all necessary equipment with you. Be in as relaxed a state of mind as possible. Exams are not fun (except for 0.35% of the population) but if you've studied then you should approach the exam with confidence – if not then it's time to PANIC!!!

I.B. Crawley: *"Flustered from Cyavan" asks, "Does it help to write out prepared answers before the exam and learn them off?"*

Mr. Angry: Ha ha ha (*in nasty sarcastic tone*), yeah right, they're REALLLLLLLY useful. About as useful as a bloody bicycle is to a goldfish. Unless you've managed to steal the actual exam paper – in which case I am honour-bound to pass your name on to the local constabulary and ask them to lock you up and throw away the key – you'll end up spending weeks writing out a perfect question to some random question that you've "spotted" and then melting away your brain power by trying to learn this off, word for word, by heart. Total waste of time. Chances are that questions will come up on the exam paper that your prepared answer might be 30% or 40% relevant to, meaning that you get 30% or 40% for all that work. And of course, what happens if the topic you expected doesn't come up? Let's just say you'll be able to count all your exam marks on your hands, or even one hand.

L. Ackey: *Oh dear.*

Mr. Angry: (*rolls eyes as Ackey's woolyness*) Don't get me wrong, writing things out can help in revising, but put your efforts on writing out summaries of the different sections of the module you're covering and on comprehending the material, instead of learning off specific chunks of material that may not come up on exam day.

L. Ackey: *That sort of sounds OK. (Mr. Angry shoots her a look of intense loathing.) Right, here's a question from "Disorganised from Dunnygall" and she asks: "I work hard and usually feel I have a good grasp of the module material when I come into an exam, but never seem to get the big marks. I went to exam consultation day last June and was told that there were loads of comments to do with "Not answering the question fully" written on my exam scripts. I suppose it doesn't help either that I usually end up running out of time in an exam..."*

Mr. Angry: Yeah, it kind of banjaxes things if you only end up answering one question.

Look, Disorganised needs to first of all make sure to plan out her time out carefully when she's doing her exams. On average, if she's a 2nd or 3rd Year, she will have roughly 40 minutes to answer an exam question. Now, she will be tempted to spend too long on her best question but needs to avoid this like a Scumchester Utd supporter. Very few people will get 80% for one very good question, but it's much easier to get marks around the 60ish for two pretty good answers. Now Disorganised sounds like someone whose maths ability is equivalent to that a literary-leaning newt, so I'll spell this out. The person who does two good questions will always do better than the person who just manages one excellent (but very long) and one barely started question that you just get 10% for. And of course, if you are writing 10+ pages on an answer that's meant to be done in 40 minutes, then you have very likely gone off the point of that question and will probably get a mark of less than 40% for that answer too!

I.B. Crawley: (crying) *Now I know why I failed my Geography exam last year and ended up as Greg White's wage-slave. It all makes sense now! Boo hooooooooo...*

Mr. Angry: (looks on at this wave of emotion in a bored manner; until a sound of a Northern Irish accent is heard outside the door and a box of Kleenex is pushed through it) Yeah, it all makes sense alright. Now assuming you've disciplined yourself to make sure you're giving enough time to write your final question, the next thing to ensure is that you're answering on exactly what you're being asked for by the question. When you start the exam, take time to read through the paper and select the questions that you will attempt. Make sure you read, and know, the exact number of questions you are supposed to answer – if you're asked to do two questions, you will not get marks for three answers. Fact. Spending ninety minutes writing two answers worth 40% each will get you an overall grade of, well, 40%. Spending ninety minutes writing three answers worth 30% each will get you an overall grade of...

I.B. Crawley: (brightly) 90%?

Mr. Angry: OH FOR...[CENSORED] (calming down) I take it you failed maths also.

I.B. Crawley: (scared) *How did you know?*

Mr. Angry: (in tired, but also sarcastic, manner) I work for a secret government grouping who is spying on you. (I.B.'s eyes dart around the office looking for hidden cameras.) Of course I don't you idiot! Look three answers worth 30% each will get you an overall grade of 30%! You only get marks for two answers, you don't get a bonus for doing a third, it's not a sort of Tesco "buy two, get one free" sort of thing.

OK, now once you've copped on to just answering the exact number of questions that

your asked to do, and chosen your questions, the next step is to make sure you fully understand what the question is asking for and answering ONLY...and I repeat ONLY... on that. No question will ask you for everything you know on a certain topic – you are always asked to focus on certain aspects. A long-drawn out and perfect account of some area that has no relevance to the question topic will get you ZERO MARKS! Resist the urge to write material that is irrelevant to the question topic just to ‘bulk’ or ‘pad’ your answer out. Or because you studied a topic solid for three weeks and it didn’t come up and you’re desperately trying to find some way of bring this material in. You suspect this will impress your marker. Instead the marker is murmuring darkly about how some silly ass has gone totally off the point of the question. In short, this will cost you marks. So what must you do? (*Stares intently at the two interviewers. I.B. pees his pants. But L. Ackey comes to his aid.*)

L. Ackey: *You need to identify the key issues in the question and focus on them, rather than writing pages of irrelevant material that will lose you marks?*

Mr. Angry: (*nods curtly at her in almost respectful manner*) Yes. And also take especial care to note the type of question that you are answering. Questions that ask you to “list” or “describe” are very different to questions that ask you to “contrast” or that ask you to “discuss”, “assess”, or “critically analyse”. The latter group of questions will expect you to develop an argument in your answer and to come down on one side of a debate the conclusion, based on evidence drawn from material that you have studied, and read about, in that module. It is important to show in your answer that you understand the different sides of a debate or argument as well, even if you are mainly arguing in favour of one side of this debate.

You need to take some time to organise your thoughts before you start to write your answer, otherwise all you’ll throw up is three or four pages of random thoughts, in which you’re probably repeating the same point about thirteen times. So for the first few minutes, organise your thoughts around the question and try to boil these down to three or four main points, which will act as the main sections within your answer. Basically your answer then will involve you elaborating on these three or four key points, backing up your points with evidence with what you’ve learned from the module material and your readings, and with reference to good case study examples. Do use an answer plan to list out the different areas that you will cover in your answer, but watch out that you don’t go over the top here and spend 20 minutes on this! The answer plan needs to be fairly short and completed in sufficient time to allow you around 40 minutes to write out your answer. A good way of making sure you cover everything you know in relation to the question is to brainstorm – as roughwork, take a minute to write down every relevant point you can think of relating to the question and you can then refer back to this list as you write your answer to make sure that you do not omit key points from your answer.

Now I hate to be mean...actually I love to be mean...but I have to leave. Now.

L. Ackey: *Please, one final question. Our editor was most insistent that we pad out Milieu as much as we can...*

Mr. Angry: *(gritting teeth)* Sounds like Perry alright. OK, quickly.

L. Ackey: *“Can you relate to your personal experiences in your answer”, from “Fealy from Kerreh”*

Mr. Angry: *(trying hard to be calm)* When it’s short and to the point, in terms of backing up a, let’s say ‘faintly intelligent’, point that you’re making in your answer, well then, yeah that’s fine. But if it ends up that all the answer is on your personal experiences and you’re making no mention at all of what was covered in the module, sort of a writing some bloody emotional diatribe about your flippin’ dog sort of effort, well there’s only one place you’re going and that’s “Failure City”. Now, I really...

The air is rent by the sound of a helicopter. I.B. grins, thinking that the CIA ‘extraordinary renditions’ squad has finally got around to dragging the psycho lecturer off to Guantanamo Bay. Mr. Angry makes to run out of the office but falls over I.B.’s out-stretched legs. There’s a knock on the door and Mr. Angry wearily groans, “It’s my flipping girl-friend.” To the amazement of the interviewers, Scarlett Johansson walks in. I.B. Crawley drools, but L. Ackey looks at Miss Johansson’s outfit with some derision.

Scarlett: *Mr. Angry, as today is February 29th, I can now ask you, will you marry me?* (Interviewers look on open-mouthed like...yep, you got it...goldfish in a goldfish bowl.)

Mr. Angry: *(resigned)* OK, OK, it’s a fair cop, you got me. Yeah, yeah, whatever. Now get lost. *(Scarlett leaves).* Well, thanks a bloody lot you two. And an especial thanks to curlew-legs over there. Now I’ve got to get hitched and leave my carefree *(I.B. laughs)* bachelor ways behind me. Thanks a bloody bunch! I’ll probably have to buy her a cheap ring or a box of out-of-date chocolates or some plastic flowers now, and I don’t have the cash for that. I’ve already ran out of kidneys to sell on E-Bay for fecks sake!

I.B. Crawley: *Surely as an esteemed member of the Geography staff, you’re well paid?*

Mr. Angry: *(a very very imbalanced look coming over his face)* HA HA HA HA HA. HA HA HA HA HA. HA HA HA HA HA. HA HA HA HA HA. HA HA HA HA HA. HA HA HA HA HA. HA HA HA HA HA...

POST-SCRIPT: With that, our interviewing duo slowly made their way to the office door, so as not to further antagonise Mr. Angry who was now foaming at the mouth, and

they made their way out with no little relief, only to see Gay Murphy standing outside the door with a syringe and a strait jacket. “It’s alright” said Gay, “This happens a lot more times than you think it might, I’m used to it” and she walked inside Mr. Angry’s office. The two interviewees thought about hanging around to see if Gay needed their help for about two seconds, then legged it. Having left their report with their feline-fondling editor, they promptly left the country and were last seen in some war-torn region that is prone to regular volcanic eruptions...let’s face it, anything has to be better than Mr. Angry’s office.

Our Earth

Felix Schweikhardt, International student

The Earth from the universe: Isn’t it wonderful? Vulnerable and graceful at the same time, it floats through the never-ending vastness of space. The orbit has the perfect distance to the sun, the atmosphere protects us from dangerous radiation and the winds give us a comfortable climate. The interaction between the different spheres fits very well. Plants provide the oxygen for the atmosphere needed by animals and humans. The atmosphere and the rocks provide the soil with water and nutrients needed by plants. With the energy from the sun, life could develop on our lovely planet. The never-ending blue of the ocean is in accord with the gentle green and brown of the land. All covered by the playful games of the clouds. Humans settled since early times at the fertile shores of rivers and seas, in sheltered places by mountains or in charming forests. In accordance with the nature, man hunted, fished and cultivated crops.

What a wonderful place to live! But also the only one we have. Without the conveniences of the earth, nobody could live for one second.

Nevertheless, the earth sometimes shows its power. Volcanic eruptions can cause ice ages and sentence whole cities to death, earthquakes engulf buildings and kill people by falling stones, floods set whole cities underwater, avalanches bury people, towns and valleys and hurricanes cause damages accounting to billions. This shows us that you shouldn’t play with the planet. But the earth is at risk. Human activities are likely to change the planet forever. The population grows rapidly causing more and more problems like pollution and emissions. More and more energy and resources are needed. The people in southern countries aren’t able to cater for themselves. This causes violent conflicts and forest burnings to gain more land for the agriculture. In doing so precious rain forests are lost and the deserts sprawl over wide areas of Africa intensifying the nutrition problems of

the local population. Especially climate change and a nuclear war are a severe threat for the future of our planet. With the current mass of nuclear weapons the earth could be destroyed easily for several times. If the emission of Greenhouse Gases isn't stopped, the earth will come in a very critical situation concerning its climatic stability. Severe storms will occur more often, the sea level rise causes floods and massive erosion for coastal areas destroying fertile land for the agriculture and setting whole cities under water. The global increase of temperature leads to an entire disappearance of glaciers in the middle latitudes and in the arctic sea. The switch of climatic zones causes a loss of natural vegetation, of forests and wetlands. All this will decrease the amount of plants and animals dramatically. Exotic species will immigrate in regions that are not prepared for them. They will spread rapidly destroying the previous landscape. Some of them are as well a severe threat for humans as they transmit fatal diseases that are able to kill millions of people. All this will lead to more and more people leaving their homeland to search for better living conditions elsewhere. So we have to face a global refugee problem as well.

Humans have changed the appearance of the earth for thousands of years. But today the development of new technologies gives the human beings a new global physical power. Combined with old habits this could have terrible impacts on our future life. Our decisions of today are no longer reversible in the future. The principle of trial and error is no longer valid. Should we really allow that the landscape of our planet, formed in billions of years, is totally changed in a few decades?

We have the earth in our hands. But we have also the possibility to protect it. We know how sustainable development works. We know how we can use renewable energy sources. We know how we could help and develop the poorer regions.

This gives us a responsibility for that also future generations, that all people of the earth can experience its beauteousness. That our grandchildren can listen to the songs of the birds, that they can experience the sweetness of a sunset on the sea, that they can see the gorgeousness of a rainbow. Isn't it a wonderful feeling to leave home in the mornings, to walk over the fresh grass where dew drops reflect the bright sunlight and to listen to the cheerful songs of the birds? Isn't it a wonderful feeling to cycle to the coloured forests in the autumn, to sight the squirrels and deer preparing for the winter and to feel the convenient rustling of the wind in the leaves? Let's fight for these feelings, let's fight for our planet. It's so beautiful. And it's the only one we have.

A Geographical Day

By Felix Schweikhardt, International student

A new light on my eyes let me glide into a new day without stress. Carefully orientated mirrors, changed every day by a few millimetres, point the sun rays at my face exactly at seven o'clock and avoid like this the necessity of a shrill alarm clock. As the sun reaches its point of five past seven, a mechanism is released and the window opens automatically

letting in some fresh air and the charming sounds of the bird's singing. Breakfast coffee is warmed in the centred solar radiation of the mirrors and eaten together with fresh organic fruits from local producers. A look into the newspaper gives an overview of the happenings in the world and its new unevenness and trouble.

This will imply new protest letter writing and further leaflet actions in O'Connell Street. But now, it's time to leave my natural home, saying good morning to trees, flowers and birds on my way to college. There, my best friends Sinead, Paddy and Mark are already prepared to provide me with their latest research results. I would like to be like them. The variety of things with that geographers are dealing is really unbelievable. Today we worry about poor Africans in the first hour, praising the development of the European Union in the second and talk about Irish sheep in the third.

A free hour sees me heading for a walk to the close nature, examining today's development stage of the vegetation to continue my ten years study about the impacts of climate change. The rejected flower bouquet of a supposed girlfriend serves as first record. After dealing with river systems in the Midlands and tourism in China, John's office hour allows to talk about the latest readings about climate change. The new book suggestions have to be located in the library directly afterwards.

The review of today's covered material follows. Hunger is coming up and implies a walk to the town centre for some buys at the small local shop. On my way a big private shopping centre is passed and mapped. The public should really know about its creation of a public space image and its methods to get people to spend money. On my next part of the way traffic is again terrible. I should really look over my integrated subway and bus route system again.

Three times the local authority now already rejected it. Finally, I reach the store. All my trials to improve the situation of the old poor owner haven't been successful so far. At least I could convince him not to give up so far. So, there is at least one possibility left to avoid the terrible big malls. On the way out, the housing development of the village can be nicely studied.

The old centre is followed by more modern buildings and finally the new campus area. After a meeting with the Geography Society a warm meal is enjoyed. On an evening walk, the soil studies on a close hill are continued. Since I started walking over the hill all day, significant signals of erosion can be recognised. It's really terrible that people aren't able to stay on the pathways. Finally, a look into the atlas with light from the over the day charged lamp closes the day. Northwest Ireland really looks like Wales, doesn't it? The angle of the mirrors for next morning is calculated, I wish my globe a good night and a new moon appears on the window.

You may argue that I won't wake up on a cloudy day at all. Well, it's not worth it. For these days, we have moodle.

Kailash, Tibet, China and the World

Brendan Creedon, 1st Year, NUI Maynooth

I first heard of Mount Kailash on the notice board of a guesthouse in Lhasa the Tibetan capital in 2004. The advertisement was for a tour to Kailash and it caught my attention because it involved some hiking. The previous month I had hiked a well known trekking route in Nepal 'The Anapurna Circuit'. The daily sights of the sheer magnitude and beauty of the Himalayas were addictive. Eager to see more, I travelled over the Tibetan Plateau from Kathmandu to Lhasa.

Tibet is known as 'The Roof of the World' aptly named because it has an average elevation of 4,000m. To put this into perspective Ireland's highest mountain, Carrauntuohil has a summit of 1,039m. The idea hiking in Tibet had interested me, but sadly this was not an option. Travel within Tibet is highly restricted by the Chinese Government; in 2004 it was only possible to get a fourteen day group visa. This effectively meant a person had to be part of a tour with a registered tour guide at all times. There was not enough time to look into a hiking trip and my money was low. Not long after I returned home. Nevertheless Tibet's beautiful landscapes and friendly people had me captivated and I was eager to return to see more. Two years later I began to plan another trip to Tibet and here I discovered the religious significance of Mount Kailash.

Kailash is an important pilgrimage site of four religions. For thousands of years followers of Hinduism, Bon, Jainism and Tibetan Buddhism have made the difficult journey to this inhospitable part of the world to circumambulate Mount Kailash. Mount Kailash (6714m) has never been climbed and to do so would be viewed as sacrilege by those who venerate the mountain. Within Tibetan Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism there is a belief that Kailash could be the fabled Mount Meru, the Axis Mundi or the centre of the universe in which everything revolves around its axis.¹

The pilgrimage itself is a difficult 51km trek that begins at an elevation of 4640m and reaches a maximum height of 5660m. Compared to this, the highest mountain in Western Europe 'Mount Blanc' has a summit that stands at a mere 4,808m. The pilgrimage takes three days. Tibetan Buddhists believe that to complete the circuit once in a lifetime will cleanse a person of their sins, however if a devotee circumambulates the mountain 108 times he/she will attain enlightenment within this lifetime.² Tibetan Buddhists, Hindus and Jains make the pilgrimage around the mountain clockwise while the followers of Bon walk the route anti-clockwise.

Fascinated by the beliefs surrounding Kailash I felt compelled to try and get there to witness the pilgrimage and walk the circuit myself.

In August 2007 I found myself back in Lhasa. In the three years since my last visit the city

had grown immensely in both size and population. Where once there had been relatively quiet streets with few people and a small amount of cars, there were now traffic jams and it was difficult to navigate from one end of a street to the other through the bustling crowds.

The reason for this change is the new train that connects mainland China to Tibet which opened in July 2006. It takes 48 hours to travel the 4,064km from Beijing to Lhasa. Tibetans look quite different to the Han Chinese and are easily distinguishable. Tibetans have rounded facial features with high cheekbones and a tint of red on their cheeks.

On my previous visit to Lhasa it had been clearly evident that Tibetans were outnumbered in Lhasa by the Han Chinese. Three years on it seemed that they were but a small minority in the Tibetan capital. A few days in Lhasa were enough, I was eager to leave the hustle and bustle of the city and make my way to Kailash.

The cost of getting to Kailash as part of a tour had been way out of my budget, the prices ranged from €1,100 to €4,400. A plan to get there on my own was hatched. This involved renting a good quality mountain bike in Kathmandu and taking it with me on a tour from Kathmandu to Lhasa and then cycle to Kailash. This year it was possible to obtain a thirty day group visa.

I believed the distance to be around 900km from Lhasa to Kailash and my plan encountered no problems for the first 450km of the cycle. My biggest worry had been getting stopped at police checkpoints along the road as my visa only permitted me to be in Tibet as part of a group. However when I did arrive at a checkpoint I was allowed pass it undisturbed and without having to stop. At the 450km point a friendly Tibetan man was the bearer of some terrible news. He told me it was still another 900km of bad dirt track to Kailash.

My pre-trip planning had been pretty much non-existent. I had relied on information received from a travel agency in Kathmandu about the distance from Lhasa to Kailash and it was over 400km shy. I came to the conclusion that the rest of the distance could not be made on a bike with the time allotted on my visa. So far I had been covering 150km a day on newly built bitumen road, maybe 60-80km a day would be possible off road. It would be impossible to cycle there and back within the time left on my visa; a new course of action was needed.

The following morning I started to hitch, my bike was safely stored away at a guesthouse. The first 30km of the journey was traversed in the back of numerous tractor type vehicles, the road was now unpaved and no cars passed. Both Tibetans and Chinese stopped and were happy to give me a lift. Within four hours of setting out, a four wheel drive pulled over.

The Tibetan driver had good English; he told me he was going to Kailash to pick a group

of Dutch tourists who had flown into the area. He would take me for €60 and the next day we would arrive at Kailash, I was so overjoyed I accepted the price straight away and never tried to bargain, sensing my elation I think the driver was disappointed he did not ask for more.

We passed a police checkpoint at a truck stop called Raga 200km into the journey without a problem. Another 70km passed and we had to stop at a military checkpoint at a relatively large town called Saga and here my dream of getting to Kailash came to a bitter end. The soldiers would not allow me to continue also I had to return to the previous police checkpoint in Raga. The Tibetan driver was not allowed pass until the soldiers on duty received confirmation from the police that I arrived back at the checkpoint. I was devastated and had no other option than to return to the checkpoint at Raga.

A lift from a passing motorcyclist was secured for me by the Tibetan driver and I was forced to spend the night in a run down guesthouse at the truck stop. The police told me that I was not in trouble. A passing bus would take me back to Lhasa the next morning. The police were very hospitable, to the extent where one of them seemed to be assigned the sole duty of making sure my tea cup was never empty. To pass the time while I waited for the bus I had been reading a copy of John Snelling's detailed book about Mount Kailash 'The Sacred Mountain'. One policeman took the book and began to flick through its pages.

There was a picture of the Dalai Lama and a forward written by him in the first few pages. The policeman saw it, he got the attention of the other policemen and I became a little worried at their reactions. I was questioned where the book had been bought and where the author was from. I had broken Chinese law because in my possession there was printed material by the Dalai Lama. The policeman in charge ordered me to tear the pages of the photo and forward from the book. I was shocked and appalled. The policeman pointed to his handcuffs and indicated I would be arrested if I did not comply. Which in the end I did, they searched through my bag and I was not allowed to take the book when I left. Not long after I was on the bus leaving Raga with low spirits and feeling ashamed.

The bus dropped me close to the guesthouse where my bike was in storage and I was back cycling the following morning; it took four days to cycle the remaining 450km along the 'Friendship Highway' to Kathmandu. Three years previous only 150km had been paved of the 800km stretch of road between the Nepali border and Lhasa. Now close to 650km was paved bitumen road. This is quite an engineering feat, to pave almost 500km of road with an elevation ranging from 3658m to 5220m within three years. In addition I passed through Tingri a town which accommodates tourists who want to go to Mount Everest's North Face Base Camp. A bitumen road was under construction to the Base Camp to be ready for the Beijing Olympic opening ceremony. The highlight of China's opening ceremony will be when the Olympic torch reaches the 8848m summit of Mount Everest. It is true that China must be investing a lot of money into Tibet, however the

Tibetan people will not benefit from such development. The new train system and better roads will only further facilitate and accommodate the high level of migration of the Han Chinese to Tibet.

Unfortunately a chance to see Kailash evaded me on this trip however I did get to see some of the world's most unique and beautiful landscape also some of its highest peaks. The 26km uphill to the Gyatso La Pass (5220m) took four painful hours to cycle, all of which were worth it for the downhill which lasted twenty minutes on the other side. My memories from this trip will last for ever. Nonetheless I witnessed constructional development on such an enormous scale that is detrimental to Tibetan identity and culture. China invaded Tibet in 1949, Tibet appealed to the United Nations for help yet no assistance was offered.³ Since then it is estimated that 1.2 million Tibetans have lost there lives as a direct result of Chinese occupation and over 100,000 refugees have left Tibet due to Chinese oppression.⁴ In 1959 the Dalai Lama fled to India, the Tibetan government in exile now operates from Dharmasala in India. In 2007 it was still illegal to be in possession of literature or pictures of the Dalai Lama. Despite of such blatant oppression of the Tibetan people by the Chinese government, on the 11th of July 2001 the Olympic Committee bestowed upon China the greatest honour a country can receive. In August 2008 Beijing will host the Olympic Games; in the eyes of the Tibetans the world has sealed its approval of China's occupation of Tibet and the oppression of its people.

