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Coláiste na hÉireann Mhúaid

# **The ‘Suburban Imaginary’: Restructuring the rural village in Ireland and France**

Two volumes, Volume II

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## **Chapter 6 ‘Symbolically suburban’**

### **6.1 Introduction**

According to Jagose et al (2003), the concept of ‘suburbia’ exists not only in material form, but in the cultural imaginary, encapsulating “ways in which we understand, think about and represent the suburb to ourselves” (P68). ‘Suburbia’ thus refers to the representational construction of ‘the suburbs’ or a ‘set of ideological understandings’ of the same (*ibid*).

Different interpretations of ‘place’ are offered in the rural contexts of Dúnfarrraig in the west of Ireland, and Gireux, in the south of France. These differences stem from processes of suburbia occurring in quite separate forms in each country. While suburbia is emerging through a culture of ‘viewing’, manifest through the built landscape of houses in Dúnfarrraig, it has adopted a more abstract form in its French counterpart. Informed by tensions of interaction between local and outsider resident, suburbia has become manifest through the symbolic construction of ‘social spatialisations’ (Shields, 1991) in Gireux. Both rural contexts illustrate the highly ideologically bound nature of ‘suburbia’.

### **6.2 The new ‘visuality’ in Dúnfarrraig: The sea**

In Dúnfarrraig, tourism has provoked local consciousness of the unique aspect of Dúnfarrraig’s location in the middle of the Burren, yet also on the coastline. It is the sea, which has underpinned descriptions of Dúnfarrraig as a place of ‘holiday’, ‘seaside village’, ‘beautiful place in which to live’ by outsider and local residents. Local awareness of how the coastline has become the focal point of interest for tourists and local residents alike, is manifest in one particular business’s attempts to orient its activities towards the point of this ‘gaze’ (Urry, 1990, 2002), in order to capitalise on the ‘view’ of Dúnfarrraig. The Seaview Riding Centre, which has very recently ceased to operate as a riding centre due to mounting insurance costs made by its riders, previously offered treks around various routes in Dúnfarrraig since the late 1990s. One of these routes included the beach and dunes. This was a very popular route with riders, and horses cantering or trotting through the spray of the sea provided a spectacle of visual interest both for the passing tourist or local resident, and for the home owner.

Figure 6.2.1 Horse riders leaving the cove.



The spectacle of horses cantering through the spray of the sea, has directed the focus of the view for the motorist and homeowner, towards the coastline, where the spectator is encouraged to consider a leisured method of engaging with Nature and the landscape.

It is contended that the presence of horses on the beach has done more than provide entertainment for tourist and local. It has suggested a changing appreciation of the sea, from feared element of the Dúnfarrraig landscape, to an object of beauty with which a leisured and even social relationship, was possible. Thus, the first form of this way of engaging with the sea was through leisure based activities, popularised through horse-riding. It is an argument of this thesis, that a *second* form of engaging with nature has emerged as a result of this focus on the sea, as now local and outsider understanding of the beauty of Dúnfarrraig has become specific to a view of the sea, expressed through the architecture of houses. Ironically, the spatial spread of the village along a ribbon type of settlement pattern, actually facilitates this new emphasis of a sea view, rather than that of the Burren rock, which claims a greater cultural, historical and geological distinction than that of the sea.

Previously, houses were built along the main road of Dúnfarrraig with their back to the sea in order to provide shelter for crops, from the wind and rain which would come in

from the sea<sup>1</sup>. Now although houses continue to have their front door face either the mountain or the sea, the space or dynamic of activity within the house, has become oriented towards this view of the sea, rather than the mountain. This change in the orientation of houses is crucial towards an understanding of how development is affecting the shape of the landscape of Dúnfarrraig. Of the houses built since the beginning of the twenty first century, nearly all of these have been constructed to face the sea. This has essentially meant building houses along the main road of Dúnfarrraig in a pattern of ribbon development rather than clustered development which would hinder the view of the sea.

In most houses, the front garden opens on to the road which is the coastal route for tourists through north Clare. It is therefore the most visible part of the household from the road, and subject to the gaze of the passer by. However, rather than discouraging this rather intrusive form of 'viewing', the owner of the Bed and Breakfast has facilitated this gaze, through the creation of a cleft by the front gates or entrance to the property. This means that the inquiring tourist can safely pull in or park the car momentarily by the front gates in order to check a map, make a decision of whether to stay or move on, or to simply gaze at the spatial layout of the immediate environs of the house and garden (Slater and Peillon, 2005)<sup>2</sup>.

While the cleft in front of the houses provides a crucial mechanism in terms of attracting and detaining the flow of tourists passing on the main road for economic gain, it is suggested that the presence of the cleft and local consciousness of the gaze of the tourist of their house and garden, is indicative of a more symbolic process which is transforming the cultural, environmental and physical landscape of Dúnfarrraig as 'seaside village'. It is contended that a form of 'suburbia' is occurring in Dúnfarrraig, first initiated through the idea of providing a view through the activity of the horse riders at the beach, then realised through the changing dynamic of the internal space within the house, to cater for this view. Further, it is suggested that this

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<sup>1</sup> One farmer described how he could tell how bad the weather would be for that week, from looking at the sea. When the rain comes from the direction of the sea, bad weather tends to stay for a number of days. When the rain comes from the direction of the mountains, the bad weather will be gone in a short time.

<sup>2</sup> One outsider resident who operated a Bed and Breakfast service from her home until very recently, remarked that some tourists would pull in by her entrance and have their photograph taken under the sign for her business, which included her and their Christian names.

process is accelerating first through the introduction of the holiday home during the 1980s, then more recently through the guise of the developer who is capitalising on the desire for a view by constructing houses within close spatial proximity to each other. The effect of which is to produce a sense of the 'neighbour', a characteristic associated with the classic model of suburban living; while the way in which each house is appropriating this view through the construction of a 'viewing frame', is affecting a uniformity to the design emphasis of the built landscape. This uniformity, which is another characteristic of the classic suburban model (Jagose, 2003), indicates a culture of 'viewing', which privileges the sea and coastline as a focal point.

It is suggested that this identification of a pattern of 'viewing' as uniform in its aspect, although operating at the level of the symbolic, has very real implications for how the built landscape is being constructed, as topographically, Dúnfarrraig does not readily appeal to the classic American model of 'suburbia'. However, as a result of this pattern, Dúnfarrraig has become more synonymous with its coastal position along the western seaboard of Ireland, than for its unique location within the larger cultural and historical context of the Burren in Co.Clare.

### **6.3 Privatising the public view**

The importance of a view of the sea is articulated by an America outsider, Hazel, who is married to a local resident in Dúnfarrraig. However she explains that because she has grown up in an suburb of housing in America, she privileges the increased sense of space around her property in Dúnfarrraig, over this love of the view. Hazel remarks that while she loves the sea now, her understanding of what a 'view' means, has been influenced by her years living in suburbia where a view of the garden was privileged as the only recourse to Nature. This is unlike her husband Pat who was born and raised in Dúnfarrraig, and so grew up with a view of the sea, rather than of the neighbour.

"A view would be important to Pat. More so than myself. I mean, I grew up in suburbia in Yonkers like...y'know, everybody was busy working like, nobody really worried about the view. There was no view in suburbia like, it was just houses and your view is the garden. Y'know, you have your own little plot nice and that's it like."



Hazel used to manage her own Bed and Breakfast business until the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease, and speaks of how tourists who stayed with her in the past, would sometimes drop in for a chat. However, she differentiates this social practice from the continued practice of tourists to park in the cleft at the front entrance to her property. Hazel describes this as an intrusion to her space, explaining that tourists tend to stop there in order to take photographs of two Shetland ponies eating the grass in her front garden. She states that she keeps these ponies in order to keep the grass down.

“I guess when we were doing the B&B, maybe from a year or six months after we lived in the house. Like you’d have to keep the lawn manicured. So, we started cutting it and we’ve a tractor, somebody with a tractor comes in and cuts it...And then we have a bunch of Shetland ponies just to eat down the grass. People stop all day taking pictures. They just pull right into the driveway there outside the poles and they’d be there watching them now, for a while.”

The fact that she feels that individuals encroach on her property is indicative of her desire for privacy. She explains that because she has grown up in ‘suburbia’ in America, her understanding of her house and garden (space) is more private.

“Even down here around the country. There’d be certain respect for like, y’know, your walls are the spaces. The same as in the city now.”

Two things are of interest from this comment. First, the comparison between the use of walls to enclose, privatise and demarcate the boundary of the property, a key feature of living in American ‘suburbia’ (Jagose et al, 2003), with the same use of walls to privatise their space in the countryside. Secondly, the attitude of “respect” between neighbours for this mode of dwelling in the countryside, which resonates with confirmation, support for similar practice on the part of the neighbour for this use of space in the countryside.

Ironically, Hazel has created a view or spectacle of interest through the use of the ponies, similar to the effect of the horse riders at the beach. The purely functional aspect of the ponies as grass cutter, is transformed into an aesthetic object by the action of the tourists, and then embedded in the consciousness of the resident. The twin practices of the tourist, first of taking the photograph which aestheticises the object against the backdrop of the house, then of sitting in contemplative wonder in

the actual driveway of the garden, allows the tourist time to engage with the moment captured by the photograph, and to study the physical landscape within which the pony has been placed.

While any view of the ponies taken from the road at the cleft in front of the entrance to the garden, would necessarily involve including the house in all its suburban pillared glory<sup>3</sup>, Hazel's description of the cars parking in the driveway of the house, suggests that the more discerning tourist wants to take a photograph of the ponies at a different angle. She indicates how the cars would park at a right angle to the road, which would enable a sweeping view of the surrounding landscape, albeit still of houses. However, the same angle *excludes*, for the larger part, a view of her house, and contains the ponies within a small section of her front garden yet includes the broader scape of its hinterland beyond the four walls.

Meanwhile, the photograph which she takes of her own house in response to how she perceives Dúnfarrraig, has been taken from a height above the house from a high mountain path. Rather than take a picture from the road-side, she chose an angle which affords a sweeping view of the surrounding landscape and coastline, in which she locates her own house. To a large degree, this imitates the view which the tourists have taken of the landscape from her garden, but one which includes her house as a reminder of her family and work.

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<sup>3</sup> The front entrance to the house is flanked by two remarkable Doric columns.

Figure 6.3.1 Photograph taken by Hazel of her house.



This photograph which depicts how she perceives Dúnfarrraig, has been taken from a height above the house such as an elevated view from a high mountain path. Rather than take a picture from the road-side, she chose an angle which affords a sweeping view of the surrounding landscape and coastline in which she locates her own house. The house is located to the left of the picture, visible as a number of buildings together.



Hazel's house is to the right of the photograph, while the building which she originally used as a garage, has been converted into an apartment. This was used as lodgings for guests, when she operated a Bed and Breakfast. She is undecided about her current use for the building. To the back of the house, is a concreted yard which includes a hen house, washing line and barn. This area is not on display to the passing tourist or resident, unlike the wide expanse of lawn pictured here.

Their house now combines a view of the sea and privacy. As the house is actually opposite two old farmhouses, the site was elevated in order for a view of the sea to be possible over the rooftops of the houses. As a last touch, Pat placed a large column on either side of the front door in order to create a porch. These are remarkable columns which, coupled with an expanse of lawn to either side of the sweeping driveway, creates a sense of a plantation house in Dúnfarrraig. However, this use of columns also renders a sense of spectacle to the front of the house, combined with the lawn as a material form of the suburban aesthetic.

Contrary to this social reconstruction of ‘suburbia’ (Girling and Helphand, 1994; Jackson, 1985) through the lawn, outsider Cathy comments that it was the ‘sublime’ (Barrell, 1972) aspect of Dúnfarrraig which first caught her attention. She situates her initial experience of living in the village in terms of television programmes in order to illustrate how romanticised her vision of rural living was at that time. Cathy describes her first glimpse of Dúnfarrraig when she arrived with her partner nine years ago, as a “windy” and “rainy” depopulated place which held an intangible extrinsic quality. She goes on to detail her experiences of attempting to find a place to stay in Dúnfarrraig and setting up a computer business with her partner. The first place which they settled in, was a small cottage adjacent to the pub on the main crossroads of Dúnfarrraig.

“We’d moved from a lovely garden in Rathmines, down to this house with no toilet, no shower, no heating, no water, no furniture, no kitchen really, and eh, we moved in thinking it’s wonderful living in the country. This is just marvellous, y’know! And eh, it was very *To-The-Manor-Born*, y’know that programme? Or *The Good Life*. That’s what it was like. And we had goats and chickens and everything. And this is comin’ from somebody who used to go to the Pod [Dublin nightclub] and everything all the time. And goin’ to this. It was quite a different transition. But it was brilliant y’know. It – country – everybody kind of drops in and we used to see a lot of people all the time an’ it was brilliant”.

