

'Terra Incognita'?: re-spacing consumption in contemporary Ireland.

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Abstract

In the context of continuing modernisation and social and urban transformation, this paper will review contemporary representations and practices of consumption in Ireland. The paper argues that in common with other rapidly globalizing societies new patterns of consumption have reconfigured representations of place and society and opened up a series of contradictions about the role and identity of the state. The paper explores how moral panic about consumption open up debates about cultural identity but argues that more attention needs to be placed upon the social, economic and spatial contexts of in which changes in lifestyle and consumption have occurred. The paper concludes that shifts in patterns of consumption in Ireland reflect social and geographical changes, the transformation of contours of Irish identity and expectations, together with the creation of new sources of demand.

Keywords: Ireland, consumption, identity, spatial practices

Resumo

Este artigo discute representações e práticas de consumo contemporâneas na Irlanda, no contexto da contínua modernização e transformação social e urbana. Defende-se que, em comum com outras sociedades inseridas num processo de rápida globalização, novos padrões de consumo reconfiguraram as representações de lugar e identidade do Estado. Explora-se a forma como o pânico moral sobre o consumo abre as portas a debates sobre a identidade cultural, mas defende-se que se deve prestar mais atenção aos contextos sociais, económicos e espaciais nos quais as transformações dos estilos de vida e do consumo têm ocorrido. Conclui-se que as mudanças nos padrões de consumo na Irlanda reflectem as transformações sociais e geográficas, as alterações dos contornos da identidade e expectativas irlandesas, juntamente com a criação de novas fontes de procura.

Palavras chave: Irlanda, consumo, identidade, práticas espaciais

I Introduction

In the context of continuing modernisation and social and urban transformation, this paper will review contemporary representations and practices of consumption in Ireland. This paper will argue in common with other rapidly globalizing societies, new patterns of consumption have reconfigured the representation of place and society and opened up a series of contradictions about the role and identity of the state. In so far as they are seen to represent an up rooting of traditional perspectives, social spaces and values, across Europe, moralizing about consumption reveals a great deal about the contested question of cultural identity, particularly as the internal solidarity of nation-states are reconfigured by the forces of globalisation. Very often however these narratives of excess distract from the social, economic and spatial contexts in which changes in lifestyle and consumption occur. Theories of consumption with its emphasis on the interdependencies of producers, regulators and consumers offers many opportunities to clarify the relationships between the body, the urban and macro economic structures and processes. This paper seeks to address these gaps in knowledge about consumption in Ireland through an exploration of the contested arenas of policy making and a survey of the relationships between consumption and urban-lifestyle change. The paper will illustrate how consumption offers insights into both questions of cultural identity and new relationships people have to place in order to demonstrate the restructuring of socio-spatial relations in contemporary Ireland.

II Consumption and social change

In 2004, *The Economist* announced that Ireland had the best quality of life in the world. The index of 111 states, produced by the Economist Intelligence Unit combined data on incomes, health, employment, climate, political stability, job security, gender equality as well as what it termed "freedom, family and community life" (The Economist 2005). Ireland emerged as the winner of this global lifestyle tournament because it combined "...the most desirable elements of the new with the preservation of certain cosy elements of the old, such as stable family and community life" (Bowcott 2004). The reaction in Ireland to this news was muted. Undoubtedly the standard living of the population has been raised in general and growth has regenerated and developed wide areas of the country. In 2005 the OECD ranked Ireland into the top group of High Income Countries, along with Luxembourg, Norway, USA and Switzerland. However, whilst Ireland performs well on international league tables, examined at a national scale, a number of questions about inequality and the social and environmental costs of transformation have become apparent. Between 1998 and 2003, Ireland's inflation exceeded the EU-15 countries, increasing by 17.5 per cent between December 1999 and December 2003. A 2003 report by Forfás found that Ireland is the second most expensive country in the euro zone, marginally behind Finland. This has resulted in an estimated overall consumer price level which is 12% above the Euro area average (Forfás 2003). One outcome, according to the National Competitiveness Council is that in the four years to May 2004 the average price of Irish goods and services increased by 22 per cent relative to the countries main trading partners.

The conclusion – in particular as it has been propagated in the media – is that Ireland has become a ‘Rip-Off Republic’.