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- 2 Chamaria, P. (1996) Kailash Manasarovar , Abhinav Publications, Delhi, India. 56-57.
- 3 Wangyal, P. (1983) The Tibetans: two perspectives on Tibetan-Chinese relations, Minority report 49. 15
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31290018: Me at the Gyatso La Pass(5220m)

31290023: Shishma Pangma (8027m) and reflection of in water

31290020: Stretch of The Friendship Highway between Nepal and Tibet

Mount Kailash from Darchen taken from http://www.cybernet1.com/himalaya/images/kailash_from_darchen.JPG accessed 20th February 2008.

Over 20 years of ERASMUS - a big chance for geographers?

Martina Streicher – Erasmus Student

Since the establishment of the ERASMUS programme in 1987 over one-and-a-half million students have already participated in student mobility, and the new Lifelong Learning Programme even aims to have 3 million participants by 2012 (European Communities, 2007,4). But what stands behind those numbers? What motivates so many students to let the surrounding they are used to, their friends and families behind them and start anew in a different country and why is the percentage of outgoing students in geography in Ireland nonetheless lower than the national average of all departments. (Office for Official Publications of the European Union) Considering the support and general use of the programme each (geography)student has to ask himself where the benefits of an ERASMUS year lie and whether it would be worth it to make it a personal experience.

If you think about these questions you can distinguish in general benefits of participation and in special advantages for geographers.

A general one is certainly that if it comes to apply for a job after college, a majority of former ERASMUS students experienced their studies abroad as helpful to obtain their first job (Teichler/ Janson, 2007, 488). This impression is also supported by experts who see former ERASMUS students in a better position in the search for a job than their fellow students (Bracht et al., 2006, 22), and one can even recognize the impact of the period abroad years after graduation in people's jobs (Bracht et al., 2006, 28). ERASMUS students hold additional skills they gained abroad responsible for it: "Erasmus is a wonderful opportunity to gain language, communication and intercultural skills which are very well regarded by employers. It is a huge plus in a world where a university degree is common currency."(Ciara Donnelly) (HEA, 2007, 16)

If one has a look at the general advantages of a stay in another European country during their studies one also has to regard the age of the participants. In order to take part students must be at least in second year which leaves them at a perfect age as their characters are not yet totally formed and can be shaped, although they are already mature enough to think critically about the impending change of location and the new experiences there (Corradi, 2006, 29). This point is stressed by former ERASMUS students in a survey, where 95% note "it was worthwhile for them having studied abroad with regard to maturity and personal development" (Bracht et al., 2006, 78) or as Sheila Casey would say it: "It was also an experience of personal growth, confidence building and network building". (HEA, 2007,14)

Additionally 61% of former ERASMUS students state in a survey that "they use the knowledge acquired in the course of study to a high extent" (Teichler/Janson, 2007,

491), which shows that the period abroad is also a time of academic progress and not only of personal benefit: “former ERASMUS students believe on average that academic progress abroad was higher than during a corresponding period at home”(Teichler/Janson, 2007, 490). Especially the differences in teaching methods and content of the courses are appreciated by students like James McGuinness: “The differences between studying music in Lahti and studying music in Cork were relatively subtle: there was enough difference to open my mind to new ways of learning, but, also, there was enough similarity to recognise and appreciate the quality of the course I was to return to. (HEA, 2007, 26) Spending time at a university in another country can give students a broader understanding of academic work as well as scientific methods and therefore prevents the use of prejudices and unfounded generalizations (Corradi, 2006, 30). This advantage can also occur because of the possibility to study different courses and even have a look at subjects you do not do at home, which broadens your horizons: “The programme allowed me to broaden my educational exposure through studying different courses and experiencing a different educational approach. (Brian Kehoe) (HEA, 2007, 21)

As geography is a field of study in which individual pieces of information are less useful than conclusions, generalizations and abstractions (Murphey, 1971, 4), the chance to experience different ways of thinking in different surroundings is especially valuable. 86% of former ERASMUS students confirm that it was in fact worthwhile going abroad to get to know “new ways of thinking and reflection” (Bracht et al., 2006, 77). Another important premise of geography is, that “nothing can be adequately understood apart from the place where it occurs” (White et al., 1968, 3). Staying in another country for a longer period offers a much better chance to understand specific phenomena of a certain region or country, than by just studying about it. A vast variety of diverse places, that are important for the interpretation and the meaning of some events, clearly do also exist within Europe. If the Industrial Revolution, for example, had taken place in Spain instead of Britain, the outcome would have been a totally different one although the incident stayed the same (White et al., 1968, 3).

However, probably the simplest and most important advantage of a stay in another country for geographers is that they get a unique chance to experience the new place and culture they live in, even if only temporarily. Especially due to the fact that the students stay in the host country for a duration of several months in a stable environment, meaning that they do not move around, ERASMUS is one of the best ways to get involved in the way of living in another culture and with the people that live in that place.

This effect is even intensified by the relatively high cultural level of participants, who are all at university level (Corradi, 2006, 29). Therefore it is not surprising that experts rate the mobile students after their return higher in knowledge of other countries (94%), intercultural understanding and competences (97%) than non mobile students. (Bracht et al., 2006, 17). Additional profit can be seen in the usually higher rate of contact with other international students abroad, which leads to an improvement of the knowledge

about other countries than the host country as well. (Bracht et al., 2006, 17) ERASMUS students usually get involved in lots of different activities with people of totally different origin which gives them unique chances to get in touch with their culture: “Whether reluctantly accepting that I would never beat my German housemates in board games, learning about Arab history and culture, discovering a love of Turkish food, naively offering to cook pasta for Italians, or jealously contemplating what made my Icelandic classmates so beautiful, my assumptions were being challenged. Looking at myself and my own country from a different standpoint during my Erasmus year helped me to grow up.”(Emma Connolly) (HEA, 2007, 15)

For geographers this is another interesting point, as they aim to find similarities about physical, economic and social processes all over the world, but they also intend to discover the processes that make places unique (Strahler/Strahler, 2002, 6). To do this job properly it is advantageous to be able to compare as many cultures and places as possible. Furthermore, as Emma mentioned, it can be helpful to discover a new perspective of the home country and to stop taking everything for granted as it is in one's own country. 71% of former ERASMUS students stated in a survey that they noted a substantial positive impact on getting a new perspective of their home country. (Bracht et al., 2006, 77). This new perspective can especially be developed as students get into the position of explaining their own culture to others and in comparing it thereby with other ones (Corradi, 2006, 30), which is a highly geographic matter as one can say: “Geography is about recognizing and understanding the interdependence among places and regions without losing sight of the uniqueness of specific places” (Knox/Marston, 2007, 3) As disconnected as it seems, even the clear improvement of language skills of most of the participants can lead to a better acknowledgement of the uniqueness of places, because what the inhabitants of a place feel and think towards a place can be as important as the place itself (Castree, 2003, 177). You can certainly explore this in a better way if you can get into direct contact with the native population during your studies abroad but also after graduation in your work assignment. Last but not least the European Union itself is an increasingly important field of study for geographers and therefore the European Council advised that geography teaching should include aspects like “understanding the position, shape and variety of physical and social environments in Europe” and “learning about and understanding different ways of life in Europe” (Donnert, 2007) As already mentioned above, an ERASMUS study is one of the best possibilities of reaching these goals as you can explore a European region over a longer period of time and get in direct contact with the people living there. Moreover a period abroad offers the chance to get involved in the ongoing political and economic integration and to develop a sense of European identity.

If you want to summarize and analyze the points mentioned above, I come to the conclusion that it is very valuable for geographers to do a part of their studies abroad, both for personal and academic reasons. This opinion is in line with nearly 90% of the ERASMUS students who see their stay and study in another European country under ERASMUS as positive or very positive. (Office for Official Publications of the European Union). And at

the latest it has to be stressed at this point that it is not only sensible to study abroad but it is also a lot of fun which is illustrated quite colorful by Jean Doyle: “For me Bologna was a voyage of self-discovery and a huge challenge both emotionally and artistically. From the first moment I loved the experience: the people, the art, the food, the wine, the atmosphere, the coffee and the passion...All in all, it was probably one of the most beautiful experiences in my life, one that offered me the chance to work and experience a different way of life. For me it was a huge achievement and also a time of personal transformation and joy. It was like being a child in a sweet shop.” (HEA, 2007, 17)

Even better that also Employers value an ERASMUS year abroad higher than any other (scholarship) programme or a self organized period abroad and 15% are of the opinion that former ERASMUS students have higher competences than other mobile students and none of them considered the opposite to be true (Bracht et al., 2006, 93/101). Unsurprisingly, the differences to nonmobile fellow students are much higher, even in areas which cannot be directly linked to international work task. (Bracht et al., 2006, 104).

Hence it seems as if people who go abroad can only benefit, especially geographers: “Learning abroad makes anyone a better geographer. It nurtures enthusiasm, perseverance, and insight for tackling all that life offers. Go for it!” (**Connie Well Professor, Department of Geography Minnesota**)

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My time in Ireland - Experiences of an Erasmus student

Stefan Esch, Erasmus Student

Hello, my name is Stefan and I am from Germany. Being a third year geography student at Eberhard-Karls-University Tübingen, I always wanted to spend some time in a foreign country. Therefore, I started to make plans for a stay in Ireland shortly after the conclusion of my intermediate examinations last summer. As the Geography Department of my university takes part in the Erasmus-programme offered by the European Union, I decided to apply for a stay at NUI Maynooth. After two weeks of excitement I finally got the desired affirmation: my home-institution would send me to Ireland.

When leaving Germany last September, a new period of life was lying ahead of me: For the next nine months I would live, travel and study in Europe's most western country. Since then, I have been asked many questions by relatives, friends and Irish students: "Why do you want to go abroad?" or "Why exactly did you choose Ireland?"

I think the reasons for my stay in Ireland are closely linked to both my personality and my field of study: First of all, Geography is a subject predestined for travelling. By exploring the world, we can increase our knowledge and broaden our (sometimes) narrow-minded horizons. Furthermore, I would like to mention my high interest in other countries, cultures and landscapes. Because of this, I wanted to visit the "Emerald Isle", which is mostly seen as a place of calmness, affability and naturalness. Additionally, I wanted to find out more about Ireland's highly interesting history and its recent economic success. The best way of doing all this seemed thus to go to Ireland for as long as possible.

Some days after the arrival, my English (which I didn't really practice for the last three years) already seemed to improve. This was probably also caused by all the "specialities" which the Erasmus-programme offers: You get to know plenty of new people from all

over the world with whom you can only communicate by using a language that everyone knows. In fact, I would argue that this kind of learning is better than any English class back in school.

During the last few months, while travelling, laughing and working together with people of very different nationalities, deep friendships developed which will surely last for much longer than my actual stay in Ireland.

Besides the improvement of my language skills I also got introduced to the Irish culture and daily life which turned out to be different from the typical German stereotype of the “Emerald Isle”. On the one hand I was really impressed by the beautiful landscapes of the different counties such as Kerry, Cork and Antrim. On the other hand, however, I also realised what is ment by the “Celtic Tiger” and its economic success. The different locations to which I have travelled enabled me to gain both “first hand” information and a certain feeling for the Irish perception of things.

This knowledge got even more broadened by the lectures and activities I participated in at NUI Maynooth: attending Geography, Politics and History classes but also taking part in different clubs and societies influenced and enlarged my way of thinking in cultural, scientific and political matters.

Finally, I have been able to pass some of these experiences on to German friends. When I will certainly visit soon in their home countries. Together with them I felt some kind of that frequently discussed “European Identity”.

As you might see, the time I spent here considerably influenced my personal development as well as my academic education. I am really thankful for my stay in Ireland and will never forget the last nine months.

The 2007 General Election

Dr. Adrian Kavanagh

**Department of Geography/National Institute for Regional and Spatial
Analysis/National Centre for Geocomputation, NUI Maynooth**

On the 24th May in 2007 a general election was held in the Republic of Ireland, taking place just over five years after the previous contest in 2002. The 2002 contest was largely uncompetitive – the only real issues of interest (outside the always competitive contests in individual constituencies) relating to whether Fianna Fáil could attain enough seats (83, or over) to win an overall majority on their own (as it transpired they just missed out, mainly due to a late surge in support for their coalition partners, the Progressive Democrats) and the extent of the collapse in Fine Gael support. The contest in 2007 was

a much closer one, in which opinion polls for much of the campaign were pointing to the realistic possibility of a Fianna Fáil government losing power after a general election for the first time since 1982. This sparked an increased interest in the poll amongst the Irish electorate, which in turn fuelled a significant increase in turnout rates, which will be discussed in the following section. The second half of this article will study the geographies of support associated with the six largest political parties for this election.

Voter Turnout

The 2007 General Election marked a notable break from the trend set in the previous quarter of a century of continually declining voter turnout levels in Irish general elections, reflecting the recent resurgence in voter participation levels that was also observed for the 2004 local elections and the 2002 Nice Treaty Referendum. The percentage turnout level increased by almost 5% from the record low of 62.6% for the 2002 contest to 67.0% in 2007, while the actual numbers turning out to vote increased by over 200,000 from 1,878,609 in 2002 to 2,084,035. One of the factors forwarded as having played a significant role in the increased turnout levels was the attempt made to improve the quality of the electoral register in the year before the contest, especially in light of the views of many commentators that growing inaccuracies in the electoral register over the past few decades had a key role to play in Ireland's declining voter turnout levels. A more notable factor accounting for the higher numbers turning out on Election Day was the closeness of the electoral contest, as was noted above. The weather on Election Day in 2007 also had some bearing on the higher turnout levels; while it was showery and downcast in parts of the state on May 24th, the weather was much better than the torrential and prolonged downpours that characterised Election Day in 2002. At a more localised level, continued efforts by non-partisan groups, such as the Vincentian Partnership for Justice, to improve voter turnout levels, particularly in socially disadvantaged areas, also helped to improve voter participation levels. On the other hand, a number of factors militated against an even higher turnout level across the state and particularly amongst certain age cohorts and social groups. The most notable of these was the decision to hold the election on a Thursday at the height of the university examinations period, a factor that prevented large numbers of students – who had failed, or were unable, to arrange postal votes – from voting on the day, in turn blunting efforts made to improve the youth turnout level by the high-profile *Rock The Vote* campaign. Against that, the Thursday polling day may have accounted for the relatively higher turnout levels in commuter areas, as 'double-registered' new residents in these areas found they could not 'go home' to vote in their original constituencies at the weekend and, as a result, had to vote in their new constituencies, thus fuelling the notable turnout increases in commuter constituencies, such as Meath West.

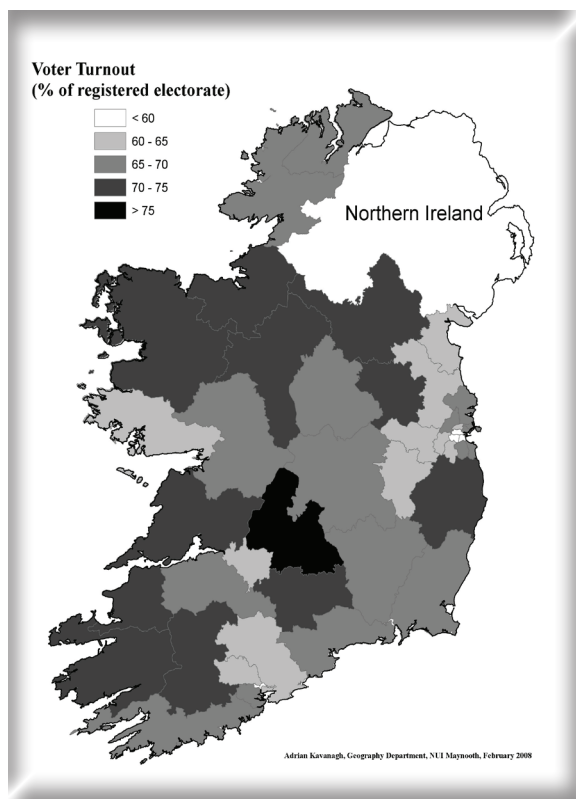


Figure 1: Voter turnout, by constituency, measured as a percentage of the registered electorate, 2007 General Election

Figure 1 shows voter turnout levels, as a percentage of the registered electorate, for each of the 43 Dáil constituencies in the state. Higher than average participation levels are observed in the western, north-western and south-western parts of the state, with especially high levels associated with the counties of Tipperary, Kerry, Mayo, Leitrim and Roscommon. Lower turnout levels were associated with the urban and commuter-belt constituencies, largely reflecting the trends observed for the 2002 contest in a marked-register based micro-level analysis of turnout patterns in that contest (Kavanagh, Mills and Sinnott, 2004), although turnout differences

between rural and urban constituencies were not as significant for this election. On a provincial, or regional, basis, the highest voter turnout level was recorded in Connacht-Ulster (69.7%), followed by Munster (69.1%), the rest of Leinster (67.2%), and Dublin (62.9%). The narrowing of the significant rural-urban turnout differentials that marked the 2002 contest was largely due to increases in voter turnout levels in the urban and commuter constituencies, with average increases of 6.2% for Dublin and 7.4% (to a level of 66.6%) for the commuter-belt counties of Louth, Meath, Kildare and Wicklow. By contrast, there were only marginal increases in the turnout rate in the more rural parts of the state, including the Midlands (increase of 0.8%) and Connacht (1.7%) as well as for the three 'inner city' Dublin constituencies (Dublin Central, Dublin South Central and Dublin South East). Turnout levels dropped marginally in four constituencies; Dublin South East, Cork South West, Kerry North and Dublin Central.

In accounting for geographical variations in electoral participation levels, political scientists and electoral geographers have pointed to a range of socio-economic, demographic, political and institutional factors that may shape these, some of which are listed in Table 1 below. That said it is important to note that constituency turnout levels are the result of a multiplicity of different turnout decisions made by individual electors, with these in turn being shaped by a host of a number of, often conflicting, factors, and also by the places in which they live and work.

Higher Turnout	Lower Turnout
Older populations	Younger populations
Married people	Single or Separated people
Residential stability	Population mobility
Rurally based/Agricultural employment	Urban-based employment
Affluence/high levels of social well-being	Social deprivation
High levels of education	Low education standards
Owner occupied housing	Local authority or private rented housing
High levels of political mobilisation	Low levels of political mobilisation
Proximity to the polling station	Distance from the polling station
High levels of political choice	Low levels of political choice
Weekend voting	Voting on weekdays

Table 1: Summary of different factors associated with areas of higher turnout and low turnout in the electoral literature.

The manner in which turnout decisions may be shaped by different geographical contexts is particularly highlighted by John Agnew's multidimensional place-centred perspective on political behaviour, which allows a shift from generalised and simplistic perspectives on political behaviour, leading instead to an understanding of how the political behaviour of individual human agents may be channelled within the places that they live in, arising from a complex interaction with external social influences of regional, national and global dimensions. As participation is based on place-specific conditions and decisions, Agnew argues that a more *microscopic* analysis of what shapes such participation levels is required. Ecological analyses (correlation and regression analysis) can help account for the spatial patterning of general election turnout levels, as discussed above, although the use of constituency level units for such an analysis is problematic given the small number of units involved (forty-three) and the likelihood that key demographic and socio-economic differences exist within, rather than between, constituencies. This is very much at variance with the microscopic analysis that Agnew calls for. That said, a constituency-level analysis does allow for a study of the factors shaping overall, or regional, trends in voter turnout levels, in particular attempting to account for the notable rural-urban turnout differences that persist, even given the increased turnout levels in many urban and commuter-based constituencies.

	Voter Turnout
Males as percentage of population	0.53**
Aged 18-24 as percentage of electorate	-0.85**
Aged 25-44 as percentage of electorate	-0.56**
Aged 45-64 as percentage of electorate	0.86**
Aged 65, and over, as percentage of electorate	0.53**
Single	-0.90**
Married	0.86**
Born in Ireland as percentage of population	0.38*
Born in other EU states (not Ireland/UK) as percentage of population	-0.50**
Born in Rest of the World as percentage of population	-0.64**
Living at a different address one year previously	-0.73**
Living in a flat, apartment or bed-sit	-0.77**
Living in owner occupied housing	0.82**
Living in owner occupied housing (mortgaged)	0.08

Living in owner occupied housing (non-mortgaged)	0.84**
Living in local authority rented housing	-0.67**
Living in rented (private and council) housing	-0.82**
Family Cycle: Pre-Family	-0.65**
Family Cycle: Family Cycle: Pre-School	-0.18
Family Cycle: Early School	0.12
Family Cycle: Pre-Adolescent	0.55**
Family Cycle: Adolescent	0.67**
Family Cycle: Adult	0.20
Family Cycle: Empty Nest	0.74**

Table 2: Correlations between turnout and spoiled vote levels in 2007 general election, and range of party support factors, based on same election, and demographic/socio-economic variables, as drawn from Census 2006.

Correlation analysis, measuring the relationship between turnout in the 2007 contest and a range of different socio-demographic causal factors, as shown by Table 2, suggests that housing tenure is a significant predictor of turnout propensity, as found to be the case in other earlier studies of Irish turnout. A significant and positive correlation exists between voter turnout levels and owner occupied housing (and especially non-mortgaged owner occupied housing), while negative associations are seen to exist with rented housing (both private and local authority) and flat, apartment or bed-sit residence, as well as with single-person and lone parent households. Tying all the threads in the correlation analysis in Table 2 together, high turnout constituencies are inferred to be characterised by high levels of owner occupancy, residential stability, families in the later stages of the family cycle, married people, older voters, Irish-born people, and males. Stepwise regression analysis shows that the owner occupied housing factor accounts for around two-thirds of variance in general election turnout. A stepwise regression analysis (Table 3) shows that a model including two housing tenure related factors, as well as the proportion of single and Irish-born people, accounts for just under 90 per cent of the variance in constituency level turnout. Owner occupied housing is shown to have a significant influence in pushing up turnout levels, while the other factors selection in the stepwise regression model are found to have the opposite effect.

Factor	B Coefficient (<i>T Value</i>)
Constant	152.47 (3.48)
Single	-1.27 (-2.58)
Percentage of Irish-born in the population	-0.49 (-3.52)
Mortgaged owner occupied housing	-0.41 (-3.97)
Owner occupied housing	0.65 (2.98)
Adjusted R ² value	0.895

Table 3: Aggregate data analysis of constituency-level turnouts in 2007 General Election

[Note: The main entry for each variable is the B coefficient, the italicised figure beside it (in brackets) is the t-value. T-values in excess of 2.02 are significant at p=0.05.]

One final related point to note is that the number of spoiled votes for this election was down on the 2002 level, from 20,707 spoiled votes nationally in 2002 to 19,386 in 2007 despite the higher number of votes cast in that election, representing a decline in the percentage of spoiled votes from 1.1% in 2002 to 0.9% in 2007. The constituencies with the highest spoiled vote levels were Dublin South Central (1.6%), Dublin Central (1.5%) and Dublin North West (1.3%), while the lowest spoiled vote levels were found in the Kildare North (0.5%) and Dublin West (0.6%) constituencies.