These programmes depict a gentrified approach to rustic living, the latter featuring two couples, one of which runs a farm by alternative methods. Both programmes glorify the principles of country living such as close neighbours, both in terms of support and proximity; farm living surrounded by animals and a fresh, untainted, almost innocent approach to life. *A Good Life* celebrates the simplicity of farm life of

one couple, by gently satirising the foibles of the upper middle class urban lifestyle of the next-door neighbour. Cathy's use of the programmes to illustrate her move to the countryside of Dúnfarrraig, romanticises the lack of basic necessities such as running water, heat and by implication, food, against a backdrop of goats and chickens. Her contrast with her old city life, glamourised by reference to a busy social life featuring a select night club in the urban capital, polarises her new existence in the country surrounded by animals and the easy socialising efforts of friends and neighbours.

Cathy and her partner moved from this cottage, into a house close by in the Rural Housing Operative. This is an estate of twenty terraced houses complete with neighbour and lawn: the first material introduction of features of the American model of 'suburbia' (Jackson, 1985) to Dúnfarrraig. Together with her partner John, they began a computer business in the living room of this house, using the upstairs rooms for their own private living space. The extent to which her own understanding of her business success in Dúnfarrraig is exaggerated and denigrated, almost in surprise that a business other than farming, could succeed in a rural setting, particularly given their rather basic beginnings.

“..and eh, we'd a couple of really good clients like Peter Mark and Roches Stores y'know. For a piddly little company down in the country, we were doin' okay.”

The company did very well and the couple were able to employ local workers to help with the amount of work. Paradoxically, the expansion of the company created a conflict of ideals for Cathy, as the presence of staff presented a visual reminder of labour which conflicted with her vision of what it meant to live in the rural countryside<sup>4</sup>. Through the close proximity of labour and leisure spaces, Cathy's need for privacy and particularly security, more generally associated with urban life, became an issue. She began to look for another house in Dúnfarrraig where they could live, while John hunted for a shed where they could conduct their business, separate to their home.

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<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Slater (1993) states that in the landed estates of the gentry, views were constructed to exclude the local people, as these represented a social form of work.

Her current plans for the renovation and extensions of the existing cottage, serve as a structural parallel for her changing attitude towards life in the countryside, and perception of Dúnfarrraig. From their first house which was exempt of the bare living necessities, but with an eclectic mix of chickens, ducks and neighbours, they moved to a house in the Rural Housing Operation, and finally settled in an isolated, somewhat dilapidated cottage dating from 1845. Where before she celebrated a lack of water and heat in her first abode in the area, as part of the charm of her introduction to life in the countryside, her movement between each house has influenced her understanding that even the features which she identifies as “original” in the cottage, are also “old-fashioned” and “in a bad state of repair”. Although this picture of ‘primitivism’ (Panofsky, 1972) satisfies the more ‘sublime’ aspect of the picturesque, Cathy’s desire need for privacy, has changed her perception of what it means to live in the countryside.

However, she remains adamant that she wants to leave the ‘neighbour’ of ‘suburbia’ (Jagose et al, 2003) behind. Unlike her partner John, who would ideally prefer to live in Dúnfarrraig, closer to the sea, Cathy is specific about why she loves living in the Caher valley, up the mountain from the village.

“In Dúnfarrraig, I would love to live down in Dúnfarrraig, be facing the sea – course I would, everyone would love to live down there, but I wouldn’t put it as top of my list if I was going to have a neighbour livin’ right next door to me and behind me. It wouldn’t interest me at all. So if I was goin’ to live in Dúnfarrraig, I would want to have a couple of acres around me...it isn’t doable.”

Paradoxically, while Dúnfarrraig is clearly defined in terms of its location facing the sea, its popularity has meant that it is now identifiable with one of the key characteristics of suburbia: the next-door neighbour. As the preferred view in Dúnfarrraig is of the sea, houses for the most part are being built side by side to form a line along the coast road, rather than a cluster. Cathy offers a condition for living back among a suburban neighbourhood, a couple of acres which would act as token gesture of the countryside setting, to separate her visually and spatially from her neighbours.

Ironically, while Cathy “would be reluctant to move back down towards the sea because anywhere down in Dúnfarrraig now, you’re gonna have a neighbour” because

“we lived in the city and we moved to the country specifically for the purpose that if you were moving to the country, that you wouldn’t have to have neighbours around us”, it is this same feature of Dúnfarrraig which she rejects on ideological grounds. However, the cost of this social isolation, means that it is difficult to find a babysitter. Cathy remarks that she will have to have more children if she wants her child to be able to socialise from their more isolated position in the Caher Valley<sup>5</sup>.

Despite its perceived suburban limitations, the strategic location of houses facing the sea, does allow the resident direct visual access to the most desired aspect of the Dúnfarrraig landscape. Indirectly, Cathy’s daughter Frances will enjoy the sea view from the large windows of the National School which she will attend within a few years. Cathy hopes that this view will instil in Frances, the love which she has for Dúnfarrraig. Similar to Hazel’s husband, Pat, Frances will have grown up in Dúnfarrraig understanding the place in terms of this view of the coastline.

“And one of the things is that she’ll be goin’ to school in Dúnfarrraig, hopefully it’ll still be open. And eh, she’ll be lookin’ out the window [of the Primary School] at the sea...and the sand dunes and the Burren...”

The privilege of living close to this view of the coastline is an expensive one. Instead, Cathy plans to “plateau the back [garden], and then maybe a pond up on the field, we’d like to do it.”

The replacement of a pond for a sea view lends an insight into the very real importance attributed to a view of the sea in Dúnfarrraig. While Cathy’s house is located within a minutes walk of the Caher river, which flows down the mountain-side, this aspect of her immediate surrounds, is not referred to. Instead, it is suggested that her view of ‘rural life’ has been informed by the desirability of a sea view, both through chat with friends in the pub and in houses, and by a visual discourse through the careful positioning of new housing developments with their emphasis on windows which maximise the view of the sea. This has transformed her requirements for a rural lifestyle in Dúnfarrraig, from the rather innocent rustic charmed bliss of *A Good Life*, to a more learned engagement with select features in the landscape. This

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<sup>5</sup> At the time of this particular interview with Cathy, she was in the very early stages of pregnancy and did not reveal this. She has since had a baby boy, and the family celebrated the christening with a party in the pub, to which the entire community of Dúnfarrraig was invited.

transformation of ideologies is projected through her current plans for a pond, a man-made structure, which will be visible from her kitchen window in the middle of the Burren landscape.

The organisation of the spatial entity of the field at the back of the house according to a rationale of garden with water feature (Peillon and Slater, 2005), ironically reproduces a type of suburban garden design (Girling and Helphand, 1994; Fishman, 1946), which includes a patio area, water feature, swings and other garden equipment. Further, the attempt to reproduce a popular feature of the landscape such as the sea, actually succeeds in distracting the viewer from other aspects of the 'natural' landscape through focusing the viewing frame of the kitchen windows on the man-made structure. Unlike other residents in Dúnfarrraig whose back garden will be subjected to the 'gaze' (Urry, 1990, 2002) of the neighbour because of their spatial proximity to each other, Cathy's view will remain private.

However, Cathy is adamant that she loves living in Dúnfarrraig precisely because it once fulfilled her rural ideal of neighbours and friends popping in for a chat or to play cards, at any hour of the day. This was possible partly because these friends were retired, and free of time constraints imposed either by family or work demands. Secondly, because the dilapidated cottage, then terraced house which she once lived in, were both situated in the village 'centre' of Dúnfarrraig. Her proximity to the shop and pub, both social centres in Dúnfarrraig, made it easy for her to become visible as a resident living on a full-time basis in the village. Therefore it is the spatial proximity of houses to each other in Dúnfarrraig, and their appeal to a 'suburban imaginary' which she rejects.

After her move to a spatially isolated dwelling on the outskirts of Dúnfarrraig, Cathy comments that friends from Dúnfarrraig don't call around as much, as she is now located off the main road. However, this predicament suits another outsider, Kate, who describes her love for her own "space", both spatially and socially. This sense of privacy is constructed through the space of her house and garden, while she remains resolutely detached from involvement with the community of Dúnfarrraig. For four months of the year, Kate lives in the nearby town of Lismaroon where herself and her husband manage and live in their hotel. Because of the intensive work which it



involves, she explains that Dúnfarrraig has become a place where she can relax and take walks. Perversely, it also means that she assigns little value toward socialising and integrating with the community in Dúnfarrraig, given that her work involves quite intensive contact with various different groups in the community of Lismaroon.

“You see, I’m in a very different frame of mind when I’m in each [place], because y’know, when I’m living in the hotel, I’m working...when I’m up here, I’m basically off, on holidays. I’m not at the heart of the community. I’m probably slightly insular in that I’m very guarded and jealous about my time in the winter. So one is work and one is holiday.”

Her involvement with the community of Dúnfarrraig is specific and purposeful, through her child who attends the local national school. It is suggested that Kate’s detached attitude from community affairs such as plans for developing the village, could be interpreted as being characteristic of two tenets of the American model of suburbia identified by Jagose (2003): subjective alienation and social isolation. She comments that people in Dúnfarrraig are more likely to meet her up a mountain on a walk, than in the pub.

The structure of Kate’s house has been altered in the last year through the addition of a sunroom to the kitchen, facing the sea. This sunroom is constructed to create a 180 degree vista of the surrounding countryside. Despite its height at seven feet, Kate claims that the sunroom is not visible from the road. Similarly, she emphasises that standing in the room, the road is still not visible.

Figure 6.3.2 Visibility from the roadside



A view of the coastline from the sunroom in Kate’s house.

This awareness of visibility, particularly from the road which is used by automobile, pedestrian and horse, reflects Kate's own concern to be socially invisible among the community, but also of a public concern to have an uninterrupted view of the landscape. There is a growing consciousness within the community, of not only possessing a view of the sea and coastline, but crucially, of not obstructing this view for other residents living within a close spatial proximity. This awareness stems from recent controversy within the community, regarding the construction of two large houses on an elevated site on a green road overlooking the sea. These two houses are unusual, identically built as three storey houses with dormer windows and bay windows enjoying a 180 degree view of the coastline.

Bitter complaint has been made regarding the way in which the houses encroach upon the view of the landscape. Although the front entrance to either house opens on to the green road, the design of the living room incorporates a square bay window. In addition, because the site is on the descent of the mountain site and the entrance to the houses is almost on a level with the green road, this means that the ground floor bay windows actually protrude out over the mountain-side and thus are quite visually prominent to the casual passer-by on the road.

In capitalising on their position, the two houses have actually *become* the view for the residents, their height and mass physically preventing the roaming eye from seeing beyond the two houses. While this is of considerable annoyance to the residents, the greater concern relates to how the houses may affect a precedent of planning rhetoric among other developers. Crucially, this much expressed fear among residents, articulates a spatial tension regarding the dominance of private 'spatialities' (Soja, 1985) over the public view. Other residents' view is now hindered: partly physically and partly symbolically, as now the eye is naturally drawn to the spectacle of houses, rather than to the view of the coastline.

Various stories have been postulated regarding the plans, application process and real intention of use for these houses. The applicants in both cases, are two American adults who live on a permanent basis in the United States, and it is understood within the community, that the design reflects in quite marked fashion, the American model of basement, first and second storey. The two houses are viewed as unnecessary by

the community, as the American family already have a house and garage on the site, built during the 1980s<sup>6</sup>.

Regardless of the intent, the construction of the houses has been arrested in the planning process due to a large number of design faults. One outsider describes the effect as “standing up like an Eiffel Tower in the middle of Dúnfarrraig.” While another outsider emphatically states that;

“They’re huge. When you come down from on top of the mountain, they’re in the way. Comin’ in from Knockree into Dúnfarrraig, you can see them. When you’re comin’ out from Dúnfarrraig from the other direction, you can see them. They’re there. They’re everywhere. They’re affecting the skyline. Drivin’ on the back road, they’re blockin’ the sea view. I think they’re disgraceful.”

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<sup>6</sup> The family house was built by the father of the applicants, who is a builder and was raised in Dúnfarrraig. He married an American woman, a nurse, and they decided to try living in Dúnfarrraig with their two young children, for a year. At that time during the mid 1980s, there was very little building work available, partly because tourism was still in its infancy in the west of Ireland and there was no demand for holiday homes. The children attended the national school for the year, but the family decided to move to America where the construction industry was beginning to boom. Every summer, the family returned, with visits to Dúnfarrraig becoming less frequent as the children grew up and moved out of home. It is speculated throughout the community, that the children will rent out the houses, rather than come to reside on a full-time basis in Dúnfarrraig, as indicated in their letters to the planning department of Clare County Council.

Figure 6.3.3 Privatising the public view of the landscape.



A sweeping view of the 'green road' in the 1980s.



Before the addition of the Americans' houses to the road. The presence of the JCB indicates the space where it will be positioned. The symbol 'X' marks the family home.



The childrens' houses are to the left of the picture, marked by the symbol 'X'. The family home is marked by the symbol 'Y'.



The Americans' houses are already affecting a planning precedent in the new housing structure beside it, which is visibly larger than the original house design behind it.

Similarly negative comments have been made by local and other outsider residents. By contrast, the same outsider points out another twin construction of houses, which has been built for use by two separate American families. She states that while the size of both houses has caused some disquiet in the community, the position of these structures is more sympathetic with its surroundings:

“...They fill in very nicely with the area, they’re – one of them is stone front with the house. It’s in away from the road...it’s down on the lower part of the road. It’s not affecting the skyline, y’know? It’s not affecting the view to the sea. So I don’t really have a problem with it.”