Together with the rising cost of living, the increased pace of everyday life, and the radical transformation of place, a more uneasy sense about the quality of life is present in Ireland than what is represented in international media. In particular the changes in patterns of consumption and its effects on way of life have raised concerns about the social conditions of Irish society. Consumption appears to represent the contradictions of increased prosperity and the loss of community. For the journalist, John Watters, commenting on the impact of the ‘Rip-Off Ireland’ debate the “... feeling exposed is not simply of being ripped-off. The feeling is of being part of a machine, a machine that grinds mercilessly week after week; demanding of us that we put our lives on hold, dump our children in the crèche, mortgage ourselves to the hairline and run ever faster to stand still on the M50 (Waters 2005). Water’s response connects to a deeper sense common amongst and middle aged and older generation of people, that consumption and economic growth is driving a more substantial remaking of Irish and lifestyle. For instance, new shopping centres are represented as the new churches. The Bishop of Dublin has observed: “I get the impression that the energy Irish people once put into achieving the salvation of their own souls – and the souls of others – has now been channelled into creating heaven on earth” (quoted in Alvarez 2005).

There is little doubt that new forms of consumption represent a fissure with the traditional organs of the state, notably the church. The decline of the established Catholic-nationalist order is a decline of identities defined around church and citizenship. Consequently, Cleary has argued

that identity in Ireland is “...increasingly articulated in terms of individual capacity to participate in various modes of consumer ‘lifestyle’ (Cleary 2004, p. 210). Amongst several public commentators, these shifts in the values of the Irish are a matter of acute anxiety. Emily O’Reilly, the government’s ombudsman and information commissioner has complained that “...released from the handcuff of mass religious obedience, we are Dionysian in our revelry, in our testing of what we call freedom...hence the staggering drink consumption, the childlike showing off of helicopters and four-wheel drives and private cinemas, the fetishizing of handbags and high heels” (O’Reilly 2004). These concerns were echoed by the Irish President, Mary McAleese on her inauguration in 2003 when she observed, “...we are busier than before, harder to please, less heedful of the traditional voices of moral guidance and almost giddy with greater freedom and choice. Our Constitution is an important ethical compass directing us to a practical patriotism, “to promote the common good,” to choose responsible citizenship over irresponsible individualism” (Macaleese 2004). Or, as the novelist Joseph O’ Connor, put it for more pithily for the *New York Times*, “...there are some of us who worship Versace the way our grandmothers worshiped the Virgin Mary” (quoted in Alizette 2005).

Anxieties about the links between consumption and ‘irresponsible individualism’ have found expression in government inquiries into obesity and alcohol consumption. The National Taskforce on Obesity reported that obesity rates rose by 3% from 11% in 1998 of men to 14% in 2002 and from 9% of women in 1998 to 12% in 2002. It has been found that Irish men are now amongst the most obese in the EU. Unsurprisingly the taskforce argued for a direct link between levels of obesity and

the marketing and advertising of processed foods. However, such bio-political concerns have been most intensely articulated in relation to alcohol. Both the *Report on Alcohol Misuse by Young People*, issued by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children and the *Second Report of the Strategic Task Force on Alcohol*, catalogued the problems of increased alcohol consumption (Joint Committee on Health and Children 2004; Strategic Task Force on Alcohol 2004). They reported that between 1989 and 2001 alcohol consumption per capita in Ireland increased by 49 %, whilst ten other European Union member states showed a decrease during the same period. In 2001, Ireland ranked second after Luxembourg for alcohol consumption, with a rate of 11.4 litres of alcohol consumed per person, compared to the EU average of 9.1 litres per person. Between 1995 and 2003, the amount of personal income spent on alcohol rose from 3.3 to 6 billion euro per annum, representing almost 2000 euro for every person over 15 years of age.