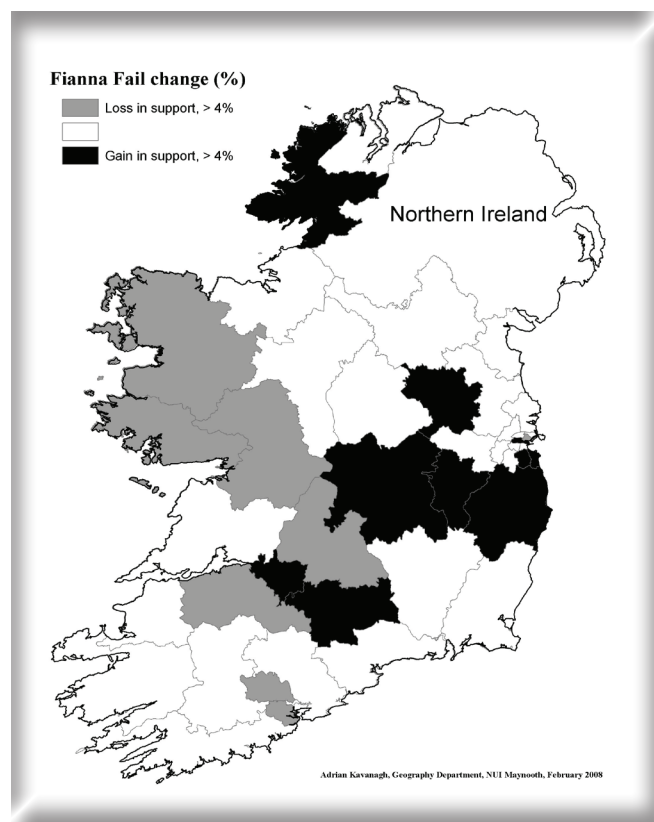
Electoral Support

The results of the election produced a number of winners and losers, the most notable winners being the two main parties. Fianna Fáil, despite a series of opinion polls having pointed to the likelihood of significant losses for the party in the weeks leading up to the election, managed to maintain their support levels at the 2002 level – enough to keep the party in power – although the party did lose four seats, probably due to the improved Fine Gael-Labour transfer performance. In terms of the number of seat gains, Fine Gael were by far the most successful party in this contest, winning an extra 20 seats (the only party to gain seats in this election), although the party's disastrous result in 2002 has to be kept in mind here as well as the fact that it failed to win power after the contest. In that the Green Party entered government after the contest, they too could be viewed as having had a successful election, especially given an increase in their share of the national vote from 3.9% to 4.7%. However, this increase was largely fuelled by the party contesting more constituencies than they had in 2002 (as with Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour, the Green Party contested all the 43 constituencies and ran two candidates in Dublin North, Trevor Sargent's constituency) and the party's failure to add to its six seat could be seen as somewhat of a disappointment given that polls early in 2007 gave rise to expectations of significant Green gains in this election (as it transpired the party gained a seat in Carlow-Kilkenny but lost their seat in Cork South-Central). The election was disappointing both for Labour and, to a larger extent, Sinn Féin, with both parties finishing the election with one seat less than they had in 2002. Sinn Féin did manage to increase their national share of the vote from 6.5% to 6.9%, but this was in part due to running four more candidates than in 2002 but even more so due to the party making gaining support in constituencies which was not sufficient to amount to seat gains there. The big losers in this election proved to be the independents and smaller parties, as well as the Progressive Democrats, with the political groupings all experiencing a notable decline in overall support, which translated into significant losses in terms of seats. Most of the media focus was placed on the Progressive Democrats losses, with this party being left with just a quarter of the number of seats that they had won in 2002; the only two deputies to hold their seats being Noel Grealish (Galway West) and Minister for Health, Mary Harney, (Dublin Mid West). However losses made by the independents and smaller parties were even more significant in scope, with these groupings ending the election with eight fewer seats than they had coming into the election, with incumbents losing their seats in Cavan-Monaghan, Clare, Dublin West, Galway East, Kildare North and Tipperary South, while outgoing deputies, Marian Harkin (Sligo-North Leitrim) and Mildred Fox (Wicklow), decided not to defend their seats. In the cases of both the Progressive Democrats and the independent/small party grouping, most of the seat losses tended to be to Fine Gael candidates.

	Dublin	Leinster	Munster	Connacht-Ulster*
Fianna Fáil	38.8 (37.1)	45.6 (43.4)	42.7 (43.3)	38.5 (41.2)
Fine Gael	18.7 (14.3)	26.8 (23.8)	39.6 (33.7)	34.8 (27.3)
Labour Party	14.5 (14.9)	12.1 (13.3)	9.9 (10.7)	3.2 (2.8)
Green Party	8.3 (8.0)	4.0 (3.4)	3.5 (2.4)	2.3 (1.4)
Sinn Féin	7.0 (8.9)	4.9 (3.1)	5.3 (4.2)	10.7 (8.0)
Progressive	4.1 (7.1)	2.9 (4.4)	1.3 (2.1)	3.0 (3.3)
Democrats				
Independents/	8.6 (9.5)	3.7 (7.7)	7.4 (11.6)	7.2 (15.9)
Others				

Table 4: Average support (percentage) levels, by province/region for political parties in the 2007 General Election – equivalent support levels in 2002 are in italicised brackets.

Figure 2: Change in support levels for Fianna Fáil between 2002 and 2007 general elections.



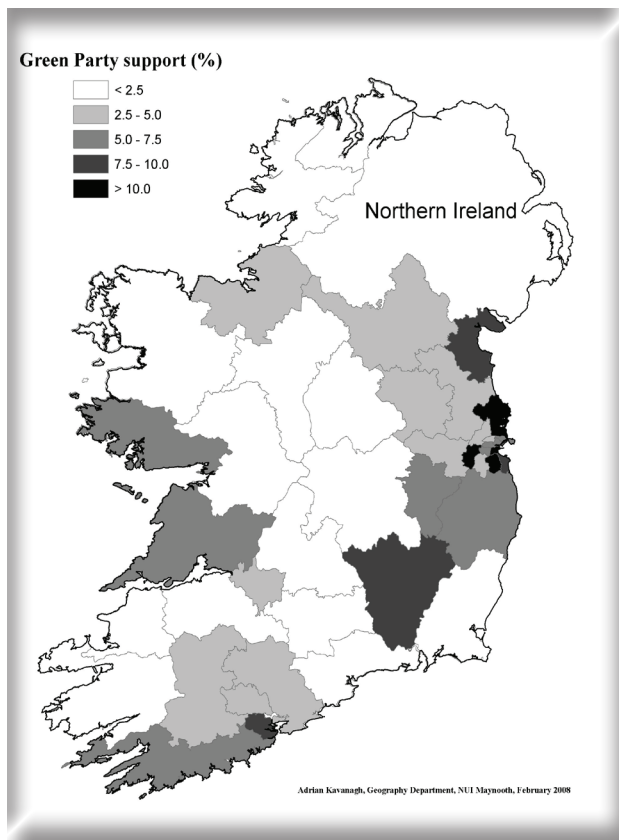
In terms of the different geographies of support of the different political parties, the patterns noted for previous elections were again largely repeated. Fianna Fáil won high levels of support in all areas of the state – winning the largest share of the vote in every constituency, apart from Roscommon-South Leitrim, Kerry North and, most notably, Mayo. Their pattern of support, however, is somewhat different to that of the 1980s and early 1990s, when the party was highly dependent on strong rural support and when Connacht-Ulster was the party's strongest region in terms of support. In 2007, Fianna Fáil won a (slightly) larger share of the vote in Dublin than they did in Connacht-Ulster (as Table 4 shows), now the party's weakest region in terms of support, with provincial

Leinster now emerging as the party's strong base of support, in part based on a strong showing for it in the commuter-belt constituencies (where it won an average vote share of 43.1%). Fianna Fáil's national share of the vote was remarkably similar to their 2002 levels (winning a slightly higher share of the vote (40.6%) than in 2002 (40.5%)), but this masks significant changes in support in some constituencies, which in turn had a notable geographical dimension (as Figure 2 shows). Support for the party was generally higher than in 2002 in the more eastern and urban constituencies, with a notable gain in support of 2.3% on average in the commuter belt constituencies, but significant levels of support was lost to Fine Gael in a number of rural constituencies, particularly in the west. Fianna Fáil's most successful constituencies in this election, in terms of gaining support, were Limerick East (up by 8.8%), Donegal South West (8.4%), Tipperary South (7.9%), Wicklow (6.8%) and Laois-Offaly (5.1%), while the greatest losses of support were in Mayo (down by 15.5%), Tipperary North (8.4%), Galway East (7.1%), Limerick West (6.2%) and Dublin North Central (6.0%).

Reversing the trend associated with the previous election, Fine Gael succeeded in gaining seats in almost half of the constituencies within the state on the back of a decidedly rather more moderate increase in the party's actual vote share. Fine Gael's support patterns display a very strong rural-urban dimension, with the party's highest support levels (as in other, more recent, general elections) associated with the more rural and western constituencies. The increase in support for the party in this election was similarly more focused on these regions of the state and especially in Connacht-Ulster, where the party's share of the vote increased by 7.3% and it now is seriously challenging Fianna Fáil for political dominance of this region. Dublin remains the party's weakest region, despite an increase in support of 4.3%. Fine Gael support levels still remain low in the more working class Dublin constituencies, such as Dublin Central (9.5%) and Dublin North West (9.9%) and support for the party is very much stronger in the more middle class areas of the city. Despite the disappointing result for Labour, the party did succeed in cementing, or further adding to, its support levels in different parts of the state, including the Dublin constituencies (where the party saw off challenges from the Green Party and Sinn Féin to maintain its seat levels, gaining a seat in Dublin Mid West but losing one in Dublin North) and the Cork region (where Ciaran Lynch made a significant gain at the expense of the Green Party in Cork South Central to bring Labour's number of seats back to three for the first time since the 1992 election). That said, the limited successes for Labour in this contest were more than offset with a series of disappointments, including the loss of Breda Moynihan-Cronin's seat in Kerry South, which has left Labour without a seat in that county for the first time since the 1940s. Potential gains in constituencies such as Meath East, Dublin South, Dublin South Central and Wicklow were also missed out on. The overall geography of support for Labour in this election was largely similar to that of previous electoral contests in that support for the party was again mainly concentrated to the south and east of a line between Drogheda and Limerick. One notable dimension of recent elections has been the emergence of Dublin as the party's strongest region, as against earlier contests in which the party's strongest and most reliable support bases were found in Munster and provincial Leinster. The growing importance of Dublin to Labour Party support has been particularly notable since the amalgamation with Democratic Left in 1999, while also reflecting a loss of support in more rural constituencies following the decline of a number of Labour family 'dynasties', such as the Springs in Kerry North and the Pattissons in Carlow-Kilkenny. Labour's regional strength in Dublin and eastern, urban, Ireland, it could be argued, nicely complements Fine Gael's strength in rural Ireland and the west, and a Fine Gael-Labour alliance poses a serious threat to Fianna Fáil in the next general election should these parties further build on their existing regional strengths.

Figure 3: Support levels for the Green Party, 2007 General Election.

The Green Party increased its vote from 71,470 (3.9%) in 2002 to 96,936 (4.7%) between the 2002 and 2007 elections, but much of this increase was focused on constituencies that the party had not contested in the 2002 contest. Buoyed by opinion polls promising



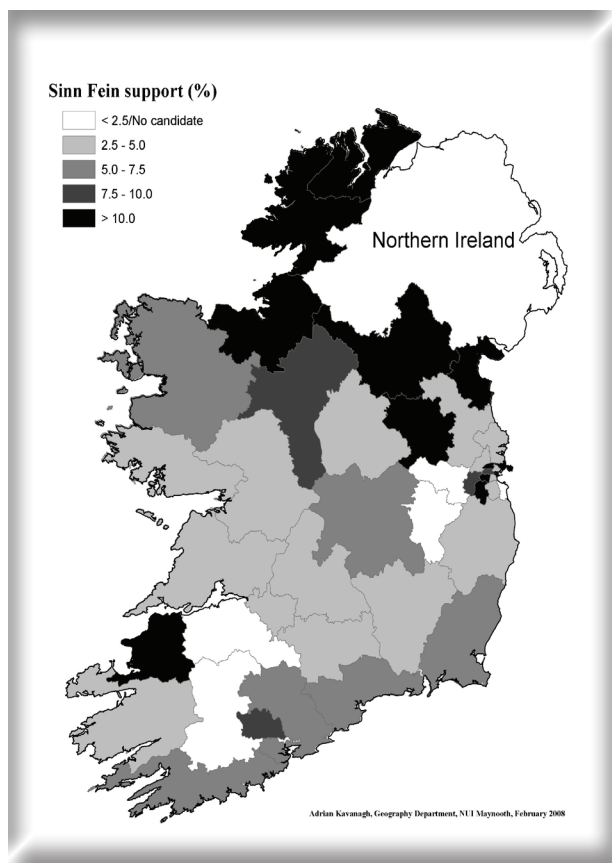
significant gains for the party in early 2007, the Green Party had targeted gains in Carlow-Kilkenny, Galway West and Wicklow, but it was to transpire that party support levels in its stronger constituencies was to largely remain static, or even decline slightly, in the election itself and only one new seat was gained – Carlow-Kilkenny, in no little part due to a “Carlow-transfer” to their candidate, Mary White – while the party failed to defend Dan Boyle’s seat in Cork South-Central. Figure 3 shows that Green Party support remains very much concentrated in mainly middle class urban constituencies – including Dublin North, Dublin South East, Dublin South and Dun Laoghaire, as well as Dublin Mid West (mainly based on Paul Gogarty’s home base in Lucan), Cork South Central and parts of Galway City (accounting for

relatively high support levels for the party in the Galway West constituency). There are, however, some ‘outliers’ outside of the cities with Green Party support levels in the 5-8 per cent range (most notably Carlow-Kilkenny, but also Louth, Wicklow, Kildare North, Kildare South and Cork South West), with this support usually based around support for a popular local county councillor. In a similar vein, the respectable electoral return in Cavan-Monaghan (2,382) can be explained with reference to the party’s selection of former independent councilor, Vincent Martin. However, party support is still very much focused on those constituencies with higher levels of younger, female and middle class voters, as well as university graduates. The Green Party continues to benefit from the opportunities afforded to smaller parties by the Irish electoral system, and especially from vote transfers as three of the successful candidates were dependent on transfers in this contest (as was also the case in 2002) – indeed two of their candidates won seats despite having less than half a quota on the first count, thanks to strong transfers from Labour, Sinn Féin and independent candidates. Sinn Féin votes, as in previous general elections, has been drawn from its two main support bases – a nationalist support base in the Border region and a working class support base in urban Ireland. In previous elections, Sinn Féin support has been developing at a consistent rate in both their Border and urban working class heartlands (with a notable outlier in Kerry North), with notable electoral successes being recorded in these areas for general, European and especially local elections. The 2007 contest saw a further development of the party’s support levels

in the Border region, particularly in the Donegal constituencies, where party candidates Pearse Doherty and Padraig MacLochlainn doubled the share of the vote won by the party in 2002 to win almost one-fifth of all the votes cast in these constituencies. (However, as both Donegal North-East and Donegal South-West are three-seat constituencies and were tightly contested in 2007, Sinn Féin failed to translate this increased support into seat gains in either constituency.) In their other heartland in working class Dublin, however, the election results proved to be very disappointing, as one of the party's Dublin seats were lost (Dublin South West) and the party came close to losing its other seat in the city (Dublin South Central). As with the Greens, Sinn Féin's opinion poll results in the run up to the election pointed to significant gains, with a number of Dublin constituencies being highlighted as highly likely (Dublin Central, Dublin North West), probable (Dublin North East) or potential (Dublin Mid West, Dublin South East) gains, but in all these constituencies Fianna Fáil and Labour withheld this challenge and Sinn Féin ended up losing support in a number of their key target constituencies as well the two constituencies where they had won seats in 2002 (down 8.1% in Dublin South West, 5.4% in Dublin Central, 2.6% in Dublin South Central and 2.5% in Dublin West), while overall support for the party in the capital was down by 1.9%. Despite the loss in support in Dublin, urban working class areas remain as one of the two party's main support bases, as illustrated by Figure 4. The main narrative associated with the Progressive Democrats was one of declining support, with notable declines in all of the party's stronger areas in 2002 (apart from Galway), including Limerick, the Midlands and middle class Dublin. Support for the party fell by 3% in Dublin, but more intense levels of decline were associated with the four mainly middle class constituencies that the party held seats in – Dublin South (down by 8.4%), Dublin Mid West (7.6%), Dun Laoghaire (6.6%) and Dublin South East (5.6%) – with this culminating in the loss seats in all of these constituencies bar Dublin Mid West. Support in the Midland counties was down by 5.3%, resulting in the loss of seats won in Laois-Offaly and Longford-Roscommon in 2002, while a decline of 3% in support in Limerick East also saw the loss of the party seat here. The only exception to this consistently negative trend was Galway, with significant support increases cementing Noel Grealish's seat in Galway West and establishing Ciaran Cannon as a key contender for future elections in Galway East and potential future party leader.

Figure 4: Support levels for Sinn Féin, 2007 General Election.

As well as looking at the national picture, even more notable variations in support levels can be observed at the sub-constituency level, with this very much linked to the 'friends and neighbours' effect which states that a candidate should expect to win their highest share of the vote within a constituency in, and close to, their home base or bailiwick. Where political parties are running two, or more, candidates in the same constituency, this phenomenon is used by these parties as a means of managing their vote and ensuring that no one candidate finishes too far ahead of their running mate(s) to put the party's prospects of maximising the number of seats won in that constituency at risk. Parties may decide



to divide the constituency between its candidates, assigning each an area to primarily focus their canvassing efforts on; an area that will include their home base. This, of course, will further fuel the impact of friends and neighbours influences. In cases where tally figures were made available (in many cases in local newspapers in the weeks following the election), analysis could be produced to allow one to get a sense of the extent to which this effect is very much an aspect of Irish electoral contests. Looking at the Wexford constituency, tally analysis shows that successful Fine Gael candidate, Michael D'Arcy (Junior) won almost half (47%) the votes cast in his home base of Gorey, as opposed to support levels of around, or under, 2% in the other major towns, Wexford, New Ross and Enniscorthy. By contrast, another successful candidate in the same constituency, New Ross-based

Sean Connick of Fianna Fáil, won just 6% of the vote in Gorey and under 2% in Wexford and Enniscorthy, but won 63% of all votes cast in his New Ross bailiwick. Striking variations in support patterns were even more evident in two-county constituencies with a trend emerging that most of the votes cast in a county will tend to be for candidates from that county. In the Longford-Westmeath constituency, 96% of all the votes cast in Westmeath went to candidates from that county, while 86% of votes cast in Longford went to candidates from that county. Similarly in Carlow-Kilkenny, 89% of all the votes cast in Kilkenny went to candidates from that county – Borris based Green Party candidate, Mary White, proving to be the only Carlow-based candidate to win a relatively significant (6%) share of the Kilkenny vote. Particularly high levels of support for Kilkenny candidates were found in the Piltown (93%), Callan (91%) and Ballyragget (90%) electoral areas, with stronger support for White in the other two electoral areas (Kilkenny City (86%) and Thomastown (87%) resulting in slightly lower support levels for the Kilkenny candidates there. By contrast, 87% of the votes cast in Carlow went to candidates from that county. The importance of the 'friends and neighbours' effect, or the local vote, to both candidates and political parties is obvious, and this means that candidates are vulnerable should changes to constituency boundaries cut across their bailiwicks, or local support bases. Fianna Fáil's Donie Cassidy had won a seat in the old Westmeath constituency in 2002, but boundary amendments brought in by the 2004 Constituency Commission saw the

creation (or rather the recreation) of a Longford-Westmeath and also moved the north-eastern part of Westmeath county into the neighbouring Meath West constituency, an area including Cassidy's home town of Castlepollard and a large chunk of his bailiwick. Cassidy had won over 1,800 votes from this area in 2002, and the loss of these votes was to ultimately cost him his seat in the 2007 contest. Similarly the political division of Leitrim between two new three-seat constituencies, Roscommon-South Leitrim and Sligo-North Leitrim, was to leave that county without a Dáil representative after the 2007 contest, and saw Fianna Fáil incumbent, John Ellis, failing to win a seat in Roscommon-South Leitrim due to the loss of support from north Leitrim, where he had won just under 1,400 votes in 2002.

Concluding notes

This article has summarised the key trends associated with the 2007 General Election, but particularly from a geographical viewpoint. The increased turnout levels have been noted, as well as some potential causes of these and the spatial dimensions of the turnout change, while the resultant geography of turnout for the 2007 contest was outlined and the different factors shaping this turnout geography studied by means of correlation and regression analysing, pointing to owner occupied housing (especially non-mortgaged owner occupied housing) as a significant influence on spatial variations in Irish turnout rates, in addition to a range of other housing tenure factors, as well as age, marital status, family status, residential mobility and nationality variables. The next stage was to study what parties and candidates this much larger number of voters chose to vote for, with the overall trend in this contest resulting in a much larger share of the vote and seat numbers being won by the two main parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, largely due to a resurgence in Fine Gael support after its disastrous election in 2002. The geographies of support for the different political parties were found to be largely similar to those of previous elections, although in this election one can point to Fianna Fáil's declining strength in the west in the face of Fine Gael's growth in this area and Fianna Fáil's rising support levels in the east at the expense, largely, of Sinn Féin and Labour. Again, as with all previous elections, localism had a significant influence on voting patterns, particularly at the sub-constituency level, in this contest, which was evident in exceptionally high support levels for candidates in their home bases and the extent of county loyalty evident in support patterns for two-county constituencies.

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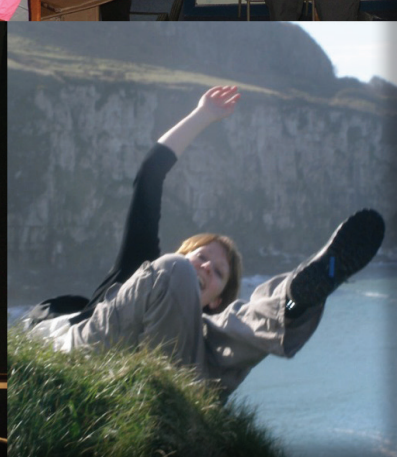
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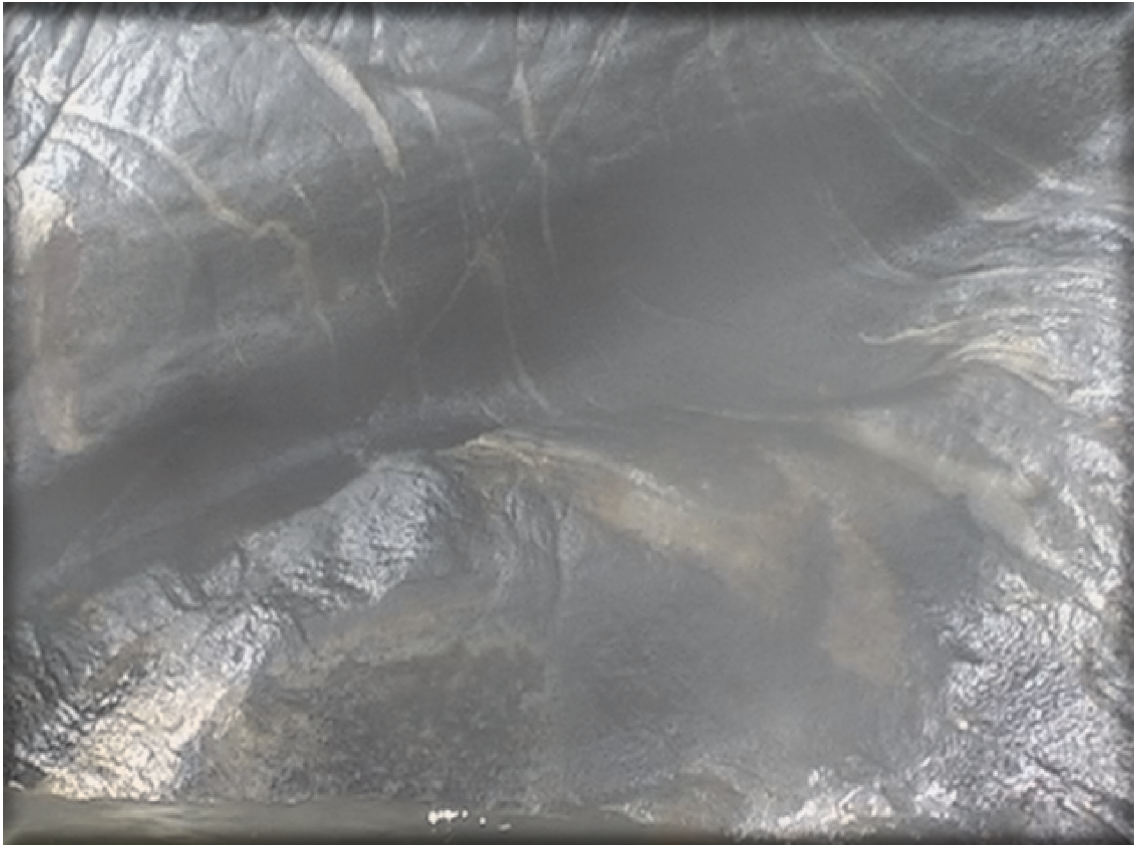


The Eighth Wonder Of The World

Pádraig Hogan, Third Year, NUI Maynooth

I was lucky enough to spend some of the winter of 2002 working in Milford Sound; New Zealand. I was instructing kayaking trips and bringing people off the Milford track by boat and this was definitely the best way to get to know the fjord, its surroundings and the sense of awe that it instilled in the many people that visit there every day. Despite being called a sound Milford is in fact a fjord. It got its name from John Grono a seal hunter who sheltered there from a storm. He tasted the water, found it to be freshwater and declared it a sound believing that a river entering it formed it. He named it Milford after Milford haven in Wales where he came from (I have not been there but have heard that they look nothing alike).