These houses have been built on the decline of the hill, sandwiched between an extension of the ‘green road’ to the front of the house, and the coast road to the back of the house. This means that although the rooftop is on the same level as the green road, the back of the houses enjoys the same panoramic view as other houses. Crucially, the positioning of the houses into the hillside means that they do not obstruct the view of the local or outsider resident, as they are hidden from sight.

Figure 6.3.4 Using space to construct roadside invisibility.



Symbol ‘X’ indicates the ‘green road’ to the front of the house, while symbol ‘Y’ indicates the coast road to the rear of the house.

Perversely, the disquiet caused by the houses has forced people to acknowledge the degree to which their understanding and attachment to Dúnfarrraig is influenced by the sea. As one local cheerfully remarked,

“People are obsessed about the view!”

Kate thus rationalises her successful application for planning permission, in terms of the non-visibility of her sunroom from the public eye, particularly given the position of her own house on the same stretch of road as that of the other two houses at the centre of the planning controversy. In her retreat from a more sociable relationship with the community, she has actively nourished a stronger relationship with the public landscape. However, she states that while she wants a garden, she doesn't want a lawn. The identification, then rejection of this suburban feature demonstrates Kate's attempt to resist suburban values manifest in the use of the lawn, which is omnipresent in the gardens of the local and outsider residents in Dúnfarrraig.

“There'll never be a lawn. From the day we built it, the one thing we said was we'll never have a lawn. It wouldn't be in keeping. Wouldn't fit in.”

While Kate explicitly rejects the suburban feature of the 'lawn' as an unsustainable feature in her garden space, the use of 'boundary walls', albeit at a low height, indicates the privatisation of her property. Further, this use of walls to demarcate her unit of landscape from others, claims a more symbolic, rather than practical role. Unlike Hazel's location on the main coast road of Dúnfarrraig, the road upon which Kate lives, is used only by pedestrians and vehicular traffic gaining access to the main road. With the decrease in farming, but particularly the increase of vehicular traffic on roads, cattle are now moved from one field to another by the back roads along mountain paths, rather than on the open road. Instead, the cow has been replaced by the car passing by on the road. Therefore, the increased use of stone walls demarcates, rather than protects the property of the resident against passing neighbour, rather than passing animal.

Figure 6.3.5 Kate's photograph of her view of the coastline.



Two things are of interest here. First, the height of the walls is deliberately kept low, in order not to obstruct the view of the coastline, a key attraction of Dúnfarrraig. Secondly, although both walls are man-made structures, the wall to the right of the picture is constructed from Liscannor flags, while the second wall is made of Burren rock and stones, which would have been taken from the field in which Kate's house is located. Arguably, the latter wall is more in-keeping with the rest of the Burren landscape, as the stone wall is commonly used to demarcate one field from the other, and is frequently used as a visual motif of the west of Ireland. In this picture, it is being used to demarcate the boundary wall of Kate's property. In so doing, it has provided a visual boundary or frame around a section of rocky Burren landscape, which falls within Kate's land, while showing nondescript green fields beyond.

The picture thus presented, suggests that the more unusual and unique landscape of the Burren is owned by Kate, while the familiar but ordinary landscape common to the whole of Ireland – not just to Co.Clare – is the public view of the landscape, as it is the view which the public has access to. It is argued that the careful retention of various grikes and rocks within this section, constructs a visual representation of the Burren landscape within Kate's private garden. However, this is clearly a symbolic act, as the second part of the 'garden' is tarmacadamed. The use of an internal wall separating either part of the garden, constructs a dichotomy of 'natural' and 'unnatural', or 'structured' and 'non-structured'. Regardless, the greater impact lies in the construction of a sequence of 'viewing' through the use of these walls, to recreate a sense of the 'picturesque' within the garden. The walls lend greater emphasis as they order or formalise the 'picturesque' according to the 'beautiful' (or structured, as the tarmacadamed area), and the 'sublime' (represented through the symbolic Burren landscape), while relegates the visual impact of the familiar green field beyond, as the 'ordinary' (fields of Co.Clare).



In a working paper by Slater and Peillon (2005), the front garden space is considered in terms of social relationships between residents in suburban Dublin, Ireland. This spatial entity is constructed as 'buffer zone' between the living spaces of the household and street scape, distancing the private from the public<sup>1</sup>. One of the ways in which this is achieved, is through the use of the garden wall. Slater and Peillon discuss how the height of the wall is class related in Dublin, where it is a sign of spatial affluence to be able to have a high boundary wall around the garden, without affecting the amount of light entering the house. In Dúnfarrraig, the use of walls operates according to a different rationale. Similar to suburban Dublin, the wall demarcates the property of the resident as private, but unlike Dublin, walls are kept low in order not to interfere with the view of the sea.

Recently, this idea of creating a garden space has extended to the caravan site which comprises almost 400 caravans. Some of these caravans are privately owned, and used as holiday homes by tourists who visit Dúnfarrraig on a frequent basis. These owners include a cohort of charismatics, who come every year for the Charismatic week in July and return later in the year for a holiday. Using the same principles of privatisation (Jagose et al, 2003) as the holiday home building or full-time home, the owner of the caravan will construct a boundary wall using lengths of twine and/or stakes stuck firmly into the ground. Similar to the house, it effectively demarcates the land around the caravan as private, despite the fact that the caravan remains within the public space of the caravan site.

Decking is also used, by a smaller number of caravans. However, rather than afford a view of the dunes and sea, the decking is being used here to extend the living space of the caravan.

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<sup>1</sup> Therefore the "only possible conditions for interaction between these opposing dwellers of space, is that of observation" (2004:3). Slater and Peillon comment that "this process of observation" is unequal, with the dweller in the house retaining the dominant position. Observation thus becomes a process of surveillance, enabled through the buffer zone of the garden.

Figure 6.3.6 Privatising the public



A number of features are of particular interest here. The overall impression is of an attempt to aestheticise the normally inelegant structure of the mobile 'home', through the use of flower pots and specific use of decking. In order to recreate a sense of 'garden', signifiers such as the garden bench, square area for use while dining or sitting out, and the front arch to represent the front entrance to the garden or property, are apparent. Crucially, not only is this a faithful reconstruction of the front garden, it also includes the alley or by-way to the side of the house, which, in suburbia, normally indicates the passage to the back garden where kennels and other pieces of domestic life, are kept. This side entrance is indicated here, first by steps which lead to the side space of the home, secondly, by the two kennels which have been placed on the decking. In line with the rest of the 'garden', a pot of flowers has been positioned between the kennels in an attempt to aestheticise the quite functional aspect of home life. Ironically, because the side entrance in suburbia is indicated by a gate or door, this view of the kennel and shed, is normally hidden from the gaze of the passer by. Here, because garden space is at a premium, that luxury is not available. Therefore, the judicious attempts of the mobile home owner, to place flower pots at strategic locations, demonstrates a consciousness of the gaze of the 'neighbour' or passer-by, in the caravan-site.

The visual effect of the decking, is to create an external living space which appears to double the space initially afforded by the caravan. It also lends a sense of permanence to the caravan, which is mobile by character.



The use of wind break affixed to posts around the caravan, recreates the garden fence and single front gate.



Again, the idea of the garden space is formalised by the construction of fence as boundary wall, and double front gates. The wider use of garden space and larger gates, indicates the car entrance and proverbial driveway into the property. The driveway in particular, is iconic of suburban practices (Jackson, 1985), as this encloses the car within the privatised unit of that 'spatiality' (Soja, 1989).

However, it is debatable as to whether the idea of the 'garden' (Pugh, 1988) works here, in the middle of the caravan site. Undeniably, the way in which the boundary wall operates in the garden of the full-time or part-time resident, is to demarcate the space as private, a characteristic of 'suburbia' (Jagose et al, 2003). The caravan site is a 'collective' (Urry, 1990, 2002) space for holiday purposes, which is then contested by practices of demarcation which represent that space (Lefebvre, 1991) as private (or 'suburban', Jagose et al, 2003), and crucially, for individual consumption (Urry, 1990, 2002).

Despite these attempts to construct a garden and viewing platform in the middle of the caravan site, the only view is of a mound of dune, rather than that of the mountains. Further, there is no attempt to locate this home in terms of the Burren, as dunes are synonymous with the seaside, rather than with limestone rock. Lastly, while the overall effect has been surely to aestheticise the rather ordinary appearance of the proverbial caravan, the rudiments of camping life such as the gas cylinder, poses as a contradiction to these attempts to aestheticise the caravan. The placement of the cylinder by the side of the caravan, unintentionally replicates the idea of the side passage from the front to the back garden of the house in suburbia<sup>2</sup>.

Thus the ubiquitous tarmacadamed driveway, tidy lawn with border, flowers and ornate gate, first instigated by holiday homes, and recently by indigenous houses, would indicate the veritable presence of a suburban culture in the countryside which is influencing how people are rationalising their garden space, front and back.

#### **6.4 Framing the private space of the garden to appropriate the public view**

This refers to what the resident wants to place in their viewing line of the coastline, and implies two spatial practices: what to include in the garden, and then how to frame that view. A number of features have come to occupy the garden space of most houses in Dúnfarrraig: the park bench, the exotic<sup>3</sup> tree/plant such as the cordyline, the rockery, patio area and lanterns. Probably the most frequently occurring of these features, is the 'rockery'.

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<sup>2</sup> However, the placement of the gas cylinder could also be related to the layout of the inside of the caravan, to the placement of the cooker within the caravan.

<sup>3</sup> Defined here as 'exotic', as these plants or trees do not grow naturally in the Burren landscape, but are planted by the resident. Therefore, it takes a social form to represent the 'exotic' (Slater, 1993).

Unlike the park bench, the exotic tree, decking or the lantern, the limestone rock which comprises a large aspect of the 'rockery', is a naturally occurring phenomenon specific to the Burren. During construction of the house, most of the limestone rock in that site will be broken and destroyed in order to lay the concrete foundation on the soil underneath the rock. To retain a portion or section of Burren rock as part of the future 'garden' structure, or within close proximity of a view from the house therefore, requires careful planning. It is suggested that the increasing use of the idea of the 'rockery' alongside the proverbial lawn in the garden of both the outsider and local resident, indicates the symbolic construction or retention of the public Burren landscape within the private landscape of the garden. This concurs with Robertson's argument that the 'local' has become an aspect of the global, that globalisation or global processes involves the reconstruction of home, community and 'locality' (1996:30), as Dúnfarrraig is being socially constructed through the interpenetration of local and global. The 'local' is being conceptualised here as the Burren rock, which is part of the public view of the landscape. By appearing to remove this section of the naturally occurring landscape from the mass of limestone rock *outside* of the garden walls, through encouraging grass (lawn) or meadow to grow beside the 'rockery' *within* the garden, this section of the private garden becomes a symbolic representation of the public landscape of the Burren.

This practice involves a kind of virtual appropriation of the Burren landscape, as it relies on the *retention*, rather than reconstruction of pieces of that landscape, in the garden. While undeniably the rockery is still essentially part of the indigenous landscape, it is constructed as exotic in the garden of the resident because of its placement beside the suburban ordinary landscape (Bell, 1985), such as the lawn (Jackson, 1985). It is now an essential part of the view of the landscape of Dúnfarrraig, a symbolic representation of the indigenous, now constructed as 'sublime' alongside the 'ordinary' landscape of the suburban lawn.

Figure 6.4.1 Positioning the landscape in order to view it.



This shows the back of the two American houses which have been built into the decline of the mountain and whose orientation is towards the sea. Central to this argument, is the construction of a 'rockery' area to the immediate back of either house, which is framed against the neighbouring field by the use of large stones to demarcate the boundary wall of the property.



A view of a local front garden from the road, but more importantly in this context, the residents view of the coastline. This includes a gravelled area immediately in front of the house in which shrubs and grasses have been planted. To the left of this, is a type of cordyline tree, while the rest of the garden consists of lawn. The wheelie bin poses as an aesthetic contradiction for the view of the passer-by of the garden (Slater and Peillon, 2005), but its presence is kept out of the viewing path of the observer within the house.



The side garden of an outsider who placed her rockery within her view from the kitchen window of the surrounding landscape, "...so that the same flow will exist, although it's my garden, and I'm trying to pick out the colours – nothing yellow for example, because there's nothing yellow in the sky or in the sea...and anyway, the alpine's and the shrubs that are in, when you look at them, they've got the same movement, y'know the way they grow and climb the rocks."



A local residents front garden, which features a sculpture with weather-cock at the top, placed in the middle of a lawn. The sculpture is made from Burren limestone rock, and is a variant on the theme of the 'rockery'. It is a clear example of increasing aesthetic sensibilities in a community which is importing raw resources from the natural landscape to create a very visual spectacle in the private space of the front garden, which incidentally is on display to the passer-by on the road.