The increase consumption of alcohol is associated with social breakdown. According to Dr Sean Brady, Archbishop of Armagh, '...we may be witnessing another lost generation - a generation of young people who, instead of emigrating abroad, are leaving the shores of moderation, responsibility and spirituality' (quoted in Holland 2003). Senator Jim Higgins of Fine Gael has remarked that Ireland is '...facing an alcohol problem of epidemic proportions, which in the next five or 10 years will leave us on a par with the AIDS epidemic in Africa' (Higgins 2002). Such concerns have been quickly associated with a rise in urban social problems, notably street violence, but also a decline in moral values. In what can be regarded as a concern for the moral geography of the street in July 2000, a district court judge in Galway became a

focus of media attention when he refused to extend late-night opening hours for a number of nightclubs in the city. In a manner which betrayed the gendered nature of public space and discourses about consumption, he argued, "I hear from respectable young men they can't meet nice, respectable girls in these nightclubs. The girls they meet there are dreadful, at least that is what I am told". He continued:

What about the ordinary, respectable citizens of Galway? They are concerned about the hooliganism that goes on in the streets of Galway at the weekends. Do you want it every night of the week now? There is drink and mayhem on the streets. Not a weekend goes by but Supermac's window is broken. If people want a night out let them go out at a respectable hour. Of course, if the truth be known, you won't find respectable people out at all hours. It's uncivilised and a lot of them just won't go out (quoted in Healy 2000).

These concerns about alcohol reiterate the links that can be drawn between body, consumption and the city. One outcome of these concerns has been the increased regulation of the night-time economy, with the extension of CCTV in many Irish city centres now commonplace as the links between anti-social behaviour and alcohol consumption are affirmed in policing and other areas of social policy.

III Placing Consumption and Irishness

Concerns about Irish people's bodies and morality also sweep into representations of place where the spaces of consumption have been increasingly portrayed as symbolic of cultural dissolution and the decline of community. The M50 orbital motorway,

opened in 1990, was intended as a Dublin bypass. But with the city's public transport system in disarray, it became an engine of rapid urban development. Far from diverting traffic away from Dublin, the unfinished crescent of the M50 is now the main thoroughfare of an 'edge city'. This urban landscape has unsettled place identity and disrupted the geographical imagination of many of its witnesses. The Liffey Valley shopping centre on the M50 on the edge of Dublin, advertised on the radio "like a day out" has appalled cultural commentators and environmentalists alike. Anne Hourihan, the author of *She Moves Through the Boom*, is vague and ambiguous about the site; the "Liffey Valley shopping centre is long and low and beige in colour. It could be an airport, it could be a factory, it could be a hospital" (Hourihane 2002, p. 5). Her sense of displacement is underlined inside the shopping centre, when she encounters the 'South Beach Food Court' which attempts to simulate Miami. A loss of the sense of place and reference to non-Irish places is typical of this commentary. Mobilizing an apparently ironic nationalist plea, according to *The Dublin People* "...Liffey Valley Centre is like a transplanted Oxford Street and is practically owned by the Duke of Westminster. Is this what Pearce died for? Is it time to once again man the barricades and repulse the Saxon foe?" (Gormley 2000, p.47). Frank McDonald in his book *The Construction of Dublin* describes the area as a "weird world – almost a parallel universe – of interchanges, slip roads, drive in eateries and colour-coded parking zones" (Macdonald 2000, p. 173). This depiction of a world of alienation and transit echoes strongly theories of non-place developed by the French anthropologist Marc Auge, who represents a non-place as having no history, no identity and no social relationships, "...a

world thus surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral" (Auge 1995, p. 78). For MacDonald, used to reading the architectural form of Dublin, the illegibility of the landscape and his sense of estrangement – the collapse of what Kevin Lynch noted as "the mental image of the city which is held by its citizens" – is telling (Lynch 1960, p. 4). In a culture where the ongoing recollection of the city's urban fabric is central to both place and self identity, registering the inability to do is typical of the rhetoric of loss embedded in these concerns about the new spaces of consumption.

Condemnation of consumption is neither unique to Ireland nor indeed to this period in time. Miller notes there is 'an ancient suspicion' of consumption in popular culture (Miller 2001, p. 255). In so far as they are seen to represent up rooting of tradition perspectives, social space and values, the consumption patterns of new Indian bourgeoisie in Mumbai and nouveau riches Muscovites draws comparable levels of rebuke. During the 1920s, the consumption behaviour of the 'modern girl' or the flapper on the streets of Dublin – hair products and cosmetics, fashionable clothes and cigarettes – came to represent everything that was disorderly and morally dangerous to the strict values of the conservative elite (Ryan 1998). The distrust of consumption can be also be understood in the context of Ireland's history as a post famine society, and more directly as a society whose mores and values were largely forged in Catholicism, with its emphasis on self denial and fasting, notably through the period of Lent. That said, practices of private consumption do have historical precedence in Ireland, it's just that it's been underrepresented in historical research.