There are fourteen fjords on the Southwestern coast of New Zealand, with Milford Sound being the furthest north and the largest. The glaciers that passed through Milford Sound are estimated to have been up to 2000m deep and to have travelled at a rate of up to 5 metres a day. This movement carved out the fjord and formed one of the most amazing places in the world. Striations and glacial grooves on the rocks can be seen from where the fast moving Glacier ground out large smooth gouges in the Granite as if it were clay.



Milford Sound itself is a beautiful place no matter what the weather but especially when the sun shines and Mitre Peak can be seen in all its glory as the centrepiece of the fjord. Standing at 1623mtrs and ascending directly out of the water it is the second highest sea cliff in the world (the highest is in Hawaii). Those brave enough to climb the mountain will be rewarded with the beautiful panoramic view the summit provides.



Mount Pembroke across and further towards the mouth of the fjord from Mitre Peak is the highest Peak in Milford at 2015mtrs. Mount Pembroke also holds the Tutako glacier the last in Milford. The Glacial retreat has accelerated rapidly in the last two hundred years and it is estimated that within another hundred years, the Tutako glacier will have melted entirely. Mount Pembroke is very recognisable by its distinct “Lion” shaped shoulder.

Average precipitation in Milford Sound is 4550mm and rainfalls of up to 250mm a day are not uncommon. On a day when it pours the many waterfalls that come of the Cascade Range are every bit as amazing a site as the mighty mountains on a sunny day and the towering waterfalls of Stirling falls and Lady Bowen falls are breathtaking. Stirling falls is the first as you enter the fjord and stands at 161 metres falling directly into the cold waters of the fjord. It is possible to kayak under Stirling falls and to receive an icy power shower in the process. The story goes that captain Stirling named this waterfall and said to his good friend Lord Bowen that he could name the next one that they saw. Lord Bowen had had a disagreement with his wife and when they came to the next waterfall standing almost three times as high as Niagara Falls at 181metres he named it Lady Elizabeth Bowen Falls after his Wife to appease her. It is now shortened to Lady Bowen Falls.



The high rain fall combined with the steep walled mountains means that it is hard for the many beach trees growing in there to find roots in the sparse soil. Young trees in Milford sound tend to intertwine their roots with older trees to gain some purchase on the almost vertical slopes. While this is effective it means that if there is a mud slide it takes a lot of trees with it. The sight and deafening sound of these tree avalanches is an amazing display of nature's destructive power. In 1993 30,000 cubic metres of trees and soil slid down a mountainside and blocked the road into Milford sound trapping people on both sides (luckily no one was injured). Despite this tourism in the area was not to be stopped and for a week people were escorted over the mound of debris and walked to coaches on either side. In some cases helicopters shuttled people over the landslide. Milford sounds small airport is the second busiest in the whole of New Zealand (based on runway traffic) and 4000 thousand people a day visit the fjord in high season via plane, tour bus and car.

There is no shortage of Wildlife to be found around Milford with Sea lions, Penguins, Dolphins, Ducks, Cormorants and other bird life making for excellent sightseeing. Due to a frequent layer of freshwater on top of the saltwater (as a consequence of the high

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rainfall) many fish and other forms of sea life are found at much shallower depths than normal. Black coral more prominent at greater depths is also found near the surface making for excellent diving.

The Maori people have there own story as to how Milford Sound was formed. They say that a Maori God called Tua wanted to become a great carver and for this needed to learn his trade. He fashioned an axe out of Greenstone and started carving through the rocks along New Zealand's South west coast starting at the bottom and working his way north. As he formed each fjord he was still an apprentice and left Islands in the middle of some of the fjords and slopes that were not as vertical as he would have liked. But he steadily improved and on his fourteenth attempt carved out Milford sound and achieved perfection. The folklore says that when one of the Sea Gods witnessed this creation she felt that Milford sound was so beautiful that if people came to see it that they would not want to leave again so she created two giant sand flies which bred to produce millions more to guard over the place. If anyone has been to Milford Sound they will put some credit to this story as Milford sound is an amazing place but the sand flies (which make our own midge pale in comparison) will make sure you don't linger for too long there.....

Where did we come from?

Dennis Pringle, Lecturer, NUI Maynooth

If your answer to the question in the title includes references to lust, powercuts, the quality of TV programming, or improbable conjugations between feathered vertebrates and honey-making insects, then you are answering a different question to the one intended. The question is not asking where we as individuals came from, but where we as a species came from.

Until fairly recent times the question was unproblematic, at least for those brought up in a Judeo-Christian tradition: God made Adam in His own image, then He made Eve from a few leftovers, and then left them to it. And so, a short while later (estimated by biblical scholars as about 6,000 years), after a bit of begatting, here we all are. To suggest otherwise was considered blasphemous, and even in certain parts of the United States today it would not be smartest way to boost your promotion chances in the teaching profession. However, in more enlightened parts of the world, the notion of evolution, which had been proposed in both Ancient Greece and China, was revived in the nineteenth

century by scientists such as Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, Alfred Russel Wallace (the ‘father of biogeography’) and, most notably, Charles Darwin.

Lamarck, in a series of publications in the early 1800s, put forward the idea that organisms adapted to their environment and that these changes could be transmitted to the next generation. He also argued for the transmutation of species – the idea that one species could evolve into a new species. These ideas were refined by Darwin and Wallace who, independent of one another, developed the idea of natural selection, the basic premise of which is encapsulated in Herbert Spencer’s famous phrase ‘survival of the fittest’. In other words, individuals within each species have different traits, some of which confer a natural advantage over other members of the species in the Malthusian competition for resources. The better equipped individuals consequently have a greater chance of surviving to adulthood, and therefore of passing on the beneficial traits to their offspring. Each species will consequently tend to evolve to become better adapted to its environment through the weeding out of individuals having the less useful traits. Any changes to the environment, however, will tend to tilt the balance in favour of individuals having traits more suited to the new environment. Evolution and environmental change are therefore intimately linked.

Darwin did not understand how the successful traits were transmitted from one generation to the next. This awaited an understanding of genetics. It is now known that the traits of individuals are programmed by DNA. The nucleus in almost every one of the 10^{14} or so cells in your body contains an identical copy of your DNA, organised into 23 pairs of chromosomes (i.e. 46 in total). These chromosomes contain the genes that provide the instructions for ‘manufacturing’ your body. Unless you happen to have an identical twin, your DNA is different from everyone else’s DNA and therefore so are you. During sexual reproduction (meiosis) a fertilised egg cell receives half its DNA (i.e. one set of 23 chromosomes) from the father and half from the mother. Siblings also receive half their DNA from their father and half from their mother, but not the same halves, so each sibling will be genetically different. If an individual by chance receives DNA that provides a competitive advantage, then that individual is more likely to survive into adulthood, reproduce and transmit the beneficial DNA to the next generation.

As the theory of evolution gained acceptance, the hunt began for the ‘missing link’ between humans and our distant ancestors. Fossils provided the primary source of evidence throughout the 19th and most of the 20th centuries. By examining skeletal remains, and associated artefacts, archaeologists and physical anthropologists were able to reconstruct our origins by identifying past species that were either our ancestors or represented an evolutionary dead end. This evidence has been supplemented in recent decades by the analysis of DNA. DNA is found in some skeletons but rarely survives in skeletons more than a few thousand years old. However, the DNA of living persons provides an alternative source of invaluable information, due to the fact that it contains a record of their ancestry.

If half your DNA is inherited from each of your parents, it follows that one quarter is inherited from each of your grandparents, and so on for previous generations. Given that you do not know which chromosomes are inherited from which parent, you do not

need to go back very many generations before most of your DNA becomes impossible to disentangle. So how does DNA help?

Fortunately, there are two types of DNA that are not hopelessly jumbled. Although most chromosomes form matching pairs (one from each parent), there is one pair which do not necessarily match. These are referred to as the sex chromosomes. There are two types, called X and Y. The Y chromosome is much smaller than the X chromosome, so they cannot exchange DNA. Females carry two X chromosomes, and everyone (male or female) inherits one of these X chromosomes from their mother. Males carry an X and a Y chromosome, either of which may be inherited by their offspring. If you inherit an X chromosome from your father, giving you two X chromosomes, then you will be female; whereas if you inherit a Y chromosome, giving you an X and a Y, then you will be male. What this means is that males can only inherit their Y chromosome from their father, who inherited it from his father, and so on through the male line to the beginning of our species.

The other useful source is mitochondrial DNA. Mitochondria are tiny structures that reside in the cytoplasm that surrounds the nucleus in each cell in your body. Their function is to combine glucose molecules with oxygen in chemical reactions that release the energy that we require to survive. However, they contain small quantities of DNA (which do not form part of the 46 nuclear chromosomes). Everyone has mitochondria, but when a female sex cell (or egg) is fertilised by a male sex cell (i.e. sperm), the mitochondrial DNA in the male sex cell is destroyed. As you are derived by cell division (mitosis) from this single fertilised egg, this means that all your mitochondrial DNA, whether you are male or female, is inherited from your mother, who inherited it from her mother, and so on up the female line to the beginning of our species.

So, how does this help us understand our ancestry? If all males inherit their Y chromosome from their father, who inherited it from his father, and so on, then each male should have inherited their Y chromosome from the first male human (usually dubbed 'Adam'). However, if every male inherited their Y chromosome from Adam, then every male would be expected to have exactly the same Y chromosome DNA, which would be of no help to us. Fortunately (at least for tracing our origins), mistakes known as mutations occasionally occur when DNA is copied. These mutations are extremely rare, but if they occur in the Y chromosome of a sex cell, then they may be transmitted to the next generation. Provided they do not confer a major disadvantage in terms of survival, the new mutated DNA may then be transmitted to future generations. Thus, minor differences have emerged in the DNA in men's Y chromosomes. Where the DNA of two men differs by a single mutation, then it may be inferred that they are more closely related than if there are several differences in their DNA. By taking DNA samples from around the world, one can build up a picture of who is more closely related to whom. Also, by assuming a average rate for mutations, one can provide a guesstimate of when different groups separated from one another. By mapping these DNA 'families', one can build up a picture of past migrations.

The same applies to mitochondrial DNA. Indeed, mitochondrial DNA was studied before the Y chromosome DNA because it is less complex and has a faster mutation rate. One

slight problem is that the first woman ('Eve') seems to have lived a lot earlier than the first man, suggesting that the method of dating may not be totally reliable. However, there are other plausible explanations. Also, past movements of males and females do not always correspond, but this might indicate situations where male armies conquered new areas and mated with the local women.

So, going back to the original question: where did we come from?

Our nearest relatives in the animal world are the great apes (i.e. gorillas and chimpanzees). It would appear that we shared common ancestors until about 9-11 million years ago, at which point the gorillas followed a separate evolutionary path. Sometime later, somewhere between 4 and 9 million years ago, our human ancestors split from the chimpanzees. Estimates of the timing vary because the fossil record is extremely sparse before about 4 million years ago. Also, whilst some earlier remains may be our ancestors, we cannot be certain. The earliest definite hominin remains (which may be referred to as archaic hominins) date to around 4 million years ago. Several different species, representing either different evolutionary paths or different stages in the same path, have been identified. Many of these belong to the genus *Australopithecus* ('southern ape man') or *Paranthropus*. Around about 2 million years ago, some of these evolved into forms that are more distinctly human and are therefore classified in the same genus as ourselves (i.e. *Homo*) - e.g. *Homo habilis* ('handy man') and *Homo erectus* ('upright man').

Given that the earliest fossil remains are only found in Africa, and given that gorillas and chimpanzees are only native to Africa, there can be little doubt that we initially evolved in Africa. *Homo erectus* was the earliest to be found outside Africa. The fossil evidence suggests that some *Homo erectus* groups initially moved into the Middle East and then subsequently migrated eastwards across southern Asia and westwards across southern Europe sometime between 2 and 1 million years ago.

These pre-modern *Homo* evolved differently in different parts of the world. For example, *Homo neanderthalensis* ('Neanderthal man'), found in Europe between about 100,000 and 30,000 years ago, is descended from a pre-modern *Homo* (probably *Homo heidelbergensis*) but was replaced by *Homo sapiens* (i.e. modern humans). It was once thought that we may have evolved from the neanderthals, but DNA evidence has now confirmed that the neanderthals were a totally different species. Besides the earliest *Homo sapiens* in Europe (referred to as Cro-Magnon man) date to about 40,000 years ago, whereas the earliest *Homo sapiens* in Africa (where there were no neanderthals) date to about 200,000 years ago. The remains of *Homo sapiens* are found in almost every part of the world, but the oldest remains are all found in Africa, leaving little doubt that Africa was not only the source area for the first hominins, but also for the first modern humans. This is confirmed by the DNA evidence.

There is more genetic diversity within Africa than in the rest of the world added together, confirming that Africa has a much longer history of human habitation than anywhere else.

DNA has identified the most likely home of the original Adam and Eve as east Africa. Further, not only is the entire human race descended from Africans, but our ancestors would have been black and only acquired other skin tints when they moved to temperate countries where they did not require skin pigmentation to protect them against the sun's harmful rays - an unpalatable truth for the average white supremacist creationist!

DNA evidence now allows us to piece together a picture of past population movements. After spending the first half of their existence in Africa, *Homo sapiens* began to cross the land bridge at Suez into the Middle East no later than 90,000 years ago. By 60,000 BP they had moved east across southern Asia into India, and by 40,000 they had spread westwards into Europe. By 45,000 the Asiatic branch had reached Australia by sea (albeit a narrower sea than at present), whilst another branch (with the benefit of improvements in clothing and housing technologies) had migrated northwards into colder climes, reaching Siberia by about 20,000 BP. Sometime before 12,000 BP they crossed the narrow Bering Straits (which may have been frozen over) into Alaska, from where they migrated southwards into the Americas – the last continents to be populated.

This diffusion occurred over a long period of time, during which there were many technological advances. The development of spears with sharp heads, for example, allowed our ancestors to hunt large dangerous animals from a relatively safe distance. However, there are indications that this may have upset the balance in nature, because the arrival of *Homo sapiens* in many areas was followed shortly after by the extinction of most of the major game species. Indeed, over-hunting may have been a major factor driving our hunter-gatherer ancestors to push into ever more hostile environments.

Finding ways to compensate for the depletion in game species also provided a major spur in the development of agriculture, which was 'invented' in the Middle East about 11,000 BP (although there is evidence to suggest it was also invented, possibly even earlier, in other parts of the world). Archaeological evidence shows that it slowly diffused into Europe, reaching northwestern Europe (including Ireland) about 5,000 BP. However, it was unclear whether this diffusion was due to migration (i.e. farming peoples moving into new areas) or a cultural diffusion (i.e. the transfer of farming technologies to neighbouring peoples). There was probably an element of both, but DNA evidence has settled the debate and has confirmed that it was primarily a cultural diffusion.

Many questions still remain (e.g. why did the neanderthals become extinct soon after the arrival of humans?), but DNA evidence allows us to solve many of the mysteries about our prehistoric ancestors. However, there is one serious problem. To deconstruct the past, we need to be know the genetic characteristics of 'pure' populations, but populations are now becoming increasingly mixed due to migration and intermarriage. As this will presumably escalate with further globalisation, it means that the window of opportunity for establishing our deep ancestry may be rapidly closing.

DGP

Wells and Wellness

Dr. Ronan Foley, Department of Geography, NUI Maynooth

Introduction

Within many parts of rural Ireland, the notion of taking the ‘cure’ or bringing home water from a holy well remains a common practice. While many holy wells have fallen into disrepair or have even disappeared, they are still a living part of the Irish landscape. More than that, they form a link to both distant and recent pasts, to the pagan and the religious, the sacred and the profane. Traditionally they are represented through a mix of natural and constructed settings, though primarily the latter. Clearly there is a strong pagan link in terms of associations with healing and water, which have been superseded or perhaps more accurately, absorbed into Christian traditions. They remain in a variety of conditions. Some have been lost forever or are covered over awaiting rediscovery. Others are prominent and include well-known features of the landscape such as Lady’s Well in Mulhuddart, Faughart in County Louth and Tobernalt in County Sligo. What this paper seeks to do is to provide a brief introduction to how holy wells might be studied as elements of a therapeutic landscape.

Therapeutic Landscapes

As a health geographer I have a particular interest in the association of health and place. As a closet historical geographer I am also interested in people and time. When you start to put these things together it is easy to see why an interest might develop in the historical developments of places of wellness in Ireland. Within health geography in particular, a recent branch of the subject, primarily developed by Allison Williams, Wil Gesler and Robin Kearns, focuses on what are called ‘therapeutic landscapes’ (Williams, 1999:

Kearns and Gesler, 1998). Typically, therapeutic landscapes are characterised as places with environmental, medical, social and symbolic associations with health and wellness. Given that holy wells have associations with both spiritual and healing aspects, and also remain living parts of the landscape, it is easy to characterise them as therapeutic places. The added value of this characterisation is that it allows students of holy wells to tap into this literature and use it a lens through which to view and study the subject.

The Geography of Holy Wells

If you look at any sheet of Ordnance Survey Ireland’s 1:50,000 Discovery series, you will see a red dot with accompanying text marking a holy well. In *Gaeltacht* areas they are marked as ‘*Tobar Beannaithe*’. It is estimated that there are over 3,000 holy wells across the island of Ireland but this is likely to be an underestimate. A number of useful clues also help us uncover the geography of holy wells and help establish the role of

place names as texts to read the landscape. Anglicised version of *tobar* abound, while the word ‘well’ is also heavily used. It is also tempting to consider doing some mapping which overlays the locations of holy wells with a number of potential explanatory spatial data layers such as geology, soil and hydrogeology. There are also different geographical forms and settings with hot wells (Enfield), cold wells (Fore), saline wells (Portrane) and even small cavities in natural rock formations known as *bulllauns*. The built form of the holy wells vary greatly from small sets of stones through to the more visible grand wells exemplified by St Brigid’s in Liscannor and Kildare. Each well is often associated with a shrine and a number of other elements, which, though not found at all, are common elements. These include paths and walkways for the carrying out of stations, statues of the relevant saint with whom the well is associated, votive offerings in the forms of collections of an astonishing varieties of materials and in or beside smaller wells, rags or small pieces of cloth.

Healing Places

Patrick Logan, in his study of the holy wells of Ireland devotes a whole chapter in his book to healing at both holy wells and pilgrimages (Logan, 1980). The medical properties and curative powers associated with wells would suggest they are on a par with many a modern clinic. The range of cures associated with different wells included those for eye complaints, sick children, mental illness, headaches, backache, skin conditions, toothache, rheumatism and even fertility. In this they reflect similar water cures noted all over the globe. It is also interesting to note the overlap between cures associated with the wells and those recorded for mineral waters and spa wells (Rutty, 1757). Typically the visitor came and washed the afflicted part with well water and then deposited the piece of cloth they used at the well to symbolically ‘leave the disease’ behind. These rags or bits of cloth were often hung on a nearby tree, hence the frequency of what were known as ‘rag wells’. Alternatively bottles of the healing water were taken home and used in domestic settings. There are echoes of produce placement in this process whereby people travelled to the place to remove the product. The only difference here was that the product was, and remains primarily free. This may account for the regard that many poorer Irish people may have had in the past for what might be labelled as the ‘people’s pharmacy’.

Accessibility and Utilisation

The visitor base for holy wells was primarily a local one though bigger centres had wider catchments. Historically people came from the local area and had a place-locale affiliation with the well. Each well was traditionally associated with a specific saint and this had a wider devotional significance as well. Travel to the wells was often difficult, given the relative remoteness of some of the sites. A small but regular trickle/flow did occur around most sites though this was more fully expressed in a strong seasonal utilisation associated with patron’s or ‘pattern’ days. These were associated with five key dates, the patron saint’s birthday but also with the four seasonal markers of the pre-Christian calendar,

namely *Imbolc* (February 1st), *Bealtaine* (May 1st), *Lunasa* (August 1st) and *Samhain* (November 1st). In fact most of the pattern day activities started on the eve of the above days. The pattern day at Liscannor was a great favourite of the islanders of Inisheer, who in turn were attractions as fine musicians who would play through the night. Pattern days were often surprisingly bacchanalian affairs, given the supposed piety of the devotions. It was regularly recorded that once the ‘rounds’ (sets of prayers) were out of the way the fun began. All night drinking, dancing and fighting sessions were so common that a most unholy of alliances, the Catholic Church and the Colonial Government, jointly tried to have pattern days banned throughout the late 18th and 19th centuries. Nowadays visiting is more haphazard, though pattern days are still marked in many locations and keep that link to the past. There is also a suggestion, from visiting a number of wells, that they are becoming places of memory, given that many votive offerings relate to the deaths of children and young people.

Conclusion

This short summary is intended to act merely as a taster for geography students who might develop an interest in the relationships between health and place. On a recent field trip to North Clare, I was struck by how a stop at St. Brigid’s Well in Liscannor (Figure 1 below) seemed to strike a chord with students. Granted it is a particularly spectacular example of a holy well complete with a passageway to the well festooned with the most bewildering variety of votive offerings. However when asked, there appeared to be an awareness in most of the students of other holy wells they knew themselves in their local areas. Perhaps that interest can be awakened in the future by more students doing projects on this topic. While Heritage Officers in most Irish counties have promoted books about holy wells, and these are a good starting point, it might be useful to develop a deeper knowledge and understanding around the well as a therapeutic landscape. Given a growing interest in new understandings of health within society as a whole, the connection between the old and the new, between wells and wellness, seems ripe for further exploration.

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Figure 1. Interior of St. Brigid's Well, Liscannor, County Clare.

A geographer loose in Hawaii

Dr Shelagh Waddington, Lecturer, NUI Maynooth

First a defence – yes I did go to Hawaii in January, yes I did swim in the Pacific and sit on a sandy beach or two, *but* I really did go to the Hawaii International Conference on Education, and I not only gave two presentations, but I went to the Conference Sessions [honest!!].