What is peculiar to each of these houses, is the lack of any real distinction between the front and back garden, as both are within view of the neighbouring resident and the passing tourist on the road. The idea of the back garden is similar to MacCannell's (1976) concept of the 'backstage' region, where any aspect of the house not on view, remains functional. In some of the older farmhouses or the house which is situated on a more elevated site such as Hazel's house, this is still the case. However, these remain the exception, rather than the norm. With all other houses in Dúnfarrraig, the factor determining the level of aesthetisation of front *and* back areas of the garden, is their degree of visibility to the public 'gaze' (Urry, 1990, 2002), as this in turn has determined which areas are to be placed on display (Jagose, 2003; Jackson, 1985; Slater and Peillon, 2005).

One local resident, Eileen, who lives within 100 metres of a cove in Dúnfarrraig, describes her view in terms of the lane which leads down to a cove near her house, and the sea. Eileen has lived in this townland of Dúnfarrraig called 'Coiscrew', all her life. When she got married to her husband Tim<sup>4</sup>, her father gave them the plot of land beside the family home, for them to build a house on. Unlike her family home, which faces towards the mountain, Eileen's house reflects the new orientation of current houses, facing the sea. Eileen works with her husband in the local shop and explains that because of the long hours of work, neither she or Tim have time to make a garden in the field surrounding their house. Instead, she states that they have placed a garden bench against the wall of their house facing the sea, from which they sit and admire the view of the lane, cove and sea.

In recent years, this small lane which accommodates four houses, has been filled with rough stone to make a smoother journey for passing vehicles. The improvements to the 'green road' have included a specific stretch of the lane, from the last house, Eileen's, to where it stops at the main road. Both Eileen and her husband prefer the latter stretch of the lane, which has been almost completely covered by growing mosses and grass. This untouched piece of land which is in the viewing path from the windows of their house, represents memories of a remembered past from childhood and incidentally, of a forgotten village whose last resident was Eileen's uncle.

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<sup>4</sup> Who was born in Neagle, a deserted village between Dúnfarrraig and Knockree.



Figure 6.4.2 A 'hybrid' (Slater, 2000; O'Connor, 1993) of 'old' and 'new' topographies.



The symbol 'X' shows Eileen's house in relation to the lane. The view of the lane as photographed here, is of that section which continues from Eileen's house as the last house on the lane, to the cove. This picture was taken in order to show Eileen's view of the lane, rather than the cove to which the lane leads.



Eileen's depiction of the part of the lane which has been improved by Clare County Council in order to allow vehicular traffic access to houses on the lane, from her house to where it stops at the main road. Just slightly off centre, is the pub, indicated by the symbol 'Y', but also clearly visible from Eileen's house due to its bright blue colour. Eileen and her husband Tim, describe their fondness for the road as it used to be, and as represented in the previous photograph. They emphatically assert their good fortune to be the last house on this road, as their view and use of the road, is as it was during her childhood.

Thus, her understanding of this part of the sea is linked with her childhood memories. This view of the road, cove and stretch of ruins of houses has escaped the modernising touch of Clare County Council, and enables her greater place attachment to this section of Dúnfarrraig which is visible from her house and garden. It is argued that Eileen's section of the lane holds a similar representational value as the 'rockery', as it is part of the local landscape which has been appropriated for visual consumption, and as such, assumes a social form (Slater, 1993) – in this context, of attachment through memories. Modernising the lane, would eliminate these memories.

### **6.5 Framing the view**

The concept of a 'viewing frame'<sup>5</sup> has become manifest on the architecture of most houses in Dúnfarrraig. It was first started by holiday home owners who actively sought to maximise the view of the sea by incorporating features of the suburban house structure such as sliding doors, decking, bay windows and balcony, into the architecture of the house in Dúnfarrraig. However, this quite structural manner of appropriating a view of the landscape, has *also* been incorporated into the design of the house and garden space of the local residents. Crucially, the desire to incorporate this view of the coastline into the architecture of the house, is actually determining the orientation of the house, towards that view. One particular outsider resident shows a photograph which she took of the outline of the foundations of a house which is under construction in Dúnfarrraig. She explains that her interest in this house is to see the structure of the house foundations in relation to the view of the sea. Obviously, an assessment of structural features, such as a large window, balcony or bay window which may be used to appropriate a view, is not possible at this point.

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<sup>5</sup> Which refers to the practice of framing the view.

Figure 6.5.1 Orienting the house



The outsider resident remarked that, “I’m interested in seeing what it’ll do with the view.” This photograph was probably from the ‘green road’, which is on a slightly more elevated position, up the mountain. The main road is not visible here, as this site is on a height, overlooking the same. This elevated position means that the site will be able to look over the rooftop of any development which occurs within this line of viewing.

However, other houses in Dúnfarrraig show more clearly the architectural methods they are using, internal (such as the use of balcony or windows) and external (patio area, decking) to the house, to frame the view of the coastline.

Figure 6.5.2 The 'viewing frame'



A viewing structure of the coastline using decking to construct a 'patio'. Wooden steps which are flanked by pots and shrubs, invite the viewer to move towards the view, which is framed by rough gravel and a boundary stone wall.



The structure to the centre of this image, shows the old national school of Dúnfarrraig, which has been extended to include a balcony with large windows and double doors on the first floor.



Photograph taken by respondent, of the view of her back garden. This is in two parts; the structured section is indicated by Liscannor flagstones which create a wall or balcony type effect, from which Deirdre can survey the landscape, or the second section of her garden. The lanterns and steps provide the frame for this view of the rest of the landscape, flanked by cordylines. Deirdre has left this part of the 'garden' untouched, and therefore, unstructured. The use of Liscannor flagstones as steps into the garden, suggests a continuation of flow from the structured viewing space of the house, through to the unstructured and 'natural' space of the landscape.



This picture shows the two houses at the centre of a controversy of planning in Dúnfarrraig. Each boasts a square bay window, which provides a 180 degree view of the landscape.



Ironically, the balcony structure is a variant of the bay window, with the only real difference being that the *internal* space is restricted to a direct view of the coastline, rather than shaped to provide a panoramic view. Indirectly however, the external space provided by the size of the balcony, would facilitate another living space for dining or entertaining purposes, albeit among the elements. The real difference between this and the previous American house however, is in their positioning of the house in relation to the mountain-side. This house is built into the incline of the mountain, then covered in its entirety with a stone façade. Arguably, this helps to blend the house into the landscape, with its emphasis on replicating the stone of the Burren landscape as a ‘natural’ material, rather than the brick.

This use of decking, large double windows, bay windows, balcony and patio, provides a very visual sense of how the resident perceives Dúnfarrraig: in terms of its coastline. A few residents have also built extensions or conservatories onto the side of their existing houses. One local resident describes the importance of a view for her house. She comments that:

“I’ve small windows, and in a way, I regret that because I’d like to have a better view...of the sea.”

while another local, Matthew, who lives up the Caher valley, talked about his family’s plans for a patio in the back garden of his house. Initially, his parents had hoped to run a Bed and Breakfast business, and extended the back of the house into a bedroom.

They used sliding doors to “maximise the amount of light that comes into this little room”. However, he admits that architecturally, it is a flawed design, as

“the window should be there and there should be another window there [on either wall], but either way... You could have em, a patio out there. It’s just em, to really, to allow a lot more light in and obviously to have a view of the mountains.”

Crucially, Matthew states that the idea of a patio was prompted by this culture of decking, rockery and balcony, which is becoming omnipresent in Dúnfarrraig.

“Ah, just I guess the...your surrounding environment, lots of others [houses] were being built, started to do this [patio], and y’know, *you’re always influenced by that like.*” [Italics added]

This acknowledgement of a practice which seeks to replicate or imitate the spatial practices of the ‘neighbour’, is of central importance to this theoretical argument. It demonstrates the active engagement of the local or outsider resident with ideas manifest through the built environment, of the ‘neighbours’ house and garden. This quite abstract interaction of ideas, has affected a method or way of engaging with the landscape, which requires constructing the garden space as private space but with a public view. This entails rationalising the garden space or part of the garden as a viewing platform of the surrounding landscape, in order to situate oneself in relation to the surrounding hinterland (Slater and Peillon, 2005; Slater, 1993; Barrell, 1972).

As Matthew’s work involves guiding tourists around the Burren mountain landscape, he sees a clear differentiation between the private external space of his garden, and the public space of the surrounding hinterland.

“Because obviously it’s [the garden]...you manicure it, you cut it, y’know, you tend to it, you care for it. The mountains are more wild. They have a more functional value. This [the garden] is for aesthetics.”

This understanding of aesthetics, is informed by a proliferation of lawns, garden benches, flower pots and rockeries, in the garden of neighbours and friends in Dúnfarrraig. While these feature as objects of visual interest in the garden, their presence serves to differentiate the garden as ‘manicured’ or socially constructed

according to this culture of 'viewing', from the 'public' landscape of the Burren mountains.

This perception of how the private landscape is being aestheticised has prompted one retired outsider, Niall, to plant a variety of trees such as ash, sycamore and beech, on either side of the length of a 'green road' in Dúnfarrraig. He stated that he wanted to construct a sense of an 'avenue' in order to bring a sense of graciousness to the area, and hired a local resident to pop seeds at regular intervals down the grikes of Burren rock. As yet, there is no visible evidence of this work along the road. Remarkably, the 'avenue' (Jackson, 1985) is an American concept in suburbia, using trees dotted along the footpath of the road, to create a gentrified residential environment. Niall is using the tree to construct an 'avenue' which will reflect the suburban model of 'Llewellyn Park' and 'Riverside'- the design of which placed much emphasis on the idea of combining the rural countryside with an urban lifestyle (Girling and Helphand, 1994).

However, Niall's preoccupation with the 'green road', is not merely about framing the view of the road or coastline, as he situates his interest in the road in terms of the activities of his neighbours who live on the same road. Thus, this gesture is not merely about aestheticising the rural landscape, but also represents an attempt to gentrify the road lane which he understands as residential and comprising a mini suburban enclave of neighbours (Girling and Helphand, 1994). This is despite the fact that this 'green road' does not conform to either the classic American model of 'suburbia' (Jackson, 1985), or the Irish experience of suburbia occurring both within and on the periphery of Dublin city (Corcoran, 2000; Punch, 2000; Bartley and Saris, 1999). Rather, the recreation of characteristics associated with the suburban topographical ideal such as the tree-lined avenue, constructs a symbolic version of 'suburbia' in Dúnfarrraig, which relies on a partial recreation of the material form of 'suburbia'. Crucially, it is suggested that the success of this project will be determined by the extent to which the material reality will realise Niall's vision of the 'avenue', which is located within his 'suburban imaginary' (Silverstone, 1997).

This concept of the 'avenue' joins a list of features such as the rockery, garden bench and others, which are creating a visual sense of aesthetics to the privately owned landscape in Dúnfarrraig. Accessorising the garden also involves aestheticising the



front appearance of the house, as an increasing number of residents are now using stone-work as a façade to cover the brick work of the house, while others are adding features such as name plates, lanterns, window boxes and so forth, for the same purpose. In some cases, stone-cut has been used to cover or add colour to certain aspects of the external wall of the house, rather than the entire framework of the structure. However, an outsider who is an artist living in Dúnfarrraig, quite vehemently disagrees that the changes to the physical landscape reflect a culture of aesthetics. Geraldine remarks that the juxtaposition of the old plaster work with this “patch-work type of effect”, is producing a visual effect which “jars”. This effect is partly due to the extent to which the conceptual basis underpinning the use of a façade - as the reconstruction of the traditional design (MacCannell, 1976) – is continued throughout the internal space of the house.

Figure 6.5.3 The ‘new’ aesthetic – the façade.



Stone work on the façade of a locally owned house. Attention is directed to specific features of the house through the use of colour, such as the entrance porch with its red door and black door hinges, which represent attempts to reconstruct the traditional Irish stone cottage. However, as the façade of stone cut is only covering the immediate front section of the house, yet the red colour of the door is continued around the side of the house through the two windows, it is suggested that the design of the house is not attempting a true reconstruction of the traditional stone cottage. Instead, by separating the stone cut design from the white washed side wall, yet continuing a line of symmetry around the side of the house through the use of the red colour, a sense both of harmony and disharmony is achieved in equal measure. It is suggested that this effect is intentional, and is achieved through the ‘hybridisation’ or mixing ideas from the old cottage structure with modern style details, to create a façade. This effect is made complete first by the cordyline in view of the passer-by from the road, which is not a naturally growing tree of the Burren landscape, and secondly by the velux windows, which demonstrates the modern emphasis of the house.



The front view of an old cottage recently purchased by an outsider, Deirdre. She explained that she changed the colour of the front door to red, and added black door hinges. The black hinges and red door provide a visual contrast and draw out the reconstructed traditional design of the front door. She also gave the house a name, 'Lina'. Despite the appearance of a front entrance in this photograph, this door is never used. Instead, Deirdre uses a door to the side of the property which opens on to the utility, and then onto her kitchen. As the utility room is roughly the same size as the entrance porch shown here, while also accommodating washing machine, dryer and other machines specific to the domestic requirements of the household, the space provides a 'back region' (MacCannell, 1976) for the greeting of friends and strangers alike. Inasmuch as the utility room has replaced the function of the porch as entrance hall, it is suggested that the washing machine provides a necessary prop in the construction of a welcome which is imbued with informality and a sense of the familiar. However, the presence of a vase of flowers (daffodils) suggests that this familiarity is operating on a level of representation, as the use of the aesthetic is an attempt to redress the balance between the everyday lived reality, and the construction of an entrance space for both family *and* visitors.