Recent condemnation of consumption often mobilises an undifferentiated idea consumer

society which represent consumers as foolish dupes and 'excess' as a universal activity. Aside from ignoring questions of inequality, where for example the state has intervened to offer school children in socially deprived areas breakfast, these perspectives show little recognition of the central role that consumption plays in the creation of self identity. Consuming and the social world go hand in hand in a more sophisticated way than narratives of anomie and cultural decline suggest. McCracken has observed "...without consumer goods, certain acts of self-definition and collective definition in this culture would be impossible (quoted in Miles & Paddison 1998, p.16). For example, for Irish emigrants, the consumption of food is an important way in which the transmission of cultural values and the connection to Ireland is maintained (Kneafesy & Cox 2001). In his research on worldwide celebration of St Patrick Day, Nagle found that soda bread, Ulster Frys, Irish Coffee, were especially prepared and eaten, in addition to the consumption of popular Irish brands like red lemonade, Kimberley biscuits, and Galtee cheese (Nagle 2005). Indeed rather than contemporary patterns of consumption denying Irishness, in terms of maintaining family obligations and gift relationships, these apparent practices of 'excess' may actually express fundamental traits of being Irish. In 2004 the average household spent €1,270 on Christmas, 75% more than the European average of just €725. According to Keohane and Kuhling, contrary to popular belief "...the extravagance of Irish spending at Christmas, weddings, housing, etc, represents a persistence rather than the erosion of Irish values of community and family" (Keohane & Kuhling 2005). If public debates about consumption reveal

something about contested versions of Irishness, they do not provide very good insights into way consumption responds to shifts in the economy and intersects with the rhythms of everyday life. In fact, research shows that most forms of consumption involve the satisfaction of everyday needs (Zukin 1994). It has long been recognized that consumer behaviour is shaped by an assembly of forces: demography (age, sex, income); geographical factors (urban and rural lifestyle, regional differences); socio-economic factors (social class, stage in family cycle); for the individual consumer psychological factors and taste. Amongst a number of sources which provide effective ways of tracking these factors are the Consumer Sentiment Index (CSI), the National Quarterly National Accounts (NQA) and the Household Budget Survey. These data-sets offer sober overviews of consumer behaviour. Both the NQA and the CSI are particularly useful in that they illustrate how consumers in the Irish economy react in similar ways to other economies. Household expenditure rises and falls in relation to job losses, employment growth and sense of job security, all of which are well known to affect the size and predisposition to spend personal disposable income. For example, following the slow down of the global technology sector and 9/11 event in 2001, the global economy shrank and these impacts were felt tangibly in the activities of consumers in Ireland. Together with census information, this data point towards mobilising analysis to understand more thoroughly the dynamics of lifestyle change, which are not to do with 'irresponsible individualism' but shifts in the economy and new sources and patterns of demand and supply of goods and services.

IV Spacing consumption

In Dublin, the pet population is changing. In popularity terms, cats are hanging in. However according to Euro monitor, the growth in apartment living and the soaring property prices in the city are putting space at a premium. The new trend is notably towards smaller animals – such as hamsters and chinchillas. Dogs are on the way out. The truth about cats and dogs in Dublin is helpful in that it highlights the effectiveness of taking into account the key socio-spatial factors that influence demand and reshape patterns of consumption. These shifts reveal deeper structural changes in the relationships between space, consumption and culture that may well be overlooked in macro-economic observations. Since the early 1970s, the population has increased by almost one million people. Life expectancy has increased significantly. The workforce has grown by almost three quarters of a million. Female employment has increased by over 460,000 and women now makes up 42% of those at work compared to 27% in 1973. There has been a significant growth in the number of households due to the increase in the number of people living alone and the greater frequency of second unions. In Cork for example, in 1971, 47% of all households were made up of couples with children, but this group had declined to just 30% by 2002. Over a quarter of all households in the city now are made up of just one person reflecting the decline of the average size of the household in Ireland from 3.93 in 1971 to 2.93 in 2002 (Edwards & Linehan 2004). This long term restructuring of the internal make up of households contributes to increases in consumer spending, principally as the costs of household goods and services are shared less. In addition, the increase in new