I have always wanted to visit Hawaii and when the conference was advertised I decided that I would submit papers and, if one was accepted, then I would take the opportunity

to fulfil my dream. Not one but two were accepted – one based on work done in GY 201 and GY 202 – so thank you very much for your efforts at reflecting on your work. The other was related to a Computer Science project – pause for first years who saw me try to log in to Moodle at the start of the year – to laugh or express serious doubt. I was really delighted in August – nearer to the time I started to get worried. I actually *had* to make two presentations in front of an unknown number of Americans and other people. The geography paper was fine – the students had actually done the work, all I had to do was write about it. The Computer Science one was a bit harder – it involved some testing which had not been done by August, it still hadn't been done in September, October or November..... However, it was done in December, so I was all set to talk about computer facilitated learning (while praying nobody would ask me anything about technical things).

On 3 January I duly headed off to the east. Yes, I do know Hawaii is in the Pacific, i.e. a long way west of Dublin, but KLM's hub is Amsterdam, so that's where I went to board a flight to Portland, Oregon. It took more than eight hours to travel from a decidedly damp and dreary Dublin to a fairly similar Portland. The final stage of the journey took 5 hours from Portland to Honolulu. It felt rather odd to have gone through immigration already, when I was now about to set off on a 5 hour journey across the Pacific away from continental USA on an *internal* flight. The flight was rather bumpy – my seat mate told me that it was always like this in January and February. The flight was my first real initiation into what it was like to live in the middle of the Pacific on small islands. Isolation from the rest of the US even in these days of jet travel is a major feature of life.

When I finally arrived at my hotel in Waikiki I had been travelling for a very long time and it was still the same day as when I left home, although late at night. I think that day lasted about 28 hours for me. What was immediately striking was that at 11.15 at night, I had no need of even a sweater. My padded jacket (necessary in Dublin) had come on its holiday.

Next day, I finally saw the Pacific and Waikiki Beach. The Pacific was every bit as blue as the travel agents want us to believe and the sand was white and shining. The temperature was and the sun shone (just like Dublin in January). However, what the tour companies didn't point out was that the strip of sand is quite narrow and is packed with people, or that the sand grains are quite large and *very* sharp – so strolling on the beach was not as enjoyable as might be expected. Still, eating pineapple watching the Pacific Ocean wasn't all bad!

Waikiki is the major holiday spot on Oahu (the island where Honolulu is located). There are huge numbers of high rise hotels – rather like some parts of Spain – and lots of very smart (and very expensive shops). 'Natural and unspoiled' is not what Waikiki does. A phenomenon of Waikiki is the number of convenience shops (ABC stores). There is at least one in the front of all of the hotels facing the shore, plus more in other streets

(usually one per block). They sell virtually identical goods and none seem about to fail because of lack of business. Local people joke about them – but it would be interesting to map them and to look at how they all manage to stay in business.

One evening during the conference we had a ‘cultural’ evening when we were taken to a luau. This involved driving to a beach – beautiful if you didn’t notice the industrial estate next door! We sat at tables and a ‘traditional’ Hawaiian meal was prepared. The impressive dish of the evening was Kalua pig, cooked by placing hot rocks into a pit lined with banana leaves. Traditionally the pig was just wrapped in the leaves – now it is also encased in a wire mesh to prevent it disintegrating – somewhat spoiling the effect. It was removed by two decidedly hunky young men – everything has its compensations! There was music and hula and other types of dancing. It was really enjoyable, but how ‘traditional’ it was must be much more open to question.

One feature of this trip (and of most of the organised tours in Hawaii) was that the drivers and guides all made a great feature of family – a strong tradition in the islands. Everybody was a cousin and we were always being encouraged to participate in greetings, introductions and other ways to interact. You did get to talk to people, but I wasn’t quite sure that I was really keen on some of my new ‘relatives’!! This could just be my English origins emerging, of course.

A feature of the isolation of Hawaii is cost – housing is considerably more expensive than on the mainland because of lack of local building materials. Food, clothes and other necessities are also often much more than in the rest of the USA – although food portions are every bit as overwhelming in size!

After duly spending my time at the Conference, I was then free to explore on my own for a while. So my first task was to go and look at some volcanic activity. Oahu has not had active volcanoes for a very, very long time, so I had to go to Hawaii (or Big Island) to satisfy my needs. To make the trip, I sacrificed sleep and got up in time to take a flight at 6.15 a.m. This required leaving my hotel at 4.30 – but intrepid geographers are prepared to make sacrifices in our thirst for learning. So I finally got to see Mauna Loa and Kilauea, volcanoes about which I had written with great confidence when I was at school and even taught children about when I worked in second level. I saw black sand – eroded lava and walked on lava (well, solidified lava anyway) which was beautifully ropery in appearance and called pahoehoe and also aa lava (ragged and clinkery). Hawaiian is a fantastic language – very few letters, and so each is well used! For those who are into these things – the chemical composition of both is the same, just the conditions in which they flowed are different, hence the difference in appearance. I visited Volcanoes National Park and saw fumeroles venting sulphur (and was pretty well fumigated myself) and walked through a lava tube. Despite the fact that Kilauea has been erupting continuously since 1983, I didn’t actually get to see any lava flowing down a mountainside. This was not because it would be too dangerous – the lava flows sufficiently slowly that you

are unlikely to be swamped by it – but because the area which is currently active is not accessible by road. However, I did acquire photographs not just from a post card, but also from the newspapers. While the eruption is hardly a new story, one section of Big Island is about to be inundated by lava, and people have been evacuated. Home insurance is a big issue – hence the newspaper coverage!

My other volcano experience was much nearer to my hotel – climbing Diamond Head, a volcanic crater near to Waikiki. This had been used by the military as part of the defences of Hawaii and so steps and tunnels (plus gun emplacements) had been built through one part of the volcano wall. The guide books all agreed that you must take a torch to walk through these tunnels, so I duly bought one. However, it was perfectly easy to see without – maybe torch manufacturers have some input into this. The view from the top was superb – and I felt really good as I was one of the few people there who wasn't desperately gasping for breath after the climb in the high temperature. Maybe the visits to the gym are really of some use!!

My visit to the Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbour was very moving. The USS Arizona was sunk in 1941 during the Japanese attack. It has been left in place where it sunk as a memorial to the 1177 sailors who died on board and to the others who died elsewhere. There is a building over part of the wreck and a whole wall covered with the names of the dead. It was extremely moving to stand gazing down at the ship and seeing the small bubbles of oil which are still escaping today. Learning about the degree of failure to anticipate attack and of communications between the authorities which contributed to the scale of the disaster, made the monument even more poignant.

On a lighter note, I also saw some of the famous surfing beaches (sadly without amazingly fit and handsome surfers as the waves weren't good enough on the day I went). This may explain why I came back to Maynooth, but I'm not sure about this. This trip also included a visit to a Japanese Temple – a really convincing, genuinely active one. However, unlike those in Japan this one was built not of wood, but of concrete made to look like wood. Not because Japanese Hawaiians have no sense of tradition, but heat, humidity and termites would destroy a wooden one in a very short time.

A final experience of the visit was a trip to a school in Honolulu on a very hot day. I was delighted to feel right at home there – students and school felt just like schools elsewhere. One reason for feeling at home was that our guide talked a great deal about issues relating to funding. The school really needed new buildings, these had been approved and then the funding wasn't provided – where has this sort of story been heard before! Why the reference to the heat of the day – schools are not air-conditioned in Hawaii, because [guess?] – yes, it would cost too much. However, it was pointed out that they were built with wide porches, which helped to keep the classrooms cool and, of course, that they avoided contributing to global warming!

I saw much else in Hawaii and came home feeling that I had had a wonderful experience and gained a great insight into this very different environment from Ireland. I am not proposing to emigrate, but it was tempting!!! The islands are wonderful places to visit, especially in January, when the weather at home is so different!! I am truly grateful that NUIM has the break in January when students are either studying or doing exams – thank you students!!!

Mobile Hibernia: ICTs and the transformation of Irish urban space over time

John Watters, Post Graduate, NUI Maynooth.

The eighties are over. Economic and social depression has been firmly imprinted on a nation stifled by stagnation and mass emigration. The turn of the decade is a leap into the unknown. Few could tolerate another decade replicating the previous one. The global economic system is ever evolving, the engine of world economies is no longer tied exclusively with manufacturing or tourism, new niches are constantly being exploited. This is what happened in Ireland in the last decade of the twentieth century. Enter a new concept which would lend itself to an ambitious economic recovery process. Enter a new concept that would imprint itself on not only the economic fabric of the country, but on the social and cultural fabrics too. Enter the information society.

The information society has helped fuel vast economic, social and cultural transformations in a maturing country. The Irish city would become the national generator of this transformation to an information society. Having a primate system as Ireland does, Dublin of course was going to become the major centre of innovation in ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in the Irish context. The great literary innovation of the last century, Joyce's *Ulysses*, is quite an illuminating analogy. Leopold Bloom consumed a city which resembled a village. Bloom's navigation turned up many manifestations of an economically depressed, but a culturally enriched regional capital. This was 1904. The most important urban infrastructures were the roads, the tramways, and the telegraph poles. Over one hundred years later and Dublin, a fast growing national capital relies on a new type of infrastructure. While roads and tramways are still important, a new type of infrastructure means for many of its dwellers, the aforementioned do not play as big a part in their lives. Enter fibre optic cables, masts and satellites. The Irish city is a city of wires.

Information Society in the wider communication history context

Communication has been central to the evolution of humankind over time. The operation of a tribe, of a community, of even the family unit necessitates established and effective communication systems. The most modern expression of this is what concerns this article. However the era of ICT communication forms part of a sequence that

predates even the birth of Christ. Where does ICT fit in to this sequence? Fig.1 presents a chronology of the major developments of communication technology over time:

Fig.1

3500 BC	The Phoenicians develop an alphabet
1400 BC	Oldest record of writing – in China
900 BC	The very first postal service – for government use in China
305	First wooden printing press invented in China
1049	First moveable type invented
1450	First newspapers appear in Europe
1560	Camera Obscura invented
1814	Joseph Nicéphore Niépce achieves the first photographic image
1843	Samuel Morse invents the first long distance electric telegraph line
1902	Guglielmo Marconi transmits the first radio signal across the Atlantic Ocean
1910	Thomas Edison demonstrated the first talking motion Picture
1925	John Logie Baird transmits the first experimental television signal
1944	Computers like Harvard's Mark 1 put into public service - government owned – the age of information science begins
1951	Computers are first sold commercially
1969	ARPANET – the first internet began
1979	First cellular telephone communication network started in Japan. AMPS (Advanced Mobile Phone Service) becomes the first mobile network in the United States to be trialed.
1980	Sony Walkman invented
1981	IBM PC first sold first laptop computer sold to the public C-Netz cellular system begins operating in Germany, Austria, Portugal and South Africa.
1983	The AMPS mobile phone network goes commercial in Chicago.
1985	Cellular telephones in cars become widespread. TACS (Total Access Communications Systems) offers mobile telephone communication infrastructure in UK, Italy, Spain, Austria, and Ireland. Eircell, a subsidiary of the state owned telecommunication company, Telecom Eireann, becomes Ireland's first mobile phone network
1988	IRC (Internet Relay Chat) developed at the University of Oula, Finland
1991	The Gulf War becomes the first news event in the world to be reported on in real time, through IRC
1994	The US government releases control of the internet and the World Wide Web (WWW) is formed
1996	Esat Digifone is awarded Ireland's second commercial mobile phone license
2001	Meteor becomes Ireland's third commercial mobile phone operator
2008	The i-Phone, combining telephone, SMS, still and recording camera, and iPod is released as the most dramatic amalgamation of multi-media applications to date...

Places are becoming increasingly connected, global networks are forming, each new technological innovation attempts to connect people in different places in new ways, over

time – postal services, the telegraph, the telephone, the computer. Geographers such as Kitchin and Turkle have written much on the shrinking of time and space in the era of globalisation. The timeline demonstrates early innovations in communication such as the devising of an alphabet in China or the publication of the first newspaper in Europe. These are local events which had very little penetration outside their respective jurisdiction for many centuries, while space and time was shrunk within these areas there was no concept of the global. What characterises contemporary developments in information and communication applications is the global reach of these. Of course many parts of the developing world are still pretty much on the edge, however it is the economic and social conditions of these countries that inhibits ICT saturation, and not technological inability. As a result of this, for the developed world and much of the former communist world, increasing interaction at an ever increasing pace is producing a global village.

The global village is a networked village. From the micro-network of ARPANET in 1969 to the World Wide Web of the last decade, the reach of interlinking networks has expanded at a vast pace. People are being connected to new places in a variety of ways. The year 1969 on the timeline marks a watershed in this process, the nature of innovations in communication technologies has made the transition from local connectivity to global connectivity. A further dimension is added to this from 1979 – mobility. Communicating and information seeking is no longer fixed in place. New opportunities are now offered to the individual to communicate from infrastructurally remote locations thanks to satellite technology.

“Since its inception billions of years ago, the evolution of life on earth has been shaped by two highly consistent physical constraints: 1. Physical proximity was always a precondition for organisms to initiate and maintain interactive relations, 2. Stable dwelling places were necessary for the development of more complex forms of communication and cooperation” (Geser, 2003, 2)

Geser’s contextualisation of the evolution of communication modes within an overall human evolutionary perspective is a useful one. This highlights one encompassing factor that dictated humanity’s communication patterns over time – *place*. Communication was *place* specific, communication occurred in *place*. What happened, however, when communication began to open itself up into *space*?

The spatialisation of communication gave rise to a communication revolution. One factor in particular can be identified as the catalyst of this process – *mobility*. Zygmunt Bauman’s (1998, 79) argument that “no space-scale is in principle too big for the explorer of new sensations” captures the essence of this phenomenon as the increasing mobilisation of people and technology results in a shrinking of space and an annihilation of time.

“The shrinking of space abolishes the flow of time” (Bauman, 1998, 88)

Removing communication modes from fixed points afforded humans with new possibilities both in the way they communicate, and the frequency they communicate. This undoubtedly has led to a reorganisation of the way in which society operates, and as a result has reconfigured the contemporary city. New spaces both physical and virtual have emerged as predominant features of the urban streetscape – internet cafés, mobile phone stores, social venues with wireless connections, international call shops – have now placed communication at a premium in the postmodern city. One can navigate the city more effectively with the ability to contact others and access information afforded by new ICT devices. The city is a vast myriad of wireless networks.

“Cyberspace provides an interesting context to acknowledge the role of space in social relations because it has been suggested that it fundamentally alters space-time relations and also provides a new space of interaction, devoid of physicality” (Kitchin, 1997, 150)

ICTs and urban and social transformations in an economically vibrant Ireland

The Engines of Change

The traditional Irish love for communicating by telling stories both in word and in written form is undoubtedly expressed this century by our enthusiastic reception for new communication technologies. It is important here to take a brief look at the most recent developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) as they are manifest in Ireland. For example, the number of mobile phone subscriptions in the state was 4.9 million according to the most recent data in 2007. Similarly broadband subscriptions have increased by almost 400% in the last two years rising from 212,200 in the third quarter of 2005 to 793,600 for the same quarter in 2007. (Comstat, 2008). This is out of a population of 4.2 million. A consumer ICT Survey which was published in February 2008, and conducted by Millward Brown IMS on behalf of Comreg is quite illuminating. Rolling data shows an increase of mobile phone ownership from 37% of those surveyed in 2000 to 90% in 2007, while fixed line ownership has decreased from 82% in 2000 to 68% in 2007. Mobile phone ownership was found to be almost universal among respondents under 50 years. In terms of PC ownership, the survey found that 54% of households now own a PC or laptop, with laptop ownership doubling from 11% to 22% between 2006 and 2007. 66% of those surveyed in Dublin claimed to own either a PC or a laptop or both. This survey was conducted among a nationally representative sample of adults between the age of 15 and 74 throughout the Republic of Ireland.

What is the significance of this data? The significance lies in the fact that all this most effectively demonstrates that the most recent technological innovations have been characterised by the mobilisation of technology. The Personal Computer, then the laptop

computer and most recently the mobile phone all mobilise our means of communication. This of course means that people have become more mobile, no longer fixed in places for the purposes of communicating with absent others. This has radically altered the dynamics of the City. The city is mobilised.

Revealing statistics such as those above also pose many questions about the changing nature of a country once fervently steeped in high moral Catholicism and a primarily agrarian outlook. It will be argued here that the interplay of two processes set in train the transition to the Irish society of the twenty-first century: urbanisation and secularisation. Early perceptions of 'the city' revolved around it being a primarily English concept and to quote Dublin's most famous artist, Joyce, as a "centre of paralysis" (Kiberd, 2002, 220). At the beginning of the last century Kiberd (ibid, 223) argues that "Dublin was a classic Third World Capital, a centre dominated by the cultural values of the peasant periphery...". What fashioned Dublin as a progressive First World capital, and as the engine of an economically vibrant country?

To answer that question the notion of urbanisation must be first acknowledged. According to the 2006 census of population, almost 35% of the population now live in the state's five largest urban centres alone, 28% of this segment of the population living in Dublin alone. A recent government attempt to decentralise public jobs from the capital essentially aims to spread some of the capital's populous to other urban centres, hence further boosting their populations while the population of Dublin continues to grow with a steady influx of immigrants from the recently expanded European Union in particular. The deterioration of the agriculture sector over time, coupled with the growth of the service and IT sectors has also served to render the countryside as economically unattractive while placing greater emphasis on the city for commercial endeavour. It can be argued that this shift from the rural to the urban has been accompanied by considerable moral, social, and cultural transformations.

Perhaps the catalyst of this transformation has been the secularisation of Irish society. From what was Europe's most devout Catholic state as recently as the Papal visit in 1979, to one of its most secular Catholic states this century, huge shifts in the country's moral climate have taken place. These have been very often promoted by government policies such as the legalisation of contraception, several, albeit failed attempts to legalise abortion, the legalisation of homosexual acts and the legalisation of divorce. These have undoubtedly become imprinted on society, and resulted in a somewhat more open-minded country in the twenty-first century.

Underwriting all this is sweeping economic transformations. A growth in production in the IT sector and a major reduction in unemployment gave birth to a new confidence in Ireland as a country, and optimism not witnessed since the 1960s. Combined with major moves towards urbanisation over time and an increasing openness to new ideas the economic, social and cultural climates were just right to introduce that new concept that was going to ensure Ireland would become a leader in innovation and technology – the

information society. This was to become a major strand of government policy through two main arenas: education and a reorganisation of the communication sector. The major government initiatives designed to promote the transition to an information society are delineated in the timeline below in Fig.2. The progression of government policy over the 20 year period 1983 to 2003 is one of the factors pertaining to an information society. This article notes some of these key policy moves as a reaction to global technological developments:

Fig. 2

- 1983 Postal and Telecommunications Services Act, 1983**
providing for the establishment of Telecom Eireann and An Post
telecommunications is now provided by a semi-state body
- 1984 Telecom Eireann launch Ireland's first mobile telephone service provider – Eircell**
- 1987 Science and Technology Act, 1987**
formation of a single government body to promote research in science and technology
- 1992 Dublin Institute of Technology Act, 1992**
Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992
third level institutes which focus specifically in training and research in the areas of science and technology, integrated with business and commerce, are established by the government
- 1996 Telecommunications Act, 1996**
the establishment of a director of telecommunications regulation
Second license for the operation of a mobile phone network awarded to **Esat Digifone**
- 1997 Scientific and Technological Education (Investment) Fund Act, 1997**
the government provides additional financial resources for educational training in the field of science and technology
“IT 2000 – A Policy Framework for the New Millennium”
a national policy for ICT in schools is unveiled by the government
- 1999 “Ireland’s Broadband Strategy”** launched by the government
Information Society Commission established as an advisory body to the government, reporting directly to the Taoiseach
Action plan to implement information society in Ireland launched by the government
Information Society Fund established by the government
- 2000 National Development Plan 2000-2006** launched
further investment in science, technology, and telecommunication infrastructure provided by government over a sustained six year period
REACH established by the government to integrate public services and develop and implement the framework for e-government

- 2001** Government privatise Telecom Eireann – **Eircom** formed competition now introduced to the Irish telecoms market
Third mobile phone operator licence awarded to **Meteor**
- 2002** **Communications Regulation Act, 2002**
Comreg formed to regulate the Irish communications industry
“New Connections”
Government project launched to “ensure that Ireland establishes itself as a world leading location for e-business and knowledge-based economic activity
- 2003** Government initiative to provide all schools in the state with broadband internet access over a three year period is launched
Digital Hub Development Agency Act, 2003
Government legislate for the establishment of the Digital Hub in the Liberties area of Dublin
Broadband Action Plan launched by government
An initiative to provide 88 towns or 350,000 people with high speed internet connectivity

The first major government move feeding in to what can be described as an ICT revolution was the establishment of Telecom Eireann, the successor to Post and Telegraphs. This gave one company the responsibility for providing the national telecommunication service, as opposed to being merely a department in a broader based company. The way was paved for innovations in telecommunications, and the first such innovation came a year later in 1984 with the establishment of Eircell, the country’s first mobile telephone operator. This demonstrates an early move by government to prioritise telecommunication development. More recent initiatives such as the privatisation of the telecommunication market in 2001 has further revolutionised the organisation of telecommunications in this country and has introduced competition, and of course competition always results in improved services and more affordable prices for the consumer.

If one focuses attention on education, moves such as the establishment of what are now called the institutes of technology must be viewed as working in tandem with other technological developments in producing the contemporary communication revolution. These institutions provide training in IT, integrated with commerce to train students specifically for employment in this area. Government objectives such as providing internet access to every school child in the state provides earlier training in basic computer and internet skills, hence making these students’ adaptability to, and dependence on, new technologies even greater than with previous generations.

Of course this analysis is all very abstract, the reality on the ground does not match the theory at the heart of government. Not every school has broadband, or indeed a full compliment of PCs, and Eircom’s domination of the telecommunications market still exists, in spite of deregulation. Accessibility to ICT is not evenly distributed, and as suggested by Castells (1996) in particular, there are disadvantaged groups in the area of technology also.

ICT Ireland is an interesting case of a non-governmental organisation involved in the roll out and maintenance of the information society. ICT Ireland is a conglomerate organisation established in 2001 as a representative lobby group for the ICT sector in Ireland. The organisation has clear policies and objectives which it represents to government and state agencies. The underlying premise of the organisation is to assist in Ireland realising its potential as a world leader in the ICT industry. For the year 2004 for example, ICT Ireland set out a number of key policy priorities. These include aiding the penetration of ICT application through all strata of society by focusing on the education system and the integration of ICT into the education cycles to improve “eliteracy” in schools. It is also adopted policy to increase ICT penetration in the home and see through the provision of high speed internet access across the country. Other policies include the promotion of the ICT sector in Ireland as solid and long-term in order to attract third level graduates into the sector, encourage the expansion of e-government services, encourage research and development in the sector in Ireland by closer collaboration with third level institutions, encourage the growth of the indigenous ICT sector, and to impress on government the significance of FDI to this sector and the ongoing threat such companies pulling out.

Understanding recent socio-spatial transformations in urban Ireland

Recent literature concerning the individual in the postmodern city by the likes of Hagerstrand and Sonnabend in particular, reveal new ways of imagining the city in the twenty-first century. According to Hagerstrand (Thrift, 2005) the individual navigates his/her way through the city in “time-space paths”, Sonnabend (2003) refers to these as “flows”. The spaces now accessible and the time in which they are reachable are dynamic and multifarious. The spaces we can consume are both real and virtual. Our time patterns are fluid. We can “multi-task” while consuming several spaces at the same time. All of this occurs at an ever accelerating pace.