A view of Deirdre's house from the back. The structure clearly shows the addition of an extension to the rear of the property. This part features large windows on the first floor, which boast a view of the sea, while the ground floor has a sliding double door, which opens onto the patio area. Crucially, while the first part retains the traditional features of the cottage, the second part is demonstrably modern. This, and the other local house, are examples of what Geraldine described as the 'patch work type of effect' on the landscape.

Geraldine describes this use of stone, as "a patchwork" which "is false. It's a false stone house". While it could be argued that the incorporation of stone to the outside of the house, is an attempt to integrate or blend the structure into the natural limestone of the Burren landscape, Geraldine disagrees, maintaining that "it's being one thing and trying to plagiarise another. The progression of houses is not mixing in a good way".

It is suggested that what Geraldine is observing through the juxtaposition of the contemporary stylistic technique of the stone-cut façade and rockery, is the proliferation of a symbolic culture of representation, first initiated by the 'global' outsider resident, then incorporated into the local homestead. Stone-cut is an attempt to reflect the visual aspect of the Burren rock, as well as of the Irish stone cottage, which is the greatest cultural signifier of the area. What is important is the way in which this type of material is used; either to cover the entire brick-work of the house, which gives the impression of blending the house into the landscape; or to cover a section of the house. The latter quite deliberately identifies the material as façade or as decorative mechanism for the house, and instead, highlights its 'representational'

(Lefebvre, 1991) rather than structural value. Thus, local imitation of this practice by the outsider, is resulting in a highly visual culture of symbolic representation, or 'representation of place' (Lefebvre, 1991) in terms of a new aesthetic.

The use of props such as decking, garden bench, balcony and double windows to construct a 'viewing frame' of the coastline, demonstrates the changing relationship of the resident to the surrounding landscape; while recent consternation within the community regarding the height and position of houses in relation to a public view of the landscape, indicates the changing relationship of the resident towards houses within the landscape. Local and outsider agitation in this last instance, has focused on the use of bay windows to maximise the view available from within the house, which has minimised residents' own view of that aspect of the countryside. Crucially, this controversy has articulated how widespread the concept of the 'viewing frame' has become.

## **6.6 Summary**

It has been argued that the repeated practice of the use of the 'viewing frame' and practices of symbolic representation, indicate a transformation to the built landscape of Dúnfarrraig, which is being informed by a change of the way in which residents are relating to that landscape. The net effect of this change has been to render a certain uniformity to the style and architectural features of the houses. To add to this, as the favoured view in Dúnfarrraig is of the sea, houses are being built in increasing spatial proximity to each other, producing an awareness of the 'neighbour' – a characteristic of the American model of suburbia (Jagose, 2003; Jackson, 1985; Girling and Helphand, 1994). Although a construction of 'suburbia' is more apparent at the level of the symbolic, residents are identifying hieroglyphics manifest in the physical landscape which can also be interpreted as 'suburban'. Arguably, this adds to the complexity of how this process is occurring. Crucially however, it is an argument of this thesis, that those residents who are naming these changes as 'suburban', or as indicative of a suburban lifestyle, are actually referring to a previous understanding or imaginary of 'suburbia'.

Yet residents also maintain that Dúnfarrraig is a rural village. Silverstone's (1997) treatment of 'suburbia' as a concept which encapsulates a certain mindset or set of

values, is more applicable in this context, as it captures this emphasis on the symbolic and its appeal to the 'suburban imaginary'.

## **Chapter 7 A similar suburban story? The French tale**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Although the type of interaction which is occurring between local and outsider resident in Gireux, is being conceptualised in terms of a symbolic construction of 'suburbia', the form through which change has become manifest, is not easily visible. This is because 'suburbia' is adopting an abstract form, recognised only by its residents, partly in criticism of other residents living in Gireux.

### **7.2 An old visuality : the local family**

Despite the influx of outsiders to Gireux, the physical appearance of the village has not changed. This is unlike Dúnfarrraig, whose outsider residents have initiated a culture of 'viewing'. A number of postcards and recent photographs of the same images, demonstrates how visually, the built environment of the village core has not changed since the nineteenth century, unlike its Irish counterpart.

Figure 7.2.1 Structurally static



The road behind the old grocery. Ironically, the photograph on the right, taken during the summer of 2004, shows that the external façade of the houses has not been improved over the years. These houses are locally owned by elderly residents.



The monument dedicated to local residents who lost their lives at war. The black and white postcard shows the old presbytery which has since been restored and converted into the mayor's offices, and social housing apartments. The old presbytery is the structure which the elderly residents associate with Gireux as it used to be.



The castle (*chateau*) in Gireux, currently owned by an English man who uses it for holiday home purposes.







Although the church looks the same in either photograph, it is hiding the only real structural change to the village (aside from houses on the periphery), as the replacement of the presbytery, into social housing apartments.



Local residences which form a square in front of the church, apartments, mayor's office and the cemetery. Unlike Ireland, rural France is associated with an aesthetic of flowers and vineyards. Both pictures show the entrance to the house on the left, flanked with flower pots, while the ivy has probably been taken down from the façade of the house on the right, because of damp problems.



The road into Gireux (into the square of residences and church), from the main road from Ste.Saron into the Pyrenees. The street lights, similarly noted in the village centre of Dúnfarrraig, are a feature of 'suburbia' (Jagose, 2003). Unlike Dúnfarrraig however, not one house in Gireux uses lanterns. This means that returning to the village at night requires bringing a torch or using the lights from the car.

The unavailability of land for building in Gireux, similar to many other small and isolated rural villages in the south of France, has posed a serious dilemma to those of its youth who have been unable to procure a site through their parents. Some of the indigenous residents have approached the local mayor, requesting land for building purposes, as all the existing houses have been filled. Agricultural land is strongly protected by the local authority of each commune or village, as it is the economic means through which that village is maintained. Income tax and house tax is used to support the village infrastructure, through the maintenance of the primary school, payment of teacher, roads or provision of social structures. Therefore the retention of land for economic purposes, as opposed for building, is viewed as crucially important to the continued stability of the rural village. Those youth wishing to live in Gireux must either rely on an inheritance system whereby the family house goes directly to the children upon death of the parents, or, they must wait for a house to become

vacant in the village and then compete against the open market which includes the English, Scottish and Irish <sup>1</sup>.

The recent influx of an outsider temporary resident population to Gireux within the past five years, through the purchase of existing houses (two of which are in ruins) seems to have had little to no effect on the indigenous community<sup>2</sup> who continue as always. Despite the enclosed and clustered nature of the small village which almost encourages exchange between neighbours on the streets outside of the house, the only overt social interaction between local and outsider resident occurs at the fete which is organised at winter and summer times; at the services such as the bread van<sup>3</sup> and more infrequently, when strolling through the village on a walk. Thus, the level of interaction between this type of outsider and the local community is minimal during the year and therefore quite strained at major social occasions such as the fete, because neither community of local and outsider<sup>4</sup> knows the other. Moreover, the lack of any times or spaces beyond these fleeting encounters, means that the outsider is unable to physically access the local residents on the roads and so must return to his/her house. Perversely, this confirms local perception that the outsider is continuing the same practices of social isolation and privatisation of space, which characterise their suburban lifestyle at home (Jagose, 2003).

This perception is then exacerbated by a lack of knowledge of the French language, particularly on the part of the holiday home owner who is predominantly English, as the local residents view this as a sign of disinterest in communicating with them. The

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<sup>1</sup> The English, Scottish and Irish are the nationalities of the holiday home owners, which number 10 residents. Outsider residents who live on a *full-time* basis in Gireux, are of Portuguese, Spanish, French and one English couple. There are 120 outsiders living on a full-time basis in Gireux, out of a total of 196 residents.

<sup>2</sup> Described by an outsider living full-time in Gireux, as a 'community within a community'. This refers to the fact that the entire community of residents living in Gireux, comprises a group of Portuguese and Spanish outsider residents; a network of indigenous residents; French non-local residents; and holiday home owners of Irish, Scottish and English nationalities. With the exception of the indigenous residents, the rest make up the general community of Gireux, with an inner circle of local residents.

<sup>3</sup> Where it is possible to meet the elderly local residents, rather than a representative sample of the population. The food, such as bread, meat, children's clothes and fish, sold by these mobile services, are more expensive than in the supermarket. Apart from those elderly residents who are either house bound, in which case the sales assistant will leave the food in a bag by the door, or use the service for social contact, both outsider and local residents buy their foodstuffs in bulk for the week in the nearby supermarket in Ste.Saron.

<sup>4</sup> That is, the holiday home owner.

mayor pointed out that none of the British families who have come to live in Gireux know any French, which makes it impossible for communication between local and outsider resident. One outsider who is from a neighbouring town, couched this lack of communication between local and outsider in terms of cultural dominance, explaining that the heightened sensitivity of the local residents to the new incomers, requires a gradual and subtle form of socialising on the part of the incomer in a non-threatening manner in order to prove their willingness to be part of the community life of Gireux. However, another outsider who has lived all of her life in Gireux and speaks French fluently, stated firmly that local residents are unwilling to see the outsider become part of the social fabric of life in Gireux, and historically, have made it very difficult for the incoming resident to feel anything other than an 'outsider' of the circle of local residents in the village.

The same notion of an inner circle or a 'community within a community' may be used to describe two other groups of outsider residents who live on a full-time basis in Gireux: the Portuguese and the Spanish nationalities. Unlike the indigenous residents in Gireux, these nationalities remain separate from each other. This is quite surprising, as various members from both the Portuguese and Spanish communities have lived in the village for nearly thirty years, working as labourers in the vineyards, yet do not socialise together. Instead, two of the outsider French residents describe the frequency of tensions and conflicts between the two groups and within the groups, with little known reason other than jealousy of friendships, of financial success, or of disputes with neighbours.

These contradictory attitudes articulate a tension between groups of local and outsider residents in Gireux, which is expressed through a marked lack of interaction at public times of socialisation such as the fete when one resident is subjected to the gaze (Urry, 1990, 2002) of the 'other' (Peace, 1989). This consciousness of the gaze of the 'other', and acute awareness of one's position in relation to the community - either as outsider or as local resident - has come to construct a specific understanding of the community of Gireux as a closed society.

### 7.3 A culture of 'viewing': the local 'panoptic' (Foucault, 1977) gaze

Each resident who lives in the village on a full-time basis, is known – if not by name, then by association. An example of the latter, might be of a resident who is known not to participate in the school scheme, not to attend the fete, or who has caused problems for neighbours and friends. In such a small community, it is the outsider who comes to live for a week or a month or several months, in the village in his/her holiday home, who creates the most lively interest.

For the outsider who is keen to get to know the residents, but not necessarily claim membership of this community, a process of 'viewing' exists, whereby the outsider must subject him/herself to the gaze of the other residents. A French outsider resident who has been living in Gireux for the past six years, explains how this process operates:

“You make efforts, even if you don't feel like it, you say 'hello! Hello!'. You have to be like that all the time. You go to the gym club, you go to the Scrabble, you go to...when the party meal [fete] is organised, you go there, you go to play the petanque on Wednesday evenings, you see? A lot of things. It's just to say that when there's something going on in Gireux, you have to go there to see what's going on. You have to force yourself to go. It's that way that the people will accept you little by little, if they get used to seeing you. That's the way you can manage to enter their little clan. If they see you often, they'll get used to you and then 'Bonjour...' that's it!”

A sense of ritual and supplication to the norms of this society, accompanies this process of socialisation.

“It's their mentality. We don't have the same mentality. So, for them, you're someone who doesn't live the same way as they do<sup>5</sup>, so there's no reason for them to be interested in you. You're different and that's it. But then, the more you see them and get to know you, and chat with you a little, that will fall down: they will change their mind. If they see that you try to live like them, it's good. But, on the other hand, if you go on living like an Irish woman in Gireux, that won't work out. It's that simple. It's not just about English and Irish people...here, in Gireux, there are a lot of Portuguese people. And at the start, it was the same. There was the language barrier. *The ones who got accepted are the ones who followed the customs of Gireux. The ones who kept their way of living from Portugal are not integrated in the village. They didn't manage to enter the clan.* They are integrated for some things, but in their own

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<sup>5</sup> This implies the existence of different lifestyles within the same spatial locality.

life, at home, for example, it's Portuguese people on one side, and then French people on the other side. But that doesn't only come from the French ones. The Portuguese ones also want to stay in their own little world. They want to stay in their clan. So if there's no will from both parts to do that, it never happens. It's very difficult. When you don't have the same language or the same culture, it's hard to meet up. The day you don't think of it and don't see the differences anymore, you then manage to get integrated." (Italics added)

The implication of not adhering to the customs and traditions of Gireux, means a social isolation for the outsider, as he/she will be seen as imposing his/her behaviour on the community and other outsiders living in the village. This view of the entire community of Gireux, is confirmed by another outsider, Laetitia, who warns that:

"To be accepted here, you have not to be extravagant. Not to say that you know a lot of things, you have to be shy, y'know? And to listen then, and to do things quietly and then, they'll [local residents and Spanish and Portuguese outsider residents] accept you."