households in real terms has also increased demand. If 2004 there were 77,000 new house completions, it can be reasonably assumed that there will be a demand for 77,000 new cookers, fridges, beds, carpets and so on. Moreover, housing demand is projected to run at between 50,000 and 70,000 units per annum for the next 15 years depending on the pace of immigration. To conclude that people are going to DIY stores in a period of unprecedented housing construction in the history of the state – to worship at the temple of consumption – ignores this obvious source of new demand in the marketplace. It is more likely that people are going to buy varnish for their windows, tools to put up shelves and garden furniture so they can sit in small suburban gardens that will take the average new mortgage owner 35 years to pay off. If they ‘splash out’ on a bar-b-cue or a gas patio heater along the way to enjoy time with friends and family, it can be hardly represented as the decline of Irish values.

Through an analysis of the Household Budget Survey, the CSO have identified a number of changes in the structure of disposable income over time. Between 1975 and 2001 the proportion of income spent on food fell from just under one third of total disposable household income to about one fifth (Table 1). Ireland now ranks second lowest in the EU in terms of the amount of household income spent on food and non-alcoholic beverages. A number of patterns feature here: less money spent on clothes, less on fuel and electricity; the same on alcohol and tobacco; small increases in transport, slightly larger increases in housing and most significantly, very large increases in services. Higher incomes clearly have stimulated these demands, but so too have the changing environment. The impact of globalization and competition in term of providing lower

cost clothes and cheaper holidays has had a clear impact on the distribution of household income. The CSO (2004, p.13) concludes that "A greater proportion of disposable income being spent on services such as meals out, entertainment, foreign holidays

and other services". In essence the income spent on food is spent on services. However it's not clear if the increase in meals eaten out is a result of changing ways of life or conspicuous consumption fueled by an increased disposal income.

Table 1 Household Budget Expenditure 1975-2001

	1975	1982	1989	1996	2001
Food	30.3	25.0	25.8	22.9	20.8
Alcoholic Drink	11.4	12.3	11.7	12.6	11.9
Tobacco	4.4	3.4	3.3	4.8	4.4
Clothes and Shoes	10.7	8.1	6.7	6.1	4.9
Fuel and Light	5.9	6.1	5.9	4.9	3.3
Housing	6.1	5.7	7.2	8.0	9.7
Durable Household Goods	4.8	5.1	4.7	3.6	3.6
Other Goods	5.2	5.7	5.9	6.4	5.8
Transport	13.2	16.7	13.7	13.9	15.4
Services	8.0	11.9	15.1	16.7	20.2

In addition to changes at household level, geographical settlement and the restructuring of urban and regional time-space routines are important variables in explaining shifts in consumption. The failure of sustainable regional planning in Ireland has meant that dispersed settlement patterns, such as one off housing and ex-urbanization, simulates new demand for cars and fuel and for the services and goods needed to keep these vehicles on the road. In this sense, whilst the M50 and Dublin's edge city has been depicted as un-Irish, these sites are deeply embedded into the new lifestyles and time-space routines of people working, commuting and consuming in Ireland. It is on 'the edge' – of villages, towns and the city where the 'New

Ireland' is located. Within these emerging spaces, new pressures on personal time also alters consumption patterns. The closure of the majority of Bewleys café houses in Dublin was also emblematic of changing experiences of time in the city. Drinking coffee is no longer a leisurely pursuit. Like the speeding up of traditional dance steps in *Riverdance* - what been called "set dancing on speed" - drinking coffee from paper cups whilst on the move rather than sitting at a café table, is emblematic of the quickening of everyday life in Ireland as a whole. As the state sponsor's higher productivity from Irish labour, people are leading increasingly busy lives, as working and commuting hours lengthen. It has been established that workloads are particularly

high among the self-employed, employees and the parents of young children (McGinnity et al. 2005). As a result, consumers with less leisure time, demand greater convenience, which in turn reshapes the supply of goods and services. Changes in personal mobility also have echoes in consumption. The demands of commuting places greater time pressures on individuals travelling long distances or for long periods of time compared to those that do not. Commuters appear to spend significantly more money on fast food than other households (Keelan et al. 2005). Similarly, single men in urban locations consume chilled ready meals rather than spend time preparing food at mealtime (Reed, et al. 2003). Together with the increasing auto dependency of Irish society, these pressures on time help explain developments such as longer opening hours of shops, the success of new retail locations such as filling stations, and the inclusion of cinemas, fitness centres and restaurants in out-of-town shopping centres.