The mobile phone market is an interesting representation of the above in an Irish context. The mobile marketing forum published a very illuminating report on the Irish appetite for mobile services in October 2005. The results of the survey conducted for this report reveal some interesting facts about the personal attachment Irish people have to their mobile phones. For example four out of five people surveyed admitted they would use their phones to flirt with somebody they had recently met. Thirty-five percent said they would ask somebody out on a date by text, or SMS, while eleven percent revealed they have sent more than fifty text messages in one day. These are quite astonishing statistics, to send more than fifty text messages in one day reveals the depth of an individual’s reliance on the mobile phone as a communication tool. Conducting personal activities such as flirting or asking somebody on a date indicates that for some Irish people, the mobile phone is more than a merely functional communicative device, and suggests it has become an integral part of some Irish people’s daily lives. The report does indeed conclude that Irish consumers are “way ahead” of their international counterparts when

it comes to mobile phone adoption, a finding supported by the fact that over nine million SMS messages are sent in Ireland every day. To use just one comparison, this is three times as many text messages per person than the UK.

The Irish city may not have been a leader in most communication innovations over the centuries but has nonetheless adopted them and made them its own. Indeed within the Irish city many communicative techniques have been used in a variety of exemplary artistic and functional ways. If writing itself is considered as a means of communication, the Irish city has produced many of the most prolific writers of the last few centuries from Swift to Joyce to Beahan. Indeed the canonical book of the last century, *Ulysses*, recounts Leopold Bloom's urban experience on one particular day in 1904. Bloom navigates the city through spaces and time, consuming its many characteristics and its people. One can read Joyce's *Ulysses* in many ways, the most popular being as a stream of consciousness, but an alternative way might be as an early twentieth century urban social geography.

One hundred years later, and Joyce's Dublin is utterly transformed – from the worst slum in Europe to the engine of a 'tiger' economy, albeit a fading one. This has fuelled an economic prosperity and an open mindedness which has firmly imprinted itself on twenty-first century communication systems. If Joyce was writing *Ulysses* now it would most probably be on his laptop – not in Bewley's Oriental Café – but in Starbucks or some other continental style café which provides a wireless internet connection! Leopold Bloom's observations would be quite different – he'd perhaps marvel at the plethora of ethnic identities, the congestion of a city in overload, and the ubiquitous sound of mobile phone's ringing for example, rather than rat infested street sewers or tea parties along the quays.

How has this new Irish urbanity 'imprinted' itself on twenty-first century communication? Firstly it can be argued that our adoption of new means of communication has become more enthusiastic than in previous centuries. This is owed to two factors I argue – greater economic prosperity making new communicative devices affordable and therefore widely accessible. Secondly the desire to engage with new communicative devices springs from two different sources. Firstly the historical love of the Irish people to communicate, and secondly an exposure to new cultures and an open mindedness to try new technologies and to increase further our standard of living. This argument has found quantitative evidence while researching this article with the finding that almost every citizen possesses a mobile phone for example.

The Irish city is expanding both spatially and in population. Major 'edge city' developments such as City West in Dublin or Mahon Point in Cork are eating into the surrounding countryside thus expanding the reach of the urban system. The population of Dublin has exceeded one million and now stands at 1.19 million people for example (Census 2006). Ireland as a country is continuing to become more urbanised. What is interesting for this discussion is that while the urban centres are physically expanding, they are also shrinking...

This can be explained by the notion of the ‘city of wires’, to borrow Kitchin’s (1998) metaphor. The city has become connected up, or more to the point the city dweller has become more connected to other city dwellers and to information. This was documented here by the idea of a new communication mobility at work in the city. Since the introduction of the car phone which resulted in Ireland from the formation of Eircell in 1985, this trend to mobilise our communication devices was set in train. Over twenty years later the car phone has disappeared and been replaced by the much more chic mobile phone – its mobility rendering the ownership of a car phone pointless. Over twenty years later even more choices will be introduced and costs will tumble. The iPhone is currently being rolled out in Ireland as the next ‘must have’ personal organisational and entertainment device. Similarly the internet is almost accessible as the mobile phone, most city streets now contain at least one internet café, if you don’t have your own internet access that is, which has become cheaper and more convenient with the advent of broadband, or failing that many public spaces now offer wireless internet connections for your laptop computer.

A whole plethora of tasks can now be conducted without leaving your home, you can book a flight while catching up on the daily news while perhaps chatting to a friend on messenger on your laptop, while at the same time sending SMS texts to your partner on your mobile phone. You can navigate the city without leaving your own space. You are the twenty-first century Leopold Bloom.

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‘So you think your Celtic? Think again...!’

Ali Robinson, Post Graduate, NUI Maynooth

Evidence does not support large-scale Celtic invasion and suppression of the original inhabitants on the Island of Ireland. It is more indicative of progressive integration of populations through trade and small-scale settlement of foreign tribes during the La Tene era (450 BC to early AD). The term Celt or Keltoi has been used as a generic umbrella to describe tribes from as far as the Iberian Peninsula to the Caspian Sea and Baltic states. The idea of widespread invasion and colonisation in Europe by the ‘Celts’ is increasingly seen to be an incorrect assumption and the term ‘Celtic’ is inaccurate in describing an entire unique culture.

In Ireland's case, the word Celtic is so deeply embedded with everything we associate with Irishness that many of us have never stopped to consider that the genetic make up of the Irish gene pool goes back 1000's of years further to a time when the last ice sheets

were retreating from Europe and the idea of a Celt was unheard of...Iconic writers such as Lady Gregory and WB Yeats did much to bring about the Irish literary revival and in doing so established an identity for a young nation, an identity lavish with warrior heroes' mythical intrigue and a sense of individualism, however, this more recent identity has buried beneath it, a more ancient Irishness that, through genetic research, is finally seeing the light of day.

Climate played its part in the Irish population's evolution. The first evidence of Neolithic inhabitation is circa 7000 BC... Genetic evidence shows that three quarters of our ancestors came to Ireland and Britain between 15000 & 7500 years ago. The arrival of hunter-gatherers to the island of Ireland was made possible by the retreating ice sheets around 13,000 BP. It has been suggested by Oppenheimer (2006) that Iberians migrated from the south and central Iberian Peninsula and simply walked along the Atlantic coast until they reached Ireland, this being possible as a land bridge between Ireland and Europe had not yet become flooded due to the retreating ice.

There is mention in old Irish texts of pre Celtic societies in Ireland; however, in the absence of the written record the references to these ancient peoples are taken from memories and stories relayed through the thousands of years from generation to generation to the point where it is impossible to establish historic accuracy. None the less it is important that we are aware of a far more ancient genetic link to the past than that of the Celts. It is no coincidence that our Irish familiarity with the Celts coincides with the introduction of the written word to Ireland circa 400AD.

Neolithic (Partholonians Nemed Fir Bolg Tuatha de Dannan Celts Vikings

7000 BC

2678 BC 1932 BC

450 BC 795 AD

With regard to our obsession and embedded Celtic identity, what is the basis for this? Is there actual evidence of Celtic settlement in Ireland and if so were the Celts in Ireland a result of an Invasion or was it an assimilation of culture over time? And, whose culture was finally assimilated, the visitor or the native?

These peoples were part of a European-wide fragmented tribal Celtic identity as distinct from a 'Celtic Empire' and there is evidence to suggest they arrived in Ireland in and around the 5th and 4th centuries BC and became an integral part of Irish life. The evidence does not support invasion and widespread settlement by these 'Celts'.

The earlier Celtic cultures of Halstatt were Bronze Age, the later cultures were of the La Tene period, which was predominately Iron Age and has distinct archaeological features that can be identified in Irish found artefacts. It is generally considered that, in Ireland, the larger representational era is that of La Tene (450 BC to early AD).

Iron was a means to an end for the Celts and the smelting and forging of weaponry in Iron gave these militant peoples an advantage over local adversaries. It is possible that migrations and forays by the Celts to new lands including Ireland and England may have been incorporated into a search for iron ore. "Iron ore occurs in Ireland, an important source being the interbalastic laterites in Co. Antrim but bog-ore could also have been

used”.¹

Regardless of the motives for settlement, some evidence of their settlement in Ireland is apparent in literary recordings and historic accounts, which came initially from traders and sailors visiting Irish shores and elaborated on by Roman writers such as Strabo 63 BC-24 AD and Diodorus 90 BC who include in their geographical and historic accounts, maps of the Celtic tribes in both Britain and Ireland. The most famous is a map drawn by Ptolemy. In his ‘Map of Ireland’, circa 150 AD he records Celtic tribe names found in Ireland some of which are recognised as coming from Britain and European Celtic tribes. An example of which would be the Monaig, also found in Gaul and the Brigantes, also found in Northern England.

“The most important classical author to write on Hibernia was the 2nd-century AD geographer Ptolemy, who gives a remarkably accurate description of the country, including the names of the principal rivers, promontories, seaports, and inland towns”.²

Whilst there is little written commentary on Ireland at this time and the accounts compiled from 100 AD onwards may be embellished, Ptolemy’s map does record Keltoi tribes in Ireland.



(Ptolemy’s’ Map of Ireland, circa 150 AD)

There is some archaeological evidence to support the settlement of Celts in Ireland. Halstatt artefacts are not represented to any great extent in Ireland however La Tenne is evident.

The La Tene style is typified by curvilinear ornamentation, spirals and floral patterns influenced by the Etruscan and Greek civilisations. La Tene design was representative of the Celtic culture from aprox 450 BC to early AD and is found on artefacts throughout modern day Europe.

The ‘Broughter Hoard’ found in Derry contains La Tene artefacts. Michael Avery, in his

1 Michael Herity and George Eogan, *Ireland in Prehistory*, pg 223

2 M Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia, *Hibernia*

article for the Journal of Irish Archaeology says “The decorated gold torc or collar found with other gold items on the foreshore of Lough Foyle, Co. Derry is regularly illustrated as one of the glories of Irish La Tene art”.³ This hoard clearly puts a Celtic presence in Ulster at the La Tene period; however, this fact does not necessarily mean that it was made by settled Celts in Ireland. It may have been brought across from the continent by traders. However, Avery makes a further point, “Ulster craftsmen understood and exploited the changing fashions of the contemporary continent”.⁴ In order to do this they would have needed communication and Celtic influence to be present in their lives.

La Tene style swords have been found in the hill fort of Dun Ailinne in co. Kildare and a sword hilt or head of La Tene style was found near Ballyshannon in Co. Donegal.

Hill forts are evident in many counties of Ireland and have some features similarly found in European Celtic type fort sites such as defensive wall design technique called Vallete. There is a Tri Vallete fort in Co. Wicklow called Rathgall; however it is not as developed as European Celtic ring forts. The traditional Celtic ‘Oppida’ forts found in Europe are not evident in Ireland.

This modification of Tri-Vallete design and complete lack of Oppida forts may hint at the influence by the older cultures already established in Ireland causing newly arriving Celts to adapt to existing environments?

There are three significant sites in Ireland that are traditionally and probably incorrectly associated with the Celts in Ireland and appear in the ‘Heroic Tales’. Emain Macha in Antrim, Tara in Meath and Dun Ailinne in Kildare...

These sites were not built as settlement sites and originated 1000’s of years before Celtic culture is noted in Ireland, the megalithic tomb at Tara dated as far back as 2800 BC.

These structures were originally built for ritual purposes and some earthen mounds used for burial. Despite this, Emain Macha has historically been associated with the settlement of ruling Celtic clan of ‘Ulaid’ and this clan is clearly written on Ptolemy’s map of Ireland. While this gives further evidence of some Celtic settlement in Ireland it clearly shows how Celts adapted and modified far older structures of those societies previously established in Ireland.

Languages and their origins are important in reconstructing the past. Spiral La Tene style designs on standing stones scattered throughout the country, provide reflections of the La Tene era gone by but they also give us clues to the original builders of the stones. Standing stones dated to circa 4000 BC - 2000 BC in Ireland have also been found to have Ogham inscriptions naming Celtic tribes and families from around 3rd to 5th Centuries AD. An example of an Ogham inscription can be seen in Co. Louth on the ‘Barnaveddodge stone’ where the name ‘Branogeni’ is written. It is generally considered that Ogham script is influenced by the Latin alphabet and is representative in part of an earlier Goidelic or Q Celtic language spoken in Ireland. As far back as 6th century BC the Greeks could distinguish between insular P and Q languages from other insular languages. There is

3 Michael Avery, *The Pattern of the Brougher Torc, The Journal of Irish Archaeology*

4 Michael Avery, *The Pattern of the Brougher Torc, The Journal of Irish Archaeology*

evidence in Iberia to show the use of Q Celtic language and it is not impossible to suggest that perhaps the spread of Q Celtic in Ireland started with the arrival of the Iberian Spanish/Portuguese Celts and Milesians. This clue of Q Celtic, held in the Ogham script, supports the case for Celtic, and earlier settlement in Ireland from the South of Europe. It does not support the idea of widespread Celtic migrations into Ireland from Central European Celts whose insular language was of the P Celtic type.

Whilst there is evidence, both literary and archaeological, to show limited Celtic settlement and influence in Ireland, there is, it could be argued, insufficient evidence to support the idea that the Celtic arrived in great numbers and that since then Celtic Culture is the singular predominant remnant of Irish society.

Cultures and populations far older than that of the Celts were in existence for thousands of years prior to the Celts arrival. Consider Nemed peoples circa 2678 BC or the Fir Bolg circa 1932 BC, attributed with the building of Tara and the Tuatha De Dannann who ultimately fought the Fir Bolg in the great battle of Moytura. The lack of contemporary written records attesting to these societies has meant that they have been wrongly consigned to the depths of a misty past.

It is incorrect to suppose that the Celts just arrived and that was an end to all that preceded them. "Surviving archaeological material gives no absolutely reliable indication of any large-scale Celtic invasion of the country during the Iron age or the later Bronze age".⁵ It is more likely that after hundreds of years of Tuatha De Dannan rule, the Keltoi arrived on these southern shores and perhaps Britains and Belgic on the Northern shores and as much as we have embraced Celtic culture today, those Celts embraced the ancient cultures of Ireland at that time. The Celts did not build New Grange; they appropriated Tara and Emain Macha and even the standing stones they used for their inscriptions in some cases had already been standing for thousands of years, their Celestial and astronomical uses forgotten by time. Perhaps Cu Culainn himself, one of the greatest symbols of Celtic legend came upon these great ancient sites and mused, as we do today, who built them and where did they come from.

The romantic idealism associated with being Celtic in Ireland has been overlaid on a much deeper history of this country. A lost identity with an ancient peoples whose intelligence was developed to the point that they could build and engineer an astronomical masterpiece such as New Grange.

Perhaps the most damning of all to the argument for dominant and lasting Celtic settlement in Ireland is the recent DNA testing of the Irish gene pool, "which show that the Irish population is descended mainly from Ireland's pre-Neolithic Inhabitants".⁶ It is far more likely that "there was no great Celtic migration into Ireland and no invasion. This does not mean that there was no migration at all - there was certainly movement of individuals and families. There was also communication between groups of people, exchanging ideas, artefacts, raw materials, art styles and technology".⁷

Further genetic testing results carried out at Oxford University by Oppenheimer claims that "no single group of invaders is responsible for more than 5 percent of the current gene

5 Peter Harbison, Pre-Christian Ireland, From the First Settlers to the Early Celts, pg 171

6 Catherine Pierce, The Society and Culture of the Celts, Focusing on Ireland

pool “ (Oppenheimer, S. (2006), and that Ireland received the fewest of all subsequent invaders after the initial migrations of 8000 BP. The DNA of these subsequent invaders only makes up about 12 percent of the Irish gene pool. These subsequent invaders included the Celt, Saxon, Viking and Norman. (Oppenheimer, S. (2006).

So then, with the above in mind, it is intriguing to think of the peoples on this island millennia's before the Celts, to imagine their culture and try to identify with them and recognise that, to be Irish is far more than to be European.

Eireann Go Breach

7. Catherine Pierce, *The Society and Culture of the Celts, Focusing on Ireland*

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What about a tangent???

Caroline McCabe, 1st Year, NUI Maynooth

Everyone was surprised, including me, when I chose Geography as one of my subjects. I was so drawn to the idea of a module studying Human Geography, that I rashly signed up for the course without reflecting on the other module involved: Physical Geography. Sadly I left school convinced that Geography was the most boring subject ever invented. To be honest the amount of knowledge I managed to retain is pretty small, I still can't remember where all those Irish rivers are!

It is therefore not surprising that I found myself at my first lecture in Physical Geography feeling a fair degree of trepidation. The phrase 'act in haste, repent at leisure' had come to mind. I felt much better when we were told it was not difficult to pass the course. It seemed idiot proof: attend lectures, tutorials and skills classes and read the textbook. How hard could that be? The workings of the MICA form, and the rules on how to communicate with the Department should things go wrong for you, were explained. It was a straightforward formula for success with a contingency plan built into it, what could possibly go wrong? The added friendly advice that the MICA form should only be used for genuine reasons and not lame excuses drew a round of laughter. We were assured that when it came to excuses the Department had heard them all before! I wondered would we ever get to hear any of them. I decided that perhaps if I got into second year they might be more forthcoming in sharing the more outrageous ones.

Twelve weeks later as I sat down to revise for my Physical Geography exam I had a simple list to complete: Climate, Weathering, Coastal Erosion and Hydrology. I had followed the Departments' advice so I felt my chances of passing the exam should be good. During my school days I managed to read a substantial percentage of the stock of novels in my local library whilst supposedly revising. At least this time I was not only reading about the subject, I was actually interested in the material. I had somehow become 'hooked' on the subject during the semester.

It was reading about the greenhouse affect that did it, something I read just didn't quite gel. I decided it would only take a few minutes to look it up on the 'net which, in hindsight, was a really bad idea! The search yielded information on global warming, which mentioned the work of Assistant Professor Katey Walters. I followed the link to learn that Assistant Professor Walters studies methane emissions from arctic lakes, especially the connection between thawing permafrost, frozen lakes and climate change. What caught my interest was the fire and what caused it. The article claimed that as global warming raises temperatures, permafrost around the edges thaw enough to fall into the lake. As the lake thaws the permafrost, the organic material in it - dead plants and animals, enter the water, where bacteria will convert it to methane gas. This gas bubbles up to the surface of the lake and is trapped under the ice. Further searching led

to the BBC website advertising a new series which just happened to be showing that week. I decided it was technically studying geography so I made a bucket tea, rescued a large bar of chocolate from the fridge and took to the couch. The programme was really interesting but the highlight for me was an image of Dr. Iain Stewart out on the ice with Assistant Professor Walters. They poked holes in the ice and held lighted matches above them. It resulted with spectacular images of fire shooting from the ice (caused by methane belches) as though there was an open gas line burning like a torch. It occurred to me that an advertisement for toasted marshmallows whilst sitting on a frozen lake had a much better chance of an advertising award than cooking 'boil-in-the-bag' rice in a natural geezer! A small amount of guilt started to encroach so I justified going off on this tangent by telling myself that Ms. Walters' opinion that global warming could melt the surface ice on these lakes and release large amounts of methane into the atmosphere might come in handy later on in the course. After all it could cause a serious escalation of the greenhouse effect, something I am supposed to learn about. Right? Given the size of these lakes and the possible outcome the theory suggests, it probably will come in handy in the future, but in truth I will always remember the image of fire burning through ice and the thought of toasted marshmallows!

The next day I was revising physical weathering and curiosity about the power of wind erosion eventually led me to pictures of the Red Rock of Arizona. As I looked at the spectacular images I was stunned by the fact that it is sculpted by the wind. The sand that blows across the surface glistened with particles of rock, like precious gem stones, and the effect of the erosion left such beautiful contours and shades of colour on massive mountains of rock, it was a striking reminder of the beauty of nature at its' best. There are fantastic pictures of it on the internet but I don't know the protocol for getting permission to use them so I'll just give you the link instead. It is worth taking a look, the people in the pictures look so insignificant in such awe inspiring surroundings. It dawned on me that checking out prices for flights to Arizona in no way helped my revision so I made a conscious effort to get back on track and started reading about weathering. All went well for about an hour and then I found myself thinking about holidays again.

Quite how the erosion of rocks led to the work of Dr. Simon Day I really don't know. I got so caught up in his expectation that the island of La Palmas will one day dump 500 bn tonnes of soil into the ocean I started reading about volcanic activity, vents, and the subsequent erosional effect on the rocks above it. If such a thing is actually possible it would be more impressive than even the most adventurous offering from Hollywood. Imagine the splash such a landslide would make! The fact that the outcome is dependent on whether this soil goes in as one unit or in pieces makes it no less exciting. The difference is simply a matter of volume, we would either see a tsunami or possibly a mega tsunami hitting the eastern seaboard of USA, from Boston all the way down to Florida. It sounds like something from the latest science fiction movie and is just as difficult to comprehend. Laboratory trials in Sweden suggest it would take seven hours to reach the USA and still be powerful enough to travel inland as far as 12 miles. The movie "Deep

Impact” showed a wall of water engulfing New York and there were TV images beamed around the world of the tsunami in Indonesia in 2004. Even so, it is hard to visualize such an enormous wave traveling so far with such destructive power. How did I ever find Geography boring? Such an event may be impossible to visualise but I still found myself practicing a convincing speech to persuade the children that our next holiday should be to Las Palmas!

Wave energy led to coastal erosion and on to the power of large waves in general. I was reminded of a programme I’d seen over the holidays, which investigated the concept of Non Linear Waves, referred to as rogue waves by sailors. It was the pet project of a Professor for many years which became very relevant after a couple of horrendously expensive insurance claims for the repair of two large ships that almost sank after being hit by one of these monster waves. Naturally I wondered why they appeared and decided to just take a quick look on the ‘net. In reading about rogue waves I was further diverted by an account of the way in which such a wave ‘sucks’ energy from the wave in front of it, which caused a very large ship to be sucked down into a deep trough before being hit by a 30ft wall of water. It caused catastrophic damage and came close to claiming the lives of all on board. The way that wave sucked energy reminded me about the reports on the Tsunami in Indonesia and the fact that the water on the shoreline was first sucked out to sea before the wall of water came ashore with such devastating consequences. Obviously they were two totally different events, for totally different reasons, but isn’t the way the water got ‘sucked’ up in both, puzzling? Could there be a link between what triggers a tsunami, the way a tsunami makes water behave and the way rogue waves are formed? Is it possible the source of one is also the source of the other on a smaller scale? Could the Professors’ theory and mathematical equations answer my question? Could he find a way to predict them before they became a hazard to shipping? Wouldn’t the insurance companies love that? Thinking about Insurance companies and their vulnerability to Nature led back to Indonesia and its’ other risk, earthquakes, which in turn led to the ‘ring of fire’ and so it went on.

The end result was that every time the question ‘why?’ occurred to me I went off on one tangent that immediately led to another. I spent several fascinating hours reading about geography and the core words that I was supposed to be revising kept coming up. I learnt a lot and developed an interest in learning even more, but as I sat down to write the exam I realized that I had failed to follow that idiot-proof plan and I could in fact be in lots of trouble. How ironic. Revising for the exams led me on so many tangents I did not have time to cover the basics. As I reflect on the fact that my hours of study may not yield the results I need, I find myself wondering if, amongst all the excuses the Department of Geography has heard before, have they have ever heard the one “What about a tangent?” Do you think they will accept the power of the word ‘Why’ as a reasonable excuse? Oh dear, does anyone have any hints for the repeats in the Autumn????

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agriCULTURE

Mark Farrelly, 1st Year, NUI Maynooth

Coming down from the wild drumlins of Cavan the shock of living in the civilised world of Maynooth has been an experience to say the least. Everything down here is under control; everyone is sophisticated, cultured, and urbane. I've been thinking to myself what makes us so different and I've reached a conclusion. It's greenery, the site of fields, hedges, shucks and trees. At home agriculture is not a job; it's a way of life.