By subjecting oneself to the 'panoptic' (Foucault, 1977) gaze of the local and outsider resident over a period of time, the presence of the new resident will eventually be accepted, particularly if this process is accompanied by attendance at public spaces such as the church and library. Ironically, while all residents – both male and females – are invited to drink at the café and support the same as the village investment – attendance of the female resident at the café outside of the space and time of the local fete, would cause speculation, as traditionally, this has always been a gendered space which only males in Gireux frequent<sup>6</sup>. Thus, this culture of 'viewing' is quite markedly different from that of Dúnfarrraig, where the same concept refers to the way in which structures of the house, such as the bay window, double windows or balcony, are used to appropriate a view of the landscape<sup>7</sup>. Both concepts are used to describe the relationship of the resident, to the landscape. However, this takes a social form in Gireux, and a structural one in Dúnfarrraig.

Nadine warns of the danger of being socially excluded by the local residents through failing to recognise the subtle nuances of the social context of Gireux. She claims that

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<sup>6</sup> This contrasts with the socialising space of the pub in Dúnfarrraig, which both males and females frequent. However, one female resident in her 60s, commented that this is a relatively new phenomenon, as women would not have attended the pub during her youth. Instead, women would have had to wait for the 'Wren Boys' or the Mummer's dances, for their opportunity to socialise.

<sup>7</sup> Arguably however, the 'panoptic gaze' is also activated in the pub context in Dúnfarrraig where the outsider is regarded with interest, as well as with suspicion.

the local and outsider's (Portuguese and Spanish) quite conservative attitude towards access into community life, is a separatist one.

“We're latin and you're nordies, and we don't have the same lifestyle at all. So, for them, you're someone who doesn't live the same way as they do, so there's no reason for them to be interested in you.”

This 'mentality' or attitude is indirectly perpetuating a social exclusion from the outsider residents, through the privatisation of events between family and friends in the home environment. The separation of the social from the public spaces of the school, church, café, and even the street, and from collective times for socialising such as during the weekends of the fete, means that it is almost impossible to meet the local residents without an invitation. Unlike those Irish, English and Scottish residents who would normally use public spaces such as the café or events such as weddings to meet and socialise, the local French residents socialise from the private space of their houses. However, this local socialising pattern *also* applies to the group of Portuguese and Spanish workers, who maintain a social distance from the activities of the indigenous residents and the other outsider residents. According to Nadine:

“They [the Portuguese residents in Gireux] are integrated for some things, but in their own life, at home for example, it's Portuguese people on one side and then French people on the other side. But that doesn't only come from the French ones. The Portuguese ones also want to stay in their own little world. They want to stay in their clan.”

Nadine's understanding of rituals, rites and process of induction to the inner social world of the 'local community', while allowing for the fact that factions exist between cultural groups such as the Portuguese and Spanish on the fringes of this community, draws a very complex picture of levels of possible *exclusion*, rather than inclusion from village life in Gireux. What is being problematised here by the French and British outsider residents, is the concept of gaining acceptance in a conservative, socially close and physically closed society. Nadine speaks of her experience walking into the café with her partner and female friend, only to be told that her place was further up the road, playing scrabble with the other women of Gireux<sup>8</sup>. The

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<sup>8</sup> Nadine states that “once, with the woman next door, at the start of our stay in Gireux...one evening, we went to the petanque court [beside the café] just to see. To meet new people. And when we got

segregation of spaces within the community, takes physical form to socially separate one culture from another – such as outsider from local resident – or private from public space of socialisation – such as the home from the fete – or of sexes.

On the other hand, it should be stated that this is an outsider's view of the difficulties of accessing the community in Gireux – albeit of various groups. The local resident understands the continuation of socialising among friends in the home environment, as completely normal, rather than as intentionally excluding the outsider. The fete, as indeed the café and the church, is viewed as providing a space and time when everyone living in the village can meet. Although accessing the local and outsider Portuguese and Spanish residents has proved to be a considerable difficulty for this researcher, it has also highlighted the quite different types of socialisation practices between the Irish and French rural contexts, and how the use of space in this regard, affects our understanding of relations between cultures - expressed here through categories of 'outsider' and 'local' – as exclusionary or closed.

In response to what she perceives as a difficult and politically intricate approach to socialising, Nadine has stayed at home with her partner, child and dog. She comments that:

“For me, there's nothing that makes Gireux unique. It's a village and ...the way it's still a bit closed...it's like the other villages, but it hasn't evolved yet.”

Instead, Nadine enjoys walks in the countryside, but particularly sitting in her garden watching the antics of her young son and dog.

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there, we were told “you, women, you can find the scrabble a bit further up the street!” We didn't go back there”.



Figure 7.3.1 A 'social spatialization' (Shields, 1991) constructed through private socialising practices.



Nadine admonishes her child, while her partner looks on. These steps lead into the ground floor of her apartment, which includes an open plan living and kitchen area complete with American style bar counter. These shutters are open permanently, unlike other residents' use of the same to shut out the light. A correlation may be drawn between the use of the shutter and the curtain (Schivelbusch, 1988) to shut out both the light from public space, and the curious 'gaze' (Urry, 1990, 2002) of the neighbour (Haumont, 2001). Nadine doesn't need to close her shutters from the neighbour however, because her view is of her garden and the landscape, rather than that of the house opposite. Therefore, even passing residents do not have access to this space, other than entering through the small gate at the entrance to the garden.

Ironically however, this use of the house and garden for private socialising practices of the family, which is characteristically suburban (Jagose, 2003), is an imitation of local socialisation practices, which constructs the home as a distinct 'social spatialisation'<sup>9</sup> (Shields, 1991). Crucially, the rationale informing *why* the house is constructed as a 'social spatialisation', differs between outsider and local resident: as in the case of the latter, this is a reactive measure to the private socialising practices of the local resident, whereas in the case of the former, socialising among family and friends constitutes a large part of their understanding of what rural life entails. However, this closed form of socialising among local residents, actually *encourages* a

<sup>9</sup> Shields's concept of 'social spatialization' refers to the symbolic construction of space at the level of the social imaginary as well as its more concrete articulation in the landscape.

pattern of social isolation by outsider residents, most of who resign themselves, like Nadine, to staying in their own home without engagement with other residents.

Unlike the process of suburbia occurring in Dúnfarrraig, Ireland, where ‘social isolation’ (Jagose, 2003) is an option which some outsider residents like Kate have chosen from the local community through privatising her home space; in Gireux, social isolation or detachment of the outsider from community affairs, arises from a process of social exclusion practised by local residents in the community. The home of the outsider is constructed by the local resident, as a distinct ‘social spatialization’ (Shields, 1991) of the community, which is removed from local access through the perceived unwillingness of the outsider to integrate; whereas the home is constructed by the outsider as space of socialisation separate to the activities of the community, from which the outsider is being excluded.

Concurring with Nadine’s interpretation of how to become accepted by the community, an outsider couple from England, Alec and Jess maintain that the key to understanding rural French society, is protocol. They argue that unlike Irish, English or northern French society, the rural south of France operates in terms of an unwritten set of rules which require the supplication of one’s cultural understanding of interaction, to that of the ‘other’ (Peace, 1989). This requires a tacit understanding of the normative values of socialising in the different cultural setting. Adhering to this protocol of social practices, should decrease the risk of social isolation, as it will demonstrate to the local residents that the outsider does want to meet the community.

Contrary to the experience of other outsider residents including Nadine, Jess espouses the friendliness of the local community of Gireux, recalling times in the past when neighbours would stop Alec on his walk with their dog through the village, to ask why they had missed a drinking festival. She describes the community in terms of family, which is “very rural” and sees it as quite natural that activities would then revolve around family life. Rather than seeking to be included at these events, she emphasises that:

“you’re very privileged if you’re involved to join the family for a ‘do’. So if you’re an outsider, you are incredibly privileged if someone comes around and

says well, we're having the entire family in on Saturday, come and join us, even for a coffee after the meal."

and reiterates that this is "not done. The family 'do' is a family 'do'." Regardless of this sentiment, Alec and Jess have been invited to a couple of family events, where the invitation has referred to desert and coffee at the end of a meal, rather than the meal itself. Similarly, they have been invited to aperitifs before a wedding, but not to the wedding itself. However, she identifies this as an inclusive practice of the younger generation of the families, which is still frowned upon by the more elderly relations.

Through their awareness of the importance of family gatherings as private for the local residents, Jess and her husband Alec, have been accepted as residents who understand their position as outsiders of this local community. A large part of this process of becoming accepted, involves understanding their position in relation to the space in which these events such as a local wedding take place, as time related. This means that an invitation to a specific part of the wedding does not imply an invitation to the rest of the wedding. It involves understanding that the invitation to attend - which is specific to a time frame that is public (through inclusion of the outsider), rather than to the ceremony itself (which is a private time for the family) - as a gesture of local acceptance of the outsider to the family celebration of that event. However, Alec and Jess's inclusion to private family events does not mean their acceptance within the 'local' community. Rather, it demonstrates local acknowledgement that Alec and Jess understand and accept their position as 'outsiders', and have indicated their support for the local community of Gireux, rather than threaten its stability by wanting to become a part of that same community. Alec and Jess's understanding of the workings of local identity, through membership of community, is critically important, as ironically their stance in relation to their position as 'outsider', means their social *inclusion*, rather than social isolation from the local residents. This is in contrast to other 'outsiders' failed attempts to integrate with the local community which has led to their 'social isolation' (Jagose, 2003).

Quite astutely, Jess states that

"You have to remember that you are a foreigner and you're never gonna be French. So you must abide by French protocol. This is France. It's their

country, it's not mine and I feel privileged to live here. So okay, maybe this is my little bit of England [her house and garden], but outside this is French and therefore I abide by everything that they say or do.”

Figure 7.3.2 A distinct ‘social spatialization’ (Shields, 1991).



Alec and Jess’s house and garden. The driveway to the front of the house, is flanked by roses, while their garden is separated into spaces for dining and entertainment, swimming and relaxing space (through the use of a pool), and space for crops and vines (symbolic representation of France). Due to the way in which the house is partly hidden from view behind trees, the gate takes on the appearance of a gated community.

Ironically the construction of a distinct spatiality through which Alec and Jess may more freely express their true English identity, perpetuates a cultural distinction of ‘othering’ (Peace, 1989) through the acknowledgement of different spaces of French and English identity. Through maintaining a separate ‘social spatialization’ (Shields, 1991), they do not encroach on the private space of the local residents<sup>10</sup>, and therefore, do not pose as a threat to their local identity. Perversely however, rather than being rejected by the local residents for this cultural distinction, the community appears to accept the couple more willingly into their midst, precisely because Alec and Jess freely and humbly acknowledge their outsider status.

<sup>10</sup> By understanding that an invitation to an event such as a particular part of a wedding, is time bound.

According to Nicole, this perception by the local community is based on local fear that “foreigners” will take over the running of their committee and other power structures in the village such as the organisation of social and cultural activities. This insight reveals the degree to which local residents<sup>11</sup> fear the loss of the strength of their community through involvement of the outsider in village life. Alec and Jess maintain a spatial distinction through their house and garden which suits the local residents, but not a social isolation, as evidenced by their attendance at each of the various social activities organised by the community. This difference is very important as it shows the local residents that they are not reverting to their suburban lifestyle of old (Jagose, 2003).

Yet, there is an ambivalence or tension in the way that the local residents use their home environment exclusively for family. Acceptance of the home as the private space within which family events occur, becomes a contested discourse between the youth and elderly at these events, particularly through the presence of the outsider. While the youth welcome the stranger, the elderly exude disapproval at the intrusion. Ironically, it could be argued that the attitude of the older generation seeks to ensure that local events remain private to the family, while the social relations which constitute this space, are being constructed as ideologically more ‘rural’ through the integrative efforts of the youth.

When asked of how they viewed Gireux, respondents expressed their answer in terms of how they use the place of Gireux, and relate to it through everyday practices, be it for social; business; private; historical or economic purposes. Crucially, while these practices do serve as an expression of their own perception of Gireux, their attitude towards village life – and by extension, the community - is also informed by how they see other residents relating to the same spaces. Therefore, while little direct physical interaction occurs between the local and outsider, there exists a clear consciousness and identification of the actions of the ‘other’. Thus, the indirect behavioural pattern of both local and outsider has affected the others perception of change occurring within the spaces of the built environment (physical) and community (abstract) of village life in Gireux.

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<sup>11</sup> Which number 76 residents, out of a total population of 196.