The Irish fast food and food retail sector has both responded to and shaped these new lifestyle changes. In these circumstances the growth of MacDonald's, Supermacs and other groups are clear beneficiaries. McDonald's has 68 restaurants in Ireland, 30 in the greater Dublin area and the remainder across the country. McDonald's opened its first restaurant in Ireland in 1979 on Grafton Street. It now serves approximately 150,000 people every day. Symptomatic of a temporal shift in Irish society, around the same time in the mid 1990s that RTE 1 pushed the start time of its earlier morning news show from 8am to 7am to meet the demands of commuters, MacDonalDs began to serve breakfast. The entry of Tesco, internationalised the distribution and sale of food and in particular promoted the sale of

ready-made meals (Vignali 2001). Outside the UK, Ireland is Tesco's largest market (Child 2002). However arguably, the most significant shift in retail provision has been the emergence of convenience stores networks. Since the middle of the 1990s convenience stores, Centra, Mace and Spar became a significant part of the Irish retail. First developed in the Netherlands in the 1930s, in 2004 there were 547 Spar and Mace stores in Ireland. Sales during 2004 reached almost one billion euros. SuperValu and Centra are in the retail franchise division of the Musgrave Group and service 630 independently owned supermarkets and convenience stores in both the Republic and Northern Ireland. Centra had sales worth €930 million for 2004. With regards to food consumption, the outcome is an established model seen in advanced industrialised societies, namely the dominance of core retailers in the distribution of food, the emergence of ready-to-eat products and the increased individualisation and de-traditionalisation of eating styles – in particular the decline of the family meal and the growth of eating out (Beardsworth & Keal 1997). Centra's advertisement slogan, 'For the Way we live Today' typify the way these new retail strategies deliberately set out to cater for emerging lifestyles. For Centra, the model offered by the company is in tune with the rhythm of contemporary Ireland. "It's very much part of city life. We're talking about the inner city, apartments, smaller families and a move towards shopping four, five or six times per week, which takes you back to the concept of convenience" (quoted in Connolly 1996). Spar has also recognised that "...a convenience store is really for families where both parents are working or where they can't get time to shop at weekends. Basically, it allows us to give easy access to what they want: ready meals, hot foods, deli. People

have less time to cook now and they want their freedom" (quoted in Connolly 1996).

The conclusion one can take from these strategies is that these stores respond to a segment of Irish society that is increasingly time poor. But there are also significant consequences for society in general. The dominance of this new retail sector is such that the turnover of the non franchised corner shop has fallen and many have closed. Aside from niche retailers who trade on local produces, this process has led to less diversity and greater homogenization in the food retail landscape of Irish town centre and villages. With the exception perhaps of the selection of local newspapers and postcards, a Centra in west Mayo is more or less the same as one found in Waterford city. Like the fast food sector, through their notable employment of labour migrants, these stores also reflect further a deeper restructuring of society and economy. Centra stores now employ some 6,000 people and the company is amongst the largest employer of migrant labour in Ireland. Tesco Ireland is also a significant employer of cheaper migrant labour, a situation where in some instances, the labour conditions for low-cost preparation of food has proved to be problematic (Sawicki 2005).

with modernization. It may be that new found wealth and the new terrain of consumption has unravelled what Giddens has termed "ontological security": "the confidence most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action" (Giddens 1990). However, whilst moralizing about consumption reveals a great deal about questions of cultural identity, attention needs to be placed upon the social, economic and spatial contexts of in which changes in lifestyle and consumption have occurred. Shifts in patterns of consumption in Ireland are not a result of fecklessness but rather reflect the social and geographical changes, the transformation of contours of Irish identity and expectations, together with the creation of new sources of demand. It is likely that new forms of consumption and lifestyles will continue to undermine older dualities, of urban and rural, of past and present, of North and South. In this sense, the transformations of patterns of consumption in contemporary Ireland are very profound, and reflect on many levels 'the way we live today'.

V Conclusion

Teasing out the nature and consequences of new forms of consumption on the island of Ireland presents a dynamic and challenging set of research questions, which this brief paper could only touch upon. At issue is the schizophrenic manner in which these forms of consumption have been greeted, which in turn reflects upon the problems encountered

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