In the countryside agriculture is everywhere, whether you're a farmer or not. It's the landscape, the chat; it's in the air we breathe. There isn't that stuffiness that one feels in towns, nor is there that sense of a hectic lifestyle. The countryside is wild, dishevelled, and unkempt. Its lunacy let loose. Yet it's peaceful lunacy. The agricultural life consists of mainly two things, the weather and tea. Usually, it's talking about the weather whilst drinking tea. That's the first thing I realised when I came to the big smoke, people don't care about the weather. No one gives a toss whether it rains or snows. At home everything is based around the weather. It plays a huge part in farmers' lives. Weather is more important than stock numbers, machinery, facilities. Without good weather, farming is not possible. Good weather may not necessarily of course mean that there are sunny skies; there is a need for optimum amount of rain and optimum amount of sunshine.

Living at home there is a work ethic embedded in everyone, whether they are working or not. Even if you do nothing all day long, you always are up early. Lie in's are not heard of. After all weren't our grandparents working 24 hours a day and would then walk to mass. Here in Maynooth I can't believe my luck. I pull myself out of the bed in the early hours of the afternoon and present myself to the world with a hearty yawn and manage to stumble down the stairs to throw myself onto the couch and then moan at how the TV remote's gone missing again. If only my mother saw me now lad. After an hour of Oprah it's time to look about breakfast. No milk? That's no problem just nip across to the shop. This is quite possibly the biggest conflict with the agricultural way of life. No matter

where you are in a town you're always near services, such as shops, cafes etc. At home if you ran out of milk, you have two choices, go out to the milking parlour and get some out of the tank, or eat your coco pops dry. If you ran out of coco pops, then you'd just have to wait till mammy does the shopping of a Thursday. The nearest shop is in the town and that's fifteen minutes away. Town day's the big adventure. The week is spent making a list of what's needed, the list is then forgotten and time in town is spent trying to remember what was on the list. Of course half the stuff is forgotten and when one arrives back home and reviews the list the evening is spent cursing about the stuff they've forgotten which they're going to have to wait until next week to buy. These are the little rituals which separate the agricultural life from the normal one.

Even the conversation topics are completely different. There's the afore-mentioned weather, and also the want for news. Life in the countryside is much more community based. By that I mean that everyone knows everyone else's business. Life can get very monotonous and people share the vents in their life out of complete boredom. In the towns everyone is much more private and less intrusive. The same is said when it comes to funerals, or 'funforalls' as we call them in the country. Funerals in the countryside are huge three day expeditions involving drink, sandwiches, singsongs and lots of men parking cars. A decent death in the region is enough to keep conversation going for at least a week. Discussions about who was at it, who wasn't at it, who carried the coffin, who cried, and how many were standing outside. If we culchies aren't careful, this adventure to Maynooth could be the death of us too.

My Trip to Petauke in Zambia.

Elaine Ryan, 1st Year, NUI Maynooth

Hello everyone! I'm going to tell you about my "little" adventure to Zambia a few years ago. In case you're thinking I went on holiday there, think again! It was 2005 and I was the chairperson for our local youth club Foroige. (For the youth). We decided to enter our names into the Soweto project. Basically we had to make some sort of difference in a community of our choice. This is where Fr. James stepped in. He was our club organiser and a frequent visitor to the poor town of Petauke, Zambia. It was his idea to base our project on the Zambian community and we were all thrilled with the idea. We planned for months and months beforehand making sure everything was taken into consideration. After all its not like we were only going down the road.

When the day finally came to embark on our adventure we were more than prepared. All the injections had been taken care of and we were very pleased with the amount of money we had raised from bag-packing in Dunnes, sponsored cycles, sponsored clean-ups and

my personal favourite, the sponsored Stay Awake. This is where people sponsor us to stay awake all night and this time it was in aid of our trip to Africa. We called it Operation Zambia! We all met up at the church car park to get the bus to Dublin Airport and from there a plane to Heathrow London. Then we had to get another plane from London that flew us into Lusaka airport, Zambia. The moment I stepped off the plane I knew I was certainly not in Ireland anymore. There were no patches of grass, no clouds hovering overhead and the air was so warm and dry, totally unlike the climate we just came from. The temperature was between 30 and 40 degrees. And this was in August, one of their Winter months! It took us eleven hours to fly to Lusaka from Heathrow but we only had to change our watches by one hour. Still we were a good seven hours away from our final destination, Petauke, the small town that was in need of our help. To get there we all huddled into the back of a jeep and kept each other amused by chattering to one another and telling jokes. We arrived in Petauke at ten o'clock that night.

All the people were waiting for us in the local hall. We didn't stay in a hostel, instead Fr. James thought we would get a better experience if we stayed with the locals who were more than happy to keep us. So we were all paired up and sent off to the different houses. I'll never forget the first journey to the houses. We walked back with the family members not really knowing what to expect. Me and my friend just kept smiling nervous smiles at each other. Lucky for us the family were extremely kind and welcoming. Their houses were made of a strange type of brick red brick. The walls were falling apart, the garden looked like the Sahara desert (which I forgot to mention we flew over) and the furniture inside was so old and tattered looking. Still to them a home is a home. When I asked to go to the toilet one of the young children lead me outside and pointed towards a wall at the end of the garden. I realised the toilet must be behind the wall and when I reached it I saw to my horror there was only a small hole in the ground. This was the toilet! Trust me when you gotta go you'll just go! Next they showed us where we were sleeping. The room was small enough but there was places for us to put our sleeping bags. We slept like angels that night after the tiring day of travelling.

When we met up with the others the next day at the mission we all had stories to exchange to one another. The biggest was the toilet and the bugs! As we started to settle in I noticed a routine. Every day we would go to bed around six and then we would be woken every morning at half five/six o'clock for eggs and white bread. Some days we the girls would be sent to the hospital to paint the walls and some days the church beside the orphanage. It was very sad to see the sick children in the hospital ward. It was like being inside a Trocaire add. There was not a lot that could be done for them so we painted beautiful pictures to at the very least brighten their day a bit. The boys were sent to gather bricks and they started the foundations for a crèche which is up and running today. It was funny to see them come home off the back of the truck in the evening complaining about sores and slave labour! Fr. James said he was so proud of all the work we were doing. When we were painting the church walls some of the local men wanted to help. They couldn't get over the fact that us females were doing "a mans job"! It just goes to show

the type of society these people were still living in.

The natives had very good English and we were even learning some Zambian. (Muli Bwanje: good morning) The currency they used was known as the Kwacha and it roughly meant one Euro was worth around two thousand Kwacha. Their main food was called Nshima and this could be compared to rice without any taste. I couldn't taste anything but I felt it would be rude not to eat their staple food especially while they were watching. In general I just tried to stick with the normal rice. One day Father James suggested we take a break from all the working and painting. We got up at six again and instead of heading to the church or the hospital we got in the truck and drove to the Chipata Mountains. The dusty roads around the mountain contrasted with the green vegetation on the slopes. To drive anywhere in Zambia takes more than two hours. After all Zambia is more than ten times the size of Ireland! And so we spent the whole day climbing up and down this mountain. One of the locals volunteered to be our guide and I'll never forget what he said as we were about to start climbing. "Whoever is to fall behind will probably be eaten. So keep up." This wasn't the most comforting news but thankfully we all made it home in one piece. It was roughly a three hour climb up the mountain and around two hours down again. When we saw the view from the top it was definitely worth it in the end. The landscape was only magnificent. Because the surface was flat and there weren't any buildings, this made it easier to see the horizon. We were all so pleased that we made it and I don't think we'll ever forget that experience. After the two weeks were finally up I found I was actually very disappointed to be going home. I had really enjoyed myself and the achievements I made. The people could not thank us enough for all our hard work. They gave us a huge banquet before we left. I felt a bit guilty because here were people with hardly any food or money putting all their food together to feed us. Their kindness is something to be treasured and I know I will never forget it.

When we returned home a lot of us noticed our appetites were off. Certain small everyday things reminded me of Africa. Even still when I'm having a shower, I remember the tiny little tubs that the family used to wash themselves in over in Africa. There is so much we can take for granted in our everyday lives and its not until you actually experience these things for yourself and a life without these comforts that you truly realise how much you didn't know. I am so glad I agreed to go on the trip because it really opened my eyes to the bigger picture and the real world around me. I know I will be travelling a lot more in the near future. It's inevitable. You don't just do things like travel across the globe to the developing world and forget about it the next day. Yes, in case you may be wondering we won the Soweto project along with a few other applicants. President Mary McAleese presented us with shiny awards and we got a huge round of applause. I read out a poem that one of the leaders had written for the occasion based on our trip to Zambia. It was only allowed to be a minute long so here is the last verse that I think sums it all up. "We'll never forget it throughout all the years. A legacy left by myself and my peers. So that was our trip and everything in it. A lifetime of memories in under a minute."

Irishness....according to me!

Rebecca Mc Govern, 3rd Year, NUI Maynooth

Irishness is a very hard thing to describe but upon hearing the word a number of areas come into my head ranging from the Irish language to GAA and from Guinness to “craic!”

Irish people are very passionate about their sports, especially when it comes to GAA. The Gaelic Athletic Association is the largest and most popular sports association in Ireland. In Gaelic football and hurling, the players themselves don’t get paid. They do it out of passion and a sense of nationalism. GAA is something special and unique and sets Ireland apart from any other country. Today three quarters of a million people are members of the GAA, but that figure represents only a fraction of those who are touched by the daily games of football and hurling. Its impact is emotional and cannot be measured in units of membership or revenue. The GAA is much more than an organization; it is something that belongs to us as Irish people.

Also, in recent years, there is a growing identification of the Irish jersey. If you were to visit any other country in the world, you’d be almost certain that an Irish jersey would pop up in some form or other! I know a girl who told me about when she went to Australia and was immediately recognised as being Irish from the wearing of her Wexford jersey.

National traits and characteristics also play a big part in Irishness. Everyone states to be Irish in some way, especially the Americans. They claim to have Irish ancestors dating way back and try to grab on to their Irish history. They also have a very stereotypical view of us, such as negative rural images, red hair and leprechauns!

It’s no secret that the Irish have a long-standing reputation for being drunks! One of our most famous exports is Guinness. It is known worldwide as the “pint of the black stuff”. No matter what country you find yourself in, you can be sure of finding an Irish pub. There is no doubt that we Irish enjoy our pub culture, not just for the drink but for the “craic” also. Irish people are known for their friendly, caring and relaxed manner, sense of humour and also for their liking of fun so there is no surprise as to why Irish pubs are so popular.

Music in Ireland has always been an important part in shaping the Irish culture. It is unique and includes many different variations such as traditional Irish music, Irish rebel music and Irish dance music. Traditional Irish music is what makes Ireland special and sets us apart from any other country in the world, with its unique sound being identified anywhere. It is passed on my mouth and by ear, not by written word or musical notation. Irish traditional music is most commonly heard nowadays in local bars especially on a Sunday night.

Irish rebel music is very similar to Irish traditional music but the songs usually tell stories of Irish history and emigration. Irish music and emigration are both interwoven with each other as each of them tell stories of exile, displacement, and a strong identification with Ireland. The emigrants have a strong need to keep a sense of Irish identity in order to ensure the survival of Irish traditional music. Most of these songs are of a sad nature as they concern Ireland's troubled past but some also celebrate Ireland's victories at times.

Irish dancing is also something very exclusive to Ireland, with Riverdance taking the world by storm. This phenomenon began life as a 7-minute interval act in the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest and has since then toured the world performing live to over 19 million people. Now, during its tenth year, Riverdance has 3 touring companies, one in the Far East, one in Europe and one in North America. Nobody had ever seen anything quite like this show and it is no surprise how this phenomenon became such a hit.

The Irish language is slowly declining in Irish society but there are some people making an effort to bring it back to life again such as the establishing of TG4 in 1996. Approximately 800,000 viewers tune into this television station each day.

There are many Gaeltacht regions in Ireland-Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Kerry, which are all on the west coast, and parts of Cork, Meath and Waterford. Although the populations of these regions speak English, there are only parts of Ireland where Irish is spoken as their first language. The Gaeltacht presents an opportunity to preserve the Irish language as part of the Irish tradition, but also allows people who want to learn or improve the language the basis to do so. It provides an environment where the language can evolve naturally in a modern setting.

From my opening paragraph, I said that Irishness was a hard thing to describe and I think that this is very true. There are so many aspects and traits that make us Irish, some good and some bad. But it seems that the good aspects are the ones that stand out most in people's heads.

An understanding to Islamic Culture

Anne-Marie Corrigan 2nd Year NUI maynooth

Saturday the 16th of February started off as a cold wet miserable morning. Thirty-eight geography students and two lectures gathered on a bus under the footbridge on the Kilcock road. There was a sense of mystery, with clear instructions to wear long sleeved shirts and not to wear any skirts. What could this possibly be for? When we set off from the college grounds Alistair Fraser and Adrian Kavannagh finally spoke.

The first point of call was to a mosque in the south Dublin suburb of Clonskeagh. We carried on to the M50 and through Sandyford. At ten thirty we arrived at our destination. The mosque in the Clonskeagh is one of the largest mosques in Ireland and Dublin catering for over eight hundred people.

So what is a mosque? A mosque is an area or building in which people from the Islamic religion go to worship. The followers are called Muslims and there is a growing population of Muslims in Ireland of nearly fifty thousand. People who believe in Islam, believe in one god, his name is Allah. They believe that Allah is their only god, he does not have any partners, and he is merciful and unique. The Koran is the holy book of Islam and is written in both English and Arabic. It can take many years to read the Koran fully. Islam is a religion that is based mainly on self-discipline. There are five pillars in which all Muslims must follow they are compulsory. The five pillars are belief in Allah, giving charity in the month of fasting, prayers, fasting in the month of Ramada and to under take pilgrimage. Muslims also believe in seven pillars of faith. These are believing in Allah, reading the Koran, believing in the messengers, believing that their life has a destiny, believing in the angels, that there is life after death and that they will have their day of judgement.

There is a mosque in Saudi Arabia in a place called Mecca. It is here where the largest gathering of Muslims is each year. There is usually a gathering of around three million people. This pilgrimage to Mecca is compulsory only once in a lifetime. One should only complete the pilgrimage when their intention is sincere. The mosque in Mecca is the first purpose built house of worship. Many people wear white when they are in the pilgrimage as this reflects the heat and also is a sign that everybody is equal in the eyes of Allah. When undertaking the pilgrimage there are certain rules one must follow. These usually last about five days. Some of these rules include not being abusive to another person, not allowed to hunt and kill any animals, not allowed to get a hair cut and there is no marital relationship between husband and wife.

In the mosque itself there was five separate rooms. These symbolise and represent the five pillars of Islam. In the main prayer room men and women are separated. The women pray up stairs and the men downstairs. People entering the mosque have to cover every part of their body. This is so there will not be any distraction and the people can pray with sincerity. There are four main prayers that must be said throughout the day. The first prayer is before sunrise, the second is in the early afternoon, the third is before sunset, and the final prayer is around half seven. If the prayers are missed throughout the day they can usually be combined at one time. On Friday evenings there is a main sermon, which usually last about forty-five minutes long. Prayers are compulsory from puberty; they are only said in Arabic. Also when they pass each other they are not allowed to look each other directly in the eye. Muslims do not celebrate Christmas, Easter or Halloween instead they celebrate two feasts one at the end of pilgrimage and the other at the end of Ramada.

When Muslims begin to earn their own wages it is compulsory for them to give a portion of their earnings to charity. It is also up to each Muslim to make lawful use of their money. A total of 2.5% of their total earnings are giving to charity each year. Charity is usually given in the month of fasting, Ramada. Ramada is the month of fasting. Fasting usually last between twenty-nine and thirty days. Muslims only have to fast from sunrise to sunset. They must not consume any food in day light hours. They would usually eat before sunrise, and break at sunset. After a day of fasting the first meal eaten is usually something light like dates and water. This is because dates are easy on the digestive system and would not make one feel ill after a full day of fasting. Then after the evening prayer they would have a proper meal. Pregnant and menstruating women are excluded from fasting in the month of Ramada but they must make up for it at a later stage. People suffering from medical conditions such as heart disease or diabetes, and elderly people are excluded from fasting as it may be damaging to their health. They do not have to make up for not fasting however they do pay a fee usually seven or eight Euro a day. There are a few rules for when Muslims are fasting, they are not allowed to be abusive, they learn to become a better person and there is no marital relationship between husband and wife during the daytime.

Just like Christianity the religion of Islam has a holy book. This holy book is called the Koran. There are one hundred and fourteen chapters in the Koran. A person who memorises the Koran is guaranteed paradise. There are also connections between Islam and Christianity, they believe that Jesus is a prophet, that he did not die on the cross that he died a natural death and that he was the only prophet to speak in his crib. Islam is not just a religion it is seen as a way of life. There is a lot of discipline within the culture. This can include food restrictions such as pork, as the pig was seen as a carrier of diseases, and this is why it is prohibited from the diet. The consumption of alcohol is also banned.

Muslims first came to Ireland in the 1950's to study medicine. Now in Ireland there are over forty thousand Islamic followers. The main Islamic countries are Malaysia, Africa, Romania, Russia, America and England. The mosque in Clonskeagh has many different functions. It is not just a place for worship, in the mosque it has a main prayer room, a sports hall, a conference/meeting room, a shop and a restaurant. This allows the local community to socialise. However the mosque does not profit from these activities as they are outside businesses that come in and provide a service.

Overall it was quite surprising to see the mosque in all its glory. When we arrived it was hustling and bustling with the sound of people of all ages, from different types of backgrounds. The atmosphere in the mosque was very laid back, relaxing and welcoming. With Ireland having a new and dynamic culture the impact of Islam can be seen throughout every day life. Such as mosques being built in the suburbs of Dublin and Irish children integrating with a new type of culture in schools, sports clubs. This therefore allowing them to be brought up of an awareness of different types of cultures that exists in society today.

“The J1”

Ronán Howe, 3rd Year, NUI Maynooth

On May 31st, 2007. My friends and I embarked on our trip to the States; Bound for Boston; we left the emerald isle. Unknowing of what the summer was going to bring and where we were going to visit. After finding work and saving money, the dream of visiting the Big Apple occurred in Mid June.

Four hours bus journey and suddenly the skyline filled up with skyscrapers. The view was breathtaking. After arriving in New York, the excitement was unreal, being young, free and unstoppable – I went doing the whole sightseeing thing. Central Park, Statue of Liberty, Ground Zero. Knowing that from my own community at home and friends, I was the first to visit this extraordinary city. New York was not what I expected; it was an unending stream of roads and paths. After lots of video and pictures of the Yellow Taxis and the sights,

It was time for the next road trip to Cape Cod. Furthermore another four hours bus journey south of Boston. I knew very little of this part and accompanied friends on day trip. After walking into a café for breakfast I ended up meeting unexpectedly a former classmate from secondary school who was travelling on the J1 for the summer. The Cape was a paradise to me with gorgeous beaches and monuments-little to my knowledge did I know that the Cape is home to the prestigious US family: The Kennedy's. With this the first opportunity to relax on a beach that summer, we lay on the sand of the beach and listened to the shore wash up. Unfortunately for me; This Irish skin took a burning. After a few more agony filled night's sleep I decided it was time for new challenge.

In July I decided to go to Washington. I had planned on dinner with Mr. Bush. Unfortunately he refused my request. So as a true Irish man I booked into a hotel and dumped the bags and headed on a wander of this universally known centre of power. It was great to say I was there, but glad I was heading back to Boston in a few days. The city was so big it was hard to walk all of it. One highlight to this trip was as I lay under the Washington memorial tower, the skies never looked so blue. With that helicopters scrambled all over the site and towards the White House. After a quick dash to the White House Gardens. It was the arrival of George Bush. I couldn't believe my luck. With about 400 metres; the world's most influential and criticised man stood from this Irish lad.

After that great experience to Washington; my mates from home rang me inviting me out to Chicago to them. They were playing hurling for a club there for the summer. This was a highlight of my trip as I got to meet people that lived at home years ago and had moved to Chicago more recently. Many nights here were spent in great pubs and clubs, one owned by a mafia boss (For Real) “Beegee's” this was the dodgiest place on earth! I lived in Chicago with 10 other GAA lads – After sightseeing out on the Lake Michigan (It's more like a sea) it was time to move onto the west coast.

In Las Vegas, I felt thrifty and booked in the Hilton (Well someone else was paying) I met up with family friends' there and they were staying in the Hilton for a week for a conference. This was unreal, for the gambling fans out there, this was the life. The place never sleeps. 24 hour nightclubs and casinos. For once I actually won money when gambling. When I realised I had enough 'lost' I decided to trek across the Mojave desert to Los Angeles.

Los Angeles was unreal, it was home to the stars and that included me for the next week. In LA the life was so cool, I actually got to cook eggs on the street and it can be done. The heat was equivalent to 46oC in Irish terms "It was ferocious Heat!" or "Great weather for trying turf!" After visits to Hollywood and the walk of fame and a few famous people's houses. Before my journey across eight cities came to an end; my friends drove me out to the infamous Edwards Air force Base in Lancaster, CA. This was their workplace; they showed me the outside perimeter, needless to say very impressive. By now it was early August and it was the return to Boston. I caught the "red eye" out of LAX for Boston; it was about a week before I had to return home. So the week I spent in Boston was catching up on lost sleep and going doing the tourist thing for a few days prior to my return to Shannon and college.

But now I'm back in NUI Maynooth for my final year, its cold and dark outside, its late December and as I look back now at what was undoubtedly one of my best life experiences to date; it makes me wonder what will next summer bring - considering that the amount of cities I saw during the summer and the fact I got to meet so many new people and learned new things. The idea of travelling seems all the more appealing and makes the world seem a smaller place (Thank you Paddy Duffy). For those considering the option to travel whether for a holiday or a summer, the idea of travelling and gaining that experience comes highly recommended especially whilst you're a student and young.

Sandyford: A Confused Development.

Ciarán O'Callaghan. 2nd Year, NUI Maynooth

Sandyford is an area of huge economic importance to both the local Dublin economy and the Irish economy. The area provides employment for thousands of high skilled professionals and service sector employees. The area however suffers from many problems relating to planning, land use, cost of living and access. It is these problems that have created what could be described as a confused development with no clear indication of what direction the development is taking. Is Sandyford intended to be an industrial or residential zone?

Sandyford is located at the meeting point of three major transportation networks. These

are the M50 motorway, the N11 national route and the green Luas tram line. The transport network is essential to the functioning, operation and success of the businesses within the Sandyford region and provided a catalyst to the initial development of the area. However, these transport links act as boundaries to the site of the development and constrain the extent to which the site can develop and the type of development that can take place next to these hugely important transport routes.

The Sandyford site is also constrained by physical features such as the Wicklow Mountains to the south, the reservoir to the north and the existing green spaces within Sandyford that Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown county council wish to preserve for the benefit of the community.

The recent development in the area has taken place within the combined lands of the Stillorgan industrial park and the Sandyford industrial estate. These two business districts and the surrounding land that has been zoned to be included in the development cover an area of 155 hectares, of which only 46 hectares have been developed.

The original intension of the planning authorities was to create a centre of employment in Sandyford that would provide employment opportunities and would create a high-density industrial district easily accessible from the greater Dublin area. Also included were plans to have a smaller amount of high density, affordable housing to cater for young professionals who worked in the area.

The current Sandyford development does not match the planned vision for the area. Recent projects in Sandyford have been mainly residential developments. These new apartment blocks started developing in the commercial zone in 2004 and since then there has been competition among developers to build the tallest block in the area. The new apartment developments have resulted in a large amount of apartments in an area that is not properly equipped to serve the people who choose to live in it.

The rate at which the apartments were constructed and sold resulted in the public and social services and amenities totally lagging behind the rate of development.

The current sewage capacity in Sandyford is not large enough to cope with the recent explosion in apartment blocks. There are no education facilities in the area, although this may not currently be a problem due to the demographics of the residents it may become an issue in the future. The social and recreational facilities in Sandyford are minimal, very few green spaces exist within the new development, and there are no social meeting points such as pubs in the main developments of apartments. Recently a shopping centre was constructed to cater for the shopping needs of the residents and this provides one of the main focal points for activities outside of the office and commercial function of the area.