Outsider consciousness of the 'local gaze' is articulated by Laetitia, who arrived to Gireux with her husband with plans to start a perfumery business there. Laetitia explains that due to time constraints imposed by business demands<sup>12</sup>, she has no involvement with the community. It is only at the summer fete, when she gives a story-telling session to the children in the village, that she becomes more actively involved in community life. Indirectly however, she hears of local reaction to her business through her tourists, who describe getting lost en route to the perfumery, stopping the local in Gireux for directions, some who will insist on showing them their garden, before pointing them in the direction of Laetitia. Not only does this involve giving the tourist a visual tour of their garden<sup>13</sup>, but the local will actually prompt the tourist to smell the plants, similar to the guided tour which Laetitia will then offer in the perfumery. Through these stories, Laetitia has become aware of the neighbour's gaze and interest in her business activities (Haumont, 2001).

“And some of them say, come, we want to show you our gardens to see the plants, to smell and then let me show you where is Atekopora.”

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<sup>12</sup> Laetitia explains that she is responsible for extracting the oil essences from the herbs, and providing guided tours of their fields of herbs to visitors.

<sup>13</sup> Which is to the front of the house on the main road, and consists of a large number of flower pots.

Figure 7.3.3. Signage in Gireux.



This is the main road from the town of Ste.Saron to the Pyrenees. What is of interest here is the white sign slightly to the right of the photograph, which points the way to the perfumery business, called 'L'Odour des Montagnes'. Unfortunately, these signs are difficult to read, even from a short distance away on foot. Laeticia remarked that these signs which were erected by the Mayor, are considerably smaller than she would like, in order to be viewed by the passing motorist as well as the pedestrian. Compare this type of signage, to the enlarged wine bottle outside the stone house to the left of the picture. A close up of this more unusual looking sign is shown in the next text box.



This photograph shows three terraced houses; the first two which sell bottles of the regional wine, the 'Blanquette de Ste.Saron'. Although advertised as 'of Ste.Saron', the grapes for the wine are grown in vineyards in Gireux and other villages, which fall under the remit of the area or '*canton*' of Ste.Saron which is the central town where the grapes are stored and made into wine. Signposted through the visual image of a large bottle on the pavement, it is these two local women who offer a similar tour to the unsuspecting inquiring tourist. The large bottle creates a billboard effect for the motorist (Friedberg, 2002) providing easy association of wine bottle with the product on offer.

Two things are of interest here: first, the use of flower pots to construct the virtual 'garden' (Peillon and Slater, 2005), and secondly, the difference in facades between the second and other houses. Unlike Dúnfarrraig, this is not a *façade*, as it is an actual indication of the age of the house, compared against the appearance of the other two. This, the middle house, is constructed using stone and mortar, similar to the materials used in all of the older houses in Gireux. The fact that the houses to either side have not been built using stone, indicates that they are a more recent development, added on by the same family which has expanded to either side of the original building.

Two processes merit particular attention here. Although physically and mentally detached from the community through constraints of time and business, Laetitia is aware of local attention to her business, suggestive of the watchful neighbour in 'suburban' Gireux (Haumont, 2001). Secondly, the attentive eye of the neighbour has become the learned eye, who now demonstrates her pride in her own garden through her interaction with the flow of tourists. Crucially, this attention to her business activities, means that Laetitia now treats the place of Gireux in terms of a suburb, as she is aware both of the cost of her inability to participate in the social life of the village (through her attendance at all of the fete, which spans an entire weekend, not



just the workshop), which has resulted in her social isolation from the community, and of a sense of the local resident as 'neighbour' (Haumont, 2003).

Laetitia quite clearly interprets local demonstration of their own garden, as a reaction and replication of her own focus in her business, which privileges a sense of smell over sight. The specific emphasis on smell, by the local resident, is a direct re-enactment of the tour offered by the perfumery. Secondly, while there is no mention of competitiveness between resident and Laetitia or frustration at the detention of possible trade for her business by the resident, she is made aware through the flow of tourists, of local consciousness of what and how she goes about her business, similar to the idea of the 'neighbour' in 'suburbia' (Jagose, 2003; Haumont, 2001). Further, this interaction remains an abstract one, engaging with the idea, even though the reaction on the part of the local takes both a physical and ideological form, manifest in the invitation to a guided tour of the garden and specific focus on smell, respectively.

However, the local tour of the garden provides an example of a type of interaction which is taking place between the local and the outsider, through the flowing tourist on the road space: abstract, as it involves the interpenetration of ideas; and indirect, as no actual physical interaction takes place. Instead, it involves what Robertson (1992) termed the 'awareness' or consciousness of the global. The local resident hears of the practices of the perfumery, and recreates the same focus in her/his own garden. After engaging with the flow of tourists on the road, and then in the garden, the tourist arrives to the doorstep of the perfumery with stories of the interaction which revolve around local pride in her<sup>14</sup> particular garden. Thus, the flow of ideas becomes part of a behavioural practice which is renegotiated and embedded in the physical landscape of the garden space.

As well as being socially detached from the community through time constraints, Laetitia is physically isolated on the outskirts of the village. Her house is part of the more recent development of detached houses on the periphery of the village, which

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<sup>14</sup> Particularly with older residents in Gireux, domestic duties are gendered and extend to the maintenance of flowers or feeding the animals in the garden.

provides a suburban fringe to the cluster of terraced houses and roads in Gireux (Jackson, 1985).

Similar to Nadine, Claudine, an outsider French resident living in Gireux, blames her marginalized position as 'outsider' from an inability to access the local community. She states that her social isolation has arisen due to the way in which local socialising practices are private to family and friends of that community. Claudine has been living with her partner and two young children, for the past five years in Gireux. Her perception of community life is very negative based on current tensions between neighbours and her initial attitude towards participation in community affairs, which has since framed how she now understands life in Gireux.

Claudine comments that not only are the social practices of Gireux embedded in rituals and methods of exclusion, but their treatment of the private space of their house reflects a concern for self, rather than for the village as a whole.

“There are a lot of people who think only of their own interest, they don't care about the others. They take care of their little house, their little garden...these people [in Coulet] were not doing it [cleaning up the streets] in order to be elected or to be acknowledged. They were doing it for the village's well-being, for the village to look good.”

She considers if this attitude reflects the everyday practices of how people inhabit Gireux.

“...I think that this village is a dormitory village. That means that people go to work outside the village and come back to go to bed. We usually call it dormitory suburbs. Actually, it's a word used about cities. That is to say that people go to live in the suburbs, sleep and eat there. And in the morning they leave and go to spend their day in Paris. So, during the day, nobody's there. Everything is closed.”

Notwithstanding the very valid observation by Claudine, of patterns of movement and time by residents in Gireux, her stated lack of want to become part of the social fabric of community life, has resulted in her like exclusion from participation in village affairs. Therefore, her perception of the degree of social activity in Gireux has been adversely affected by her initial attitude towards the community.

However, her remark concerning a generic pattern of behaviour, more characteristic of life in the suburbs, lends a significant correlation between processes of suburbia occurring in Dúnfarriga, Ireland, and in Gireux, France. Claudine is identifying features such as the privatisation of owned space as a characteristic of the classic model of suburbia (Jagose, 2003; Girling and Helphand, 1994; Jackson, 1985), and by extension, the privatisation of socialising activities.

Claudine's understanding of Gireux as "dormitory suburb" is emphatically denied by a local resident, who works as secretary to the Mayor. He compares Gireux to other rural villages, to illustrate the very cohesive and integrative nature of the community.

"It's true that in Gireux, we regularly meet the people, there are other communities that are only dormitories. But here, we still manage to communicate and do things together. We regularly meet up to have dinner, have a drink."

Jean-Luc interprets the increasing gap between outsider or incoming resident and local resident, as a question of the unsocial practices of the outsider who remains in his/her house and does not become involved with the local community.

"He comes here but he does not mix with people and we respect everyone's freedom."

This statement is imbued with a tension regarding the use of space in Gireux. Incoming residents are perceived not only as raising the price of housing in Gireux, thereby creating an unaffordability gap for those youth wishing to buy in the village, but are then seen to maintain a social isolation through remaining in their house, removed from the rest of the community (Heanue, 1998; Ryan, 1982). Claudine's agitation with the community and ensuing isolation from the same, would thus appear to perpetuate this perception of the reclusive outsider who looks upon Gireux as a rural retreat rather than as a rural village with a community.

In contrast, Jean-Luc describes the local residents in terms of "neighbours" who coordinate efforts to help one another in an expression of community "solidarity". However, at no stage during the summer fete – a time when both local and outsider

resident makes special effort to attend – did any of the organising committee approach the newcomers or attempt to introduce new with old residents. Instead, a strained atmosphere reigned, with local residents standing chatting to one side looking on at the more awkward group of outsiders<sup>15</sup> sitting on benches or standing by the wall. Practices of solidarity appeared more marked among the local residents, in support for each other under the gaze of the foreigner.

It is argued therefore, that the construction of the house as a ‘social spatialisation’ (Shields, 1991) by outsider residents is a reactionary measure to the quite closed and exclusionary social practices of the local residents in Gireux. One way of accessing local families, is through supporting the partnership school scheme. However, this method is only applicable to outsiders with children of school-going age. Claudine’s decision to send her children to the school in the town of Ste.Saron therefore, is not only viewed as distancing herself from the local community of parents and families in Gireux, but a dismissal of the quality of education provided by the village schools.

The school in Gireux will re-open in September 2007 when the threshold number of children is reached. At present, the mayor operates a partnership system with five other rural villages, encouraging parents of children in Gireux to support attendance at this and other primary schools. When all are opened, residents of the other rural villages will support Gireux in turn. The primary school is considered the most important structure for the rural village in France and Ireland, with its symbolic role of the regeneration of community life given literal emphasis by fluctuating enrolment figures. Support for the school is an affirmation of the community. Claudine’s increasing apathy and indifference towards the community of Gireux is reflected in her lack of support for its stronghold, the national school.

This is noted with disapproval by the local residents, who interpret her choice in terms of a lack of support for the village life of Gireux. The school also provides an important social function for the parents of the children, as a meeting place. Claudine does acknowledge the implications of her decision, which has resulted in a social isolation both for her and her children growing up in Gireux. She uses the spatial

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<sup>15</sup> Of Portuguese, Spanish, British, non-local French, Irish and Scottish nationalities

position of her house which is physically separate from the street space in Gireux, as a metaphor of her position as outsider of the community.

“..because there are lots of children. That’s what brings parents together. There are many children here, but em, we don’t see each other....My little girls are in school outside the village. I am apart from it [village life]. I’m a bit like my house in comparison to the village, apart from it.”

Figure 7.3.4 Spatially separate.



Claudine uses this image to depict her physical separation from the community. The wall to the left of the photograph, is the boundary wall of her house and garden, which continues down as far as the green wheelie bin, marked by the symbol ‘X’. The only entrance to her property, is via the side entrance, just visible here, marked by the symbol, ‘Y’.

Claudine’s description of an invisible village life of children and parents, visible only through attendance at family events in the home, is borne out in her photograph of the empty main street of Gireux. This photograph shows a street emptied of all signs of life including animals, and represents Claudine’s understanding of community in Gireux.

Figure 7.3.5 Community life, according to Claudine.



Pictured here is the main road through the village of Gireux, at a right angle to the main road from Ste.Saron to the Pyrenees. The incline in the road indicates that the route is heading up the mountain side, into the cluster of houses. The house pictured at the end of the road, is the old grocery (*epicerie*) which is derelict. However, the significance of this picture lies in its depiction of streets which are emptied of residents.

Not unlike the other elderly residents, Claudine's only recourse to socialising in Gireux, is through the daily services which stop by the street side, adjacent to her house. Similar to Nadine, Claudine stays at home where she remains untroubled by empty streets. Here, she enjoys the view of her garden and her house which she loves. As the house and garden is screened off from the street by a high wall, Claudine and her family enjoy complete privacy in the seclusion of their garden.

Figure 7.3.6 The cost of privacy – the view.



This is a photograph taken by Claudine, of the view of her back garden and surrounding countryside, taken from the bedroom window on the first floor. Despite taking the picture from this height, the view of the countryside still remains hidden behind the trees which form a line at her boundary wall.

This love of her house is ideologically motivated. Claudine states that “what is really part of the people here is their sense of property”. Both her travels around other villages, and observation of the priority accorded to aestheticising the front façade of the house in Gireux, has made her aware of the value of her property. This value is measured in terms of private space, rather than in economic terms. Claudine’s property, albeit rented, includes a large house, veranda and large garden – all of which are screened from the road view by a high wall. Both this wall and an internal wall which forms a boundary around the length of the property and garden, function to demarcate the property as private, as well as affording privacy for Claudine (Peillon and Slater, 2005). However, although Claudine’s property is situated on the incline of the mountainside, the height of the trees which have been planted in front of the wall in order to aestheticise the very functional aspect of the wall, interfere with her private view of the public landscape. Thus, Claudine’s privacy from her neighbour in the property behind the trees, has cost her the view of the countryside. Anticipating this difficulty, the residents in Dúnfarrraig have kept their boundary walls low, in order to have an uninterrupted view of the coastline.

Despite her love of her house and the garden, Claudine remarks that her preferred state of dwelling is to be immersed in the countryside, physically and socially detached from neighbours.

“I know people who have built their house with no garden. I can understand that because my style of house would be one lost in the countryside. I would hate to have neighbours with their house stuck to mine. It would annoy me. I prefer a house completely isolated, it doesn't matter to me if it's lost in the countryside. When I come home, it's my home and it's quiet. They [the local residents in Gireux] can't understand that. If people want to come and see me, they have to give me a ring first because they don't know if I'm home.”

What is interesting from this vision of lifestyle, is Claudine's perception of Gireux as essentially 'suburban' in both the classic American sense (Jagose, 2003; Jackson, 1985; Fishman, 1946) of living in a house with a garden beside neighbours, and its French equivalent, encapsulated in the notion of '*les pavillonnaires*' (Haumont, 2001). This perception conflicts with her ideal of rural living, which is premised on the notion of being visually and spatially distanced from her neighbour. In addition, Claudine is referring to how her wish to spend time alone in the evening with her children and partner, is at odds with how other residents in the village use the same time socialising with family and friends in their houses. Her comment indicates her perception of local disapproval of her departure from this social practice, which places much importance on collective gatherings with family and friends, rather than on the individual family unit.

Claudine identifies both the attitude of local resident towards their home - in terms of the construction of a private space of socialisation – and attitude towards the newcomer to argue that *her* social isolation from the community has been created through her inability to physically access the local residents other than in their homes, and that when she has interacted with the 'local' resident, their priority has been for themselves, rather than to make her feel part of the community. Therefore, she has 'given up' on the community and wants to leave Gireux as soon as she can.

It is suggested that both Claudine and Nadine's decision to stay at home with their immediate families, creates a social distance from community activities in Gireux which is being identified by the local residents as problematic for the future life of the village. This attitude is partly informed by Claudine and Nadine's absence at the local



fetes - an event which is organised by the local residents with the aim of providing a public time and space through which residents living in the village, may meet up. During informal conversations at the various fete celebrations, or with the mayor, the local residents described their wish “to know more of the people who have come to live here”, which also includes the holiday home resident as the outsider who lives on a temporary basis in the village<sup>16</sup>. Not unlike the local residents in Dúnfarrraig, the mayor was dismissive of the holiday home owner, describing this type of resident as socially distant from the local community by staying in their house. Although this may indeed be the case, outsider difficulty in accessing local or other outsider residents would suggest that this view is simplifying a very real problem of integration and socialisation methods, which is adversely affecting the social construction of the community.

However, an Italian outsider, Nicole, who grew up in Gireux, remarks that exclusionary social practices are reflected in the behaviour of both local *and* outsider residents. She speaks of how a position on the committee in Gireux, is used as a source of power by a network of local residents to ensure local control of decision making ability in relation to issues pertaining to village life. While Nicole’s perception of local use of the committee to exclude the outsider from involvement in community matters, remains quite a complex area which is beset with family history, her view of the committee as the most important space to the social, political and economic affairs of the village, is confirmed by the secretary to the Mayor, Jean-Luc, who identified the ‘*salle*’, or the room at the back of the Mayor’s office, as the most important space of the village.

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<sup>16</sup> There are 10 holiday homes in Gireux.

Figure 7.3.7 The politics of exclusion



The meeting room (*salle*) of the committee in Gireux. This, for Jean-Luc, epitomises the heart of community life in the village, as it is the space in which decisions are made.

“It’s the meeting room for the village council. That’s where all the decisions are taken. The life of the village, that’s important. That’s where weddings and elections take place, where meetings take place. There are eleven representatives who manage the community, the school, everything. It’s true that even the commercial people would tell you it is part of the village life. Commercial people like the butcher, the fishmonger and baker.”

However, Nicole also interprets an unwillingness to mix, in terms of outsider residents who commute to work.

“...those people who commute y’know, don’t mix with the people of the village. Also because of their job, because y’know, they want to be on their own. So it’s not only the people of the village who are responsible for this situation. For example, the couple who lives here [indicates from her terrace, Claudine’s house], the woman takes her kids to school everyday. She brings them to school, then she brings them back. She could live with the village.”

Claudine’s lack of support for the school as basic social structure of the village, is interpreted in terms of a greater unwillingness to integrate among the local community. This has quite important implications for local residents’ and Nicole’s perception of the changing social landscape of Gireux. Thus, Nicole is arguing that while exclusionary tactics are visible through the political practices of the committee,

new opportunities are being presented to the outsider and local resident through the partnership system of the school that would enable greater social cohesion but which are being ignored by some families<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, by sending their children to schools elsewhere, the incoming families are creating spaces of social isolation from the community through the maintenance of their home space as a 'social spatialisation' (Shields, 1991), distinct from other spaces in the village.

#### **7.4 Bourgeois bliss : the detached house "*les pavillonnaires*" (Haumont, 2001)**

However, Nicole elaborates that the power of the network of families is not only imagined through the political space of the committee, but is also constituted through work relations of farmer/labourer. Historically, the wealth of the village has rested with the five dominant families in Gireux, who own large tracts of land (farmed for vineyards) around the village, while the Portuguese and Spanish have worked as labourers on the farms since the middle of the twentieth century. This hierarchy of class is partly expressed in terms of the location of the house in Gireux, as situated in the centre of the village among the rows of terraced houses or on the outskirts of the village.

Originally, the network of families comprised a cohort of farmers who amassed wealth through their vineyards and later employed resident Portuguese, Spanish and Italian labourers<sup>18</sup> to toil on the land. Two families of Portuguese and Italian labourers in particular, worked intensively and amassed enough money to move from their terraced house within the village core, to a bigger, detached house on the outskirts of the village. According to Nicole, this caused great consternation among the French families, who resented their changing spatial position in Gireux, as symbolic of their changing economic fortunes.

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<sup>17</sup> Crucially, the changing class structure of Gireux, is now embodied in the committee membership. While still controlled by the 'network' of families, the younger generation of sons and daughters have taken positions of power and significantly, now support outsider, such as Nicole's involvement on the committee. However, Nicole does not anticipate the eradication of the power nucleus of the 'network', through abdication of membership of the committee. Rather, she hopes that it is symptomatic of a new era of social inclusion and cohesion between communities.

<sup>18</sup> This Italian was Nicole's father.

However, this movement by outsider residents, from the terraced centre to detached houses on the periphery, is crucially important in terms of how it reflects the model of suburban development in post war America, or the emergence of the French equivalent, which is the model of the detached house and its ideological structures, conceptualised as '*les pavillonnaires*' (Haumont, 2001). Common to both models, is their emphasis on the bourgeois ideal: a detached home with a garden. In theory, it is argued that the spatial layout of Gireux – with its rows of houses which represent the village 'centre', and a periphery of detached dwellings on its outskirts – lends itself to a micro imaginary of 'centre' and suburb. However, given the rural setting of Gireux, and the fact that its 'centre' has developed from a history of protection for the castle or fortress, rather than from an urban plan of a street network system, this American model of 'suburbia' or indeed the Irish and British models of suburbanisation (Corcoran, 2000; Peillon, 2000; Punch, 2000; Bartley and Saris, 1998), do not easily lend themselves towards an understanding of spatial developments in this rural context. Instead, Haumont's (2001) research of '*les pavillonnaires*' provides a better interpretation of why this development has occurred in Gireux<sup>19</sup>. Her explanation of the detached home as an aspiration towards a type of lifestyle which is almost elitist in tone, concurs with two Portuguese residents' description of their relief to be away from the watchful eye of the neighbours and associated noise, and to have a garden (Haumont, 2001:142-3). One of the reasons why this movement of outsider residents to the periphery, created such consternation among the local residents, was because this network of old and powerful families who employed these residents, were already living in this space, outside the village centre. Thus, not only did this movement give material emphasis to the development of an existing 'suburban' periphery in Gireux, it also presented a very real challenge to a spatial representation of the economic structures of the village, as now employer and employee were living side by side.

One of these outsiders who relocated from a terraced house in the village centre to a large detached house on the outskirts, was Nicole's father. She recalls how this move provoked local "jealousy" of her family's good fortune<sup>20</sup>. Portuguese residents,

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<sup>19</sup> This is still using the notion of 'suburbia', but applying a French model of 'suburbia' expressed through the idea of '*les pavillonnaires*', rather than the British or American models, in order to understand social practices in the French context.

<sup>20</sup> "You have the feeling that perhaps em...they feel superior to them? The other ones [local residents and outsider residents] are ...merely workers?...Because my father was Italian and when he came here

Madame Citue and her husband, Jean-Michel, also created a stir in the local community, when they too moved from their terraced house, to a similarly detached house on the outskirts<sup>21</sup>.

Figure 7.4.1 Spatially mobile – ‘*les pavillonnaires*’ (Haumont, 2001).



Nicole’s old family home, indicated by the symbol ‘X’, where she lived as young teenager growing up in Gireux. Of the five houses which are shown here, three are holiday homes: two are owned by English families, while the third is owned by an Irish family.

- and he was really a hard worker, really work hard – eh, people said, ‘huh’! They didn’t trust him y’know, because he was a foreigner.”

<sup>21</sup> Monsieur Gomes and Nicole’s brothers continue to work as labourers in the vineyards, while Madame Citue is a housewife and tends to her animals on their farm. Nicole is a secondary school teacher in Ste.Saron.



Nicole's current family home where she lives with her two brothers who continue to work in the vineyards.



The former permanent residence of Portuguese outsider residents Madame Citue and her husband, Jean-Michel, marked by the symbol 'X' which they now rent to non-local French residents. They have moved from this terraced house, to their new home, recently constructed by the family, to the outskirts of the village.

In contrast to the other streets, which feature rows of dilapidated grey terraced houses, these houses are whitewashed, and boast a large amount of street space, relative to the width of other streets in Gireux. While the colour of the houses lend a gentrified appearance to this area in the village, the use of hanging baskets over the ground floor window and shrubs to the left of this picture, also aestheticise this area.



The new abode of Madame Citue and Jean-Michel. The property features a long, unmarked driveway to the two-storey house with its Spanish arches. The cars show the continuation of the driveway around the side of the house, past the sheds for the animals, to a carport at the back of the house. The rear of the house enjoys unparalleled views of their own crops and vines.

Abel is a labourer, who continues to work in the vineyards of the French families, but who now owns his own vineyards and considerable tract of land. They rent their house in the village to French non-local residents, while living free of mortgage concerns, spatially removed from the village. Their move has allowed the couple to invest in farm animals, such as hens, ducks, peacocks, rabbits, and geese. Most of these are bred to sell in local markets in neighbouring villages.

The Portuguese couple are known and highly respected for their hard labour, but their move away from the village environs is a statement of lifestyle change which is viewed with suspicion by the local and other labourer outsider residents. Madame Citue repeatedly describes the freedom of living away from prying neighbours and noise from houses on either side. She talks about the freedom of space which she now enjoys inside her house. This features a large sitting room and even larger kitchen area in the basement. Despite this association of the terraced house with the 'neighbour' – similar to Haumont's (2001) description of terraced houses or apartment blocks with neighbours on either side - Madame Citue's current house is located within a two minute walk from the nearest terraced house. Therefore, it is suggested that what has made her life qualitatively different, is the movement to a detached house which boasts its own plot of land (Haumont, 2001). Citue speaks of her delight in having a garden that she can use as both a farm for the animals and as a

vineyard for her crops and vines. The space needed for this plan has also determined their wish to leave the confined nature of the terraced village centre.

Similarly, a local French woman and her mother who sell bottles of the regional wine, the Blanquette, speak of the tranquillity of living away from the noise of the village. While they still have neighbours, they live in a long detached house, which has been separated into two inter-connected housing lots to accommodate the growing needs of family.

“We’re lucky to live here, we have our neighbours, but we’re in a quiet part. It is much better to live a bit apart from the village. It’s quieter, the houses are not stuck to each other...When we got the occasion to come here, we came because it’s quieter. With the double-glazing, we don’t hear anything. In the village, there’s always someone coming to see you and all, while here, it’s quiet. If we need something, we go there.”

The elderly woman remarked that she used to “live in the village” until the age of ten, when her parents moved to their current abode. This represents a different quality of life for her. A move away from the proximity and noise of the village while still retaining a sense of ‘neighbourliness’, and through this aspect, they remain connected to the local community (Haumont, 2001).

A motivating factor underlying this move away from ‘neighbour’ and the spatial proximity of the terraced house, is the view of the mountainside. The garden assumes huge importance in the south of France and considerably increases the value of property.



Figure 7.4.2 A house with a view.



This is a view of the main road from Ste.Saron to the Pyrenees, which runs through Gireux, photographed from Nicole's terrace. She also has a balcony on the other side of the house, which claims a panoramic view of the vineyards. She describes with regret, her clumsy decision to make the dominant living space of the terrace, to the road-side, as her preferred view is of the vineyards.



A local resident, Natalie, who lives in the terraced environs of the village centre, pointed to one view of the mountainside, which is shown in between the roofs of neighbours' houses.



Natalie points to another view of the mountains, pictured here beside the large blue shutters of the first floor window. This local resident described Gireux in terms of a close community, but when she approached the same question in visual terms, she took photographs of views of the surrounding countryside. As she lives with her partner within the cluster of terraced houses which faces onto a parallel street of houses, she had