The initial intention in Sandyford was to develop affordable housing for first time buyers who worked within the Sandyford business district. This has not turned out to be the case. A standard two bedroom apartment in one of the new apartment block in Sandyford will sell for around €450,000. This price is well above the normal first time buyer and as such creates a somewhat exclusive housing development that is only accessible to a small number of the workforce in Sandyford.

This problem of exclusivity is what has created many of the social problems that can be associated with Sandyford. The occupants of the apartments work all day Monday to Friday and may return to their family home at the weekends. This results in empty buildings during the week and during the weekends which creates an air of abandonment throughout the area. There is a sense that Sandyford has become a town that is void of activity at the weekend except for some shoppers who come to the area from the suburbs of Dublin at the to visit one of the many furniture, D.I.Y. and décor shops that are to be found in Sandyford.

It is for these social and public service reasons that Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council have passed a motion that has halted any future development within the Sandyford business district until a proper urban framework plan and a local area plan can be drawn up for the area. These plans will allow the council to clearly indicate the type, size, scale and function of any future developments that occur within the district. These plans will also allow for the construction of proper infrastructure services such as access roads, Luas extensions, water and sewage services and provide for education, recreation and social amenities.

With this changing attitude among the policy makers in the area it is possible to create a vibrant community within the business district of Sandyford and correct some of the mistakes that were made in the past. However it is important that the area is given a specific function if development in the future is to prove successful.

End Note

This article is based on a talk given by Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Councillor Aidan Culhane. The talk was given on Saturday 16/02/2008 during the second year fieldtrip to South Dublin and Laois.

The Cultural Geography of Fleet Street and the Political Economy

Rory Flood, 2nd Year UCD student

To look at the cultural landscape of Fleet Street, one is bombarded with a wide array of mechanisms to carry this out. However for one particular angle of approach, one can examine the relationship of the cultural geography of Fleet Street with the Irish Political Economy. Political Economy in this instance is the effects of advancing a particular culture (Mitchell, 2007). Fleet Street in relation to this political economy and cultural development, are closely associated as Fleet Street was part of the wider Temple Bar area of Fiscal Incentives for Urban Regeneration that was established by the Irish Government in 1986 (Williams, 2006). Thus by linking the cultural landscape and political economy together, one ascertains the great level of flux that is taking place in Fleet Street. Also one discovers how cultural geography in the case of Fleet Street is affected by gargantuan network of actors and stakeholders, these actors of change are crucial elements for understanding the cultural landscape as they established the current morphology of Fleet Street.

Fleet Street prior to the establishment of the Urban Regeneration program in 1986 had suffered tremendously from an out-migration of people to the Dublin Suburbs during the post WWII period (Williams, 2006). This out-migration and the decline in demand for retail and commercial space led to a decline in the inner city (Williams, 2006). However with the introduction of Fiscal Incentives (Williams), such as tax breaks for developers the downward trend that was exhibited by Fleet Street began to be abated by the early 1990's (Williams, 2006). The government through market intervention had dealt with the problems of urban decline to some degree (Williams), but also they allowed for the alteration of the urban morphology of the street. These Tax Incentives involved regenerating areas to develop in a particular manner; an example of this was the Custom House Docks, which was designated to become a central business area (Williams, 2006). The same can be ascribed to Fleet Street, as mentioned previously Fleet Street is a constituent street of Temple Bar, with this Temple Bar along with Fleet Street was designated to be regenerated upon the bases of being a cultural, artistic and entertainment quarter (Williams, 2006).

With this Don Mitchell (2007) investigates how key social actors exploit culture as being a marketable idea. Mitchell (2007) discusses how culture although a false reification, it is crucial to understand whom is responsible for reifying it (Mitchell, 2007)? Culture in the case of Fleet Street is a produced culture; it has been reified initially by the government through fiscal incentives thus in one respect Fleet Street can be seen as a representation of a particular ideology (Mitchell, 2007). The ideology in this case is market capitalism and state intervention. This reified culture, is apparent on the physical landscape of Fleet Street, as Fleet Street exemplifies a tourist consumer based area.

With this manner of examining the cultural landscape of Fleet Street, one can see quite easily how the political economy has a significant impact on the cultural geography of a particular location. Fleet Street in this manner benefited economically from state intervention, but while doing so provided momentum to the creation of an altered cultural landscape, thus an altered cultural geography. With an altered physical landscape, allows for the rise of an altered social landscape. One can view Fleet Street as a created landscape, almost leading one to believe that there are inherent undertones of environmental determinism (Mitchell, 2007). This may or may not be the case, but as has been discussed and from what one can gather from Mitchell (2007) political economy plays a huge role on effecting the cultural landscape and is the institution from which key actors emerge from to effect changes on the cultural geography of a particular place (Mitchell, 2007), in this case that of Fleet Street.

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The importance of the Gaelic Athletic Association

Enda Ruddy, 3rd, NUI Maynooth

The GAA was founded on the 1st of November 1884 at Hayes Hotel in Thurles, County Tipperary by Michael Cusack and Maurice Davin. Other founder members present were John Wyse Power, John McKay, J.K Bracken and Joseph O’Ryan (www.politics.ie).

This was a harsh time in Ireland’s history. “Famine and disease had ravished the country and emigration was rife. Irish culture in the in the shape of its language, music, dancing and games was in danger of oblivion.” The setting up of the GAA helped cured this hardship to an extent and impacted the country in numerous ways. “The Association swept the country like wildfire” (Mahon, 2000, pg 4).

This quote is not an overstatement as can be viewed from the impact of the GAA in Dublin in 1888. There was 42 clubs affiliated in Dublin city such as Erin’s Own and Brian Borus, 23 clubs set up in North County Dublin such as Magh go Bragh and Erin’s Isle, while in South Dublin there was 40 clubs affiliated and an example is Thomas Davis GAA club (Nolan, 2005). This is striking evidence of the immense popularity and impact the GAA had even in its beginning. The organisation has grown rapidly in the 20th century. Today it is without doubt the most popular and indeed the most important sport in Ireland and for many communities abroad. The experience of the GAA in Ireland cannot be matched with any other sport on the island.

“To understand the GAA and Gaelic games is to understand the sociability of the Gaelic crowd, be it hurling or football. The games induce a great feeling of fraternity through a combined passion, a common language, an enjoyment of physical endeavour of a pint after the match and of friendly rivalry” (Cronin, 1999, pg 72).

The GAA allows people in communities to express a huge sense of pride and place. The GAA helps to preserve a sense of place for people, no matter where in the world one may be living. It emoted a feeling of belonging somewhere. Duffy (2003) argues this point: “One reflection of the continuing importance of the local has been the enduring popularity of the GAA. Indeed the GAA from its beginnings attached its organisational structures to the architecture of parishes, town lands and counties, and probably helped to preserve and promote a local sense of place over the decades” (Hourihane, 2003, pg 27). The world today is more urbanized and there is a feeling that people attain less attachment to place and are less localized, but there is still a need to have an attachment to a home place. Duffy (2003) quotes, “Although our relationship with the local has been irreversibly altered in the last couple of generations there is still a need to be grounded in a local dimension, in a sense of place” (Hourihane, 2003, pg 26).

Feelings of county and club loyalty, attachment and identity are commonplace all

throughout Ireland. The GAA triggers these feelings most significantly. GAA clubs arouse these emotions especially referring to people who live in the same county.

Gillmor (2003) debates this point about the GAA influencing county loyalty to a maximum. "It is the Gaelic Athletic Association that county loyalty is at its height. For many people who have little interest in GAA sports, it is different when their county get to an All-Ireland final. The dreams of many GAA players are that their club will win the county championships and that they themselves will play for their county, an ambition similar to that of international representation in some other sports" (Hourihane, 2003, pg 57).

The sense of place and geography of the GAA is evident all throughout the world. Irish emigrants experience similar feelings about their home country, county and club. The GAA affords emigrants not only with a sense of place, but also a means of establishing friendships and integrating more easily for example. Boston in the United States of America is a prime example of this.

"The GAA afforded Irish Catholics with opportunities simply to associate with like-minded individuals and engage in social and sporting activities resonant of home. For some, immersion in Gaelic games undoubtedly helped alleviate the feeling of dislocation and alienation that the Boston Irish often felt. It is also likely that involvement in a GAA club or attendance at a match in Boston provided entrance into the social networks that enabled newly arrived immigrants to find work and accommodation " (Bairner, 2005, pg 95).

The importance and the need for the GAA in are evident from the benefits it provided for many emigrants, for example, the Irish in Boston. The GAA has afforded people in communities, home and abroad to feel a sense of place and belonging, reminiscence and also to help them to establish a better life for themselves both economically and socially. "The capacity of Gaelic games to provide new Irish arrivals in Boston with a sense of the familiar in an otherwise alien environment and allow them to maintain an important psychological link with home continues to the present day" (Bairner, 2005, pg 96).

This link may also apply to people who may for example have migrated within Ireland from a rural area to an urban area. The GAA still may provide them with an important psychological link to club or county even if they are based in a different geographical place away from home. For many migrants in Ireland, associations with their home county or club gives an emotional and even perhaps a longing to go home feeling. This can be viewed through GAA matches or even songs, stories or poems as examples. "The Association with place and song is most emotional when the emigrant is looking back to his or her native country. This is the Irish person's strong attachment to and rootedness in place, and the longing to go back home". This is evident in such songs as "Lovely Laois", "Lets go home to County Mayo" and "The Green and Red of Mayo".

The GAA provides and promotes a sense of nationalism. This occurs most prominently in

Northern Ireland where GAA Catholic communities exist against the majority Loyalist/Unionist population. “As the only mass-membership Catholic/Nationalist grouping in Northern Ireland which functions legally and is not directly connected to politics, the GAA allows for the promotion and celebration of a Catholic/Nationalist culture and identity” (Cronin, 1999, pg 148-149).

The GAA most definitely has a fundamental grounding in communities. It ties in with what the definition of a community is according to Day (2006). “The essential meaning of community might seem obvious enough. It refers to those things people have in common, which bind them together and give them a sense of belonging with one another” (Day, 2006, pg 1). The GAA is an adhesive of the community which “binds” people together. “At a minimum, community involved people doing things, and being together rather than been separate and alone” (Day, 2006).

“Throughout its history, the GAA has contributed significantly to community life, from the simple provision of sporting outlets to personal development for its members through commitment, personal dedication and discipline. The GAA has developed a major physical infrastructure for sporting, cultural and community activity throughout the country, it also provides facilities for social interaction within local communities” (www.gaa.ie, 2002, pg 77).

The significance and impact of both the social and economic benefits of the GAA are discussed by Delaney (2005). It is thoroughly important to realise that although the benefits of the GAA are obvious, among those who play for example, physical exercise and social interaction as examples, the impacts spread well beyond those who play. GAA can be crucial as a social outlet for people who do not play also. The impact of the GAA as a social outlet can take many forms, ranging from extensive voluntary work, membership of clubs, managers, coaches, fundraising and attendances at matches as examples. These social aspects of sport have attracted growing attention in the last 10-20 years in the context of a new interest in social capital (Delaney, 2005).

“The concept of social capital refers to the social networks, norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within and among groups. Some see it simply as a new term for community” (Delaney, 2005 pg 1). The GAA certainly helps link the concept of “social capital” and is to the fore in the community. The GAA is the lifeblood for many people in communities throughout the country. Almost every town and village has a GAA club in the country.

Volunteering is a major form of “social capital” and a pivotal part of any GAA club. So much work done by volunteering, and it is a huge social motivation for people in communities. In Ireland today the GAA accounts for 42 percent approximately of volunteering. 21 percent for Gaelic football, 15 percent for hurling and 2 percent for ladies football (Delaney, 2005). Volunteering for GAA activities include provision of

transport, coaching (managing), organising activities and serving as a club official for example. Volunteering is a critical issue in terms of the GAA.

The GAA is very much a voluntary driven organisation. Most clubs have voluntary run structures, and if these were not in place, the GAA club quite simply would not be able to survive. For many people volunteering is their opportunity for social interaction in a community. And the GAA duly provides the chance for people to volunteer. “Volunteering is a key source of social capital, the sports volunteer is important not only to sports clubs and players but also to the wider community” (Delaney, 2005, pg 32).

Membership of GAA clubs is crucial to the GAA and as previously mentioned is a valuable social outlet for people in a community. The average membership in a GAA club is approximately 20-30 euro, but can vary. The GAA has the largest membership in Ireland in comparison to any other sport played. It is also noteworthy to mention that the GAA has far more members than players. Approximately three hundred thousand adults (non-players) are members of GAA clubs, while in the region of two hundred thousand are players in GAA clubs.

This statistic identifies that, while there are a certain number of players who gain valuable “social life” as well as physical benefits, there are also a huge cluster of people who are members, and the GAA provides them with the opportunity to be still involved with the GAA and community. Statistics show that twenty per cent of males over the age of sixty five are registered members of sports clubs. “This points to a significant role for sports clubs membership- especially in golf and to an extent also in the GAA in maintaining social contact throughout their lifecourse for men” (Delaney, 2005, pg 39). The GAA again has the largest share of sports club membership ranging around thirty per cent in Ireland (Delaney, 2005).

Attendance at GAA matches is also a form of social engagement for communities.

This may be attending anything from a local club match or an All-Ireland final at Croke Park. For many GAA fans attendance at matches is a way of expressing their identity, allegiances and also developing commonality not only with other supporters of their own team but with the followers of a GAA” (Bairner, 2005). This sentence is a good definition of what it means for a GAA spectator to attend a match. It is socially stimulating without a doubt. It can be something as small as a simple conversation in a village about a match. It also provides memories, reminiscence, and debate. In Ireland the GAA dominates the attendances at sports events. “GAA sports account for almost sixty per cent of sports attendances in Ireland” (Delaney, 2005, pg 42). Attendances provide “life” at a GAA match in my opinion and experience and help a team perform to an optimum level.

The GAA generates a massive deal of social activity outside of playing both for players and the wider community alike throughout Ireland and abroad, and is an absolutely integral part of life in Ireland and abroad. It’s importance and impacts, in so many aspects cannot be underestimated.

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Graham Geraghty and the 2007 General Election

Brian Kelly, 3rd Year, NUI Maynooth



The 2007 Irish General Election was widely expected to be a very close affair, with the Fine Gael and Labour alliance hotly tipped in some quarters to outpoll Fianna Fail and thus end a ten-year absence from Government. As part of their strategic plan to

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emerge victorious from the election Fine Gael opted to run celebrity candidates in some constituencies, with Mairead McGuinness in Louth, John O'Mahony in Mayo and Graham Geraghty, on whom this article focuses in Meath West. Geraghty would have a very high public profile in Meath, having played intercounty football for Meath at various levels for the previous seventeen years, winning four All Ireland titles, including one as captain in 1999. Based on this profile he fitted perfectly the celebrity criteria, which the party were looking for.

By choosing Geraghty to run in the election it was deemed that Fine Gael were going to get the young people of Meath West to vote for the party, especially as another candidate in the constituency, Damien English, an outgoing TD is also a young man. However on the other hand there were certain questions that had to be answered, namely, would a man with no political experience be able to run a successful campaign and also was it a move that would ultimately prove detrimental to the parties hopes of winning a second seat in the constituency.

By selecting Graham Geraghty to run in the General Election Fine Gael could have been trying to emulate the successes of their own Jimmy Deenihan in Kerry and Jack Lynch in Cork. However, in contrast to both of these people Geraghty had very little prior knowledge of politics and indeed during the course of the electioneering period he issued only 6 statements, with 5 of these coming in March. Indeed he managed to issue none over the last 6 weeks of the campaign. By doing this it would suggest that he was going to rely very heavily on the friends and neighbours effect in order to poll well. However by having to rely on this was a dangerous tactic as he had lived in the constituency of Meath East for much of his life and consequently many of the people who he could have relied on for votes were unable to support him in his bid to be elected. This reflects somewhat poorly on Fine Gael as their reasons for running Geraghty were flawed from the outset. Without the full effects of the friends and neighbours theory the chances of Geraghty helping boost their performance in Meath West diminished greatly.

The constituency of Meath West was split up between the candidates so that Damien English had the Navan and Kells areas to canvass; Peter Higgins had Trim and the areas of Westmeath within the constituency while Geraghty had to cover the whole of the constituency. This immediately put him at a disadvantage as it is harder to cover the whole of the constituency rather than half such as the party's other two candidates. Because of this Geraghty was ultra reliant on getting full effect from the 'friends and neighbours effect' in the constituency. However it was this that ultimately let him down the most in the election as only in one of his local areas did he manage to win more than 10% of the vote, picking up 13.6% in the Coolronan electoral area, a figure that translates into 46 votes.

This is significant as in 1999 when he captained Meath to the All Ireland he owned a public house, (The Swan Inn), here and that is a possible reason for his good performance.

However in the Athboy / Rath Cairn area where he currently resides he earned a mere 6.15% of the popular vote. This shows that Geraghty failed to get the most out of the 'friends and neighbours effect', thus damaging hugely his prospects of being elected to Dail Eireann.

Overall it has to be said that from the time it was announced that Graham Geraghty was standing as a candidate for Fine Gael in the 2007 General Election it always looked as though it was an act from a party that was not going to be beneficial in terms of winning two seats in the party. And as the results on May 24th showed, this proved to be accurate. Fianna Fail who ran two candidates won two seats, while Fine Gael with three candidates won only one seat. Geraghty, the party's third candidate won only 3.17% of the vote, thus giving much credence to the popular opinion that it was a mistake by Fine Gael to run him as a candidate.

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Experiencing the World through Digital Mapping

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How we are representing, interacting and mapping our world is evolving due to continuous developments in technology. Geographical visualisation production and usage is growing at a phenomenal rate, due to the introduction and advancement of new technologies such as GIS (Geographical Information System), multimedia cartography and web based mapping tools. They create new opportunities to analyze our physical landscape, environment and human behaviour. GPS (Global Positioning System) and GIS are growing and becoming more integrated with everyday life. With the ongoing productions of new technologies we are able to look at our world in new, different and innovative ways. People alive today are part of one of the most visual generations that has ever lived thanks to the development of visual technologies like TV, internet, digital cameras and camcorders. More and more is captured and constructed visually in today's world and in turn we are interacting with maps on a personal level and displaying what we capture by geotagging it to a particular location.

Maps have always been a powerful way to represent our world. Paper maps have been used by human beings for centuries for uses such as navigation, exploration and surveying. Now we have much more flexibility with cartography, we can update the continuous changes that occur in our environment much faster and with more accuracy through new technologies. These developments have reduced time and resources needed to produce a map. Through remote sensing, GIS, GPS and similar technologies and systems we can study issues such as deforestation, climate change and natural disasters and follow the changes as they unfold. By continuously monitoring, taking images, updating geodata sets and using real time data we can follow these changes. After Hurricane Katrina caused extensive flooding in New Orleans Google Earth (<http://earth.google.com/>) constantly updated its satellite images of the city so those who had fled could see their home. Even though they were removed from their home location they were still connected through digital mapping.

Digital mapping as a technology is growing and expanding at a rapid rate. There is a lot of excitement around “digital geography” as it is becoming easier for the public to access through a variety of websites and free software downloads like Google Earth. The digital visual element is making geography more interactive and allowing us to explore our location in different ways. We can zoom onto our roof tops from the comfort of our homes using software such as Google Earth. We can track people’s movements through mobile phones with the use of GPS and mapping software. We can explore unfamiliar territory with hand held devices or by using satellite navigation systems. The possibilities are endless.

Today we have the ability to instantly connect with anywhere on the globe. Whole communities take place in cyber space and now more than ever before we share personal information with virtual strangers. We are no longer limited to how we interact by our location. The internet allows everyday interaction with digital spatial information through virtual globes like Google Earth and NASA’s World Wind (<http://worldwind.arc.nasa.gov/>). Such ‘virtual globe’ tools are incorporating increasing levels of interactivity and data manipulation. More and more people are interacting with GIS whether they know it or not. What was once a specialist way of looking at the world is now available in the public domain. Google Earth for example has had an enormous impact, it is a system now used widely by the public and media alike. It has also allowed many countries open access to its own maps and information it didn’t have before.

Crowdsourcing, a term used to describe how mapping is being outsourced to the public instead of professionals. They are geotagging their own data in reference to a particular point on a professional base map, from a holiday photo to a review of a restaurant, therefore personalising the maps. By allowing the public to add their own data they get involved in deciding what should be mapped. Much more spatial and descriptive data of the landscape can be accumulated this way than a few professionals could do, though we have to be aware of the variation in accuracy of this data. Many businesses, companies and

individuals are taking advantage of online mapping tools to map their business or personal location with photos, videos and information. Many websites allow you to map virtually anything, from places where your favourite band has played to your holiday photos, by attaching them to specific points on a map that they refer to – geotagging. Neogeography is the term used to describe this new type of mapping. As people create their own maps that are spatially significant to them, they are visualising locations personally. There is a growing passion around geography, mapping and geotagging personal information. Neogeographers don't use traditional GIS programmes like ArcView but instead use software and toolsets provided by sites such as Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com>) or Platial (<http://platial.com>).

Google Earth has provided the software Google SketchUp for the public to create their own 3D buildings that they can place on the map. Again by using the public as a resource to edit and map, more buildings are created than paid professionals could do. For example if you go to New York and turn on the 3D tab you can move yourself into a horizontal rather than vertical viewpoint and explore the map by moving down different streets surrounded by buildings rather than looking at a flat map. This is just one of thousands of possibilities. People are mapping what matters to them such as models of their homes or their business. They can also create and upload their own maps through the use of GPS units. As GPS usage grows it is becoming more and more usable in everyday tracking and map making, as it gathers real time data that can be displayed on a number of devices e.g. satellite navigation systems, computers, PDA, mobile phones etc.

There is a vast array of uses for such devices with many maps available for download created by professionals or the public. Leisure activities for example can be recorded by the individual such as running, skiing, cycling even driving routes using their GPS system, marking waypoints and then uploading the maps onto the internet to share with the public through downloading. Tourist handheld interactive devices are using GPS technology to lock onto their location and provide them with information about their surroundings through pictures, stories, music, sound-effects and maps. These devices can be easily updated and changed. This technology is in the early stages but seems set to grow. Mobile phone ownership is increasing and many of these have integrated GPS capabilities. We live in an age when we can download software that use an individual's mobile phone to track their movements, using a GPS component in their phones. Imagine you could turn on a map on your phone and you could see the location of all your friends, family and employees on the same map. In the future, problems may arise as people are faced with invasion of privacy due to ease of accessibility. Employees may be forced to use the technology, parents may use it to monitor their children and teenagers, and anyone could track anyone. What implications will this ease of tracking mean in the future? GPS phones can also geo-reference a photo or video to the longitude and latitude it was captured at and then the user can upload and attach it to a map such as Google Earth or their own personally created one.

Technological developments have influenced cartography and the way geography is interacted with. Improvements in the internet will continue to drive this technology as more

tools become available for public download. Wireless internet is becoming more publicly available allowing more users access. People are interacting with maps on a personal level through a variety of technologies. We can explore the environment surrounding our home from soil type to air and water quality, through maps such as EPA ENVision (<http://maps.epa.ie/InternetMapView/mapviewer.aspx>). Real-time displays of spatial location are now possible, influencing navigation capabilities and decision making. Advancements in navigation tools will create further demand for innovative displays that allow users to occupy and guide themselves around unknown spaces. We can track people through the simple use of a mobile phone. As these technologies become more accessible and cheaper, they are set to become more mainstream with increased reliance on them in decision making processes. There is a huge range of ways to explore our world, so go out there and have a look!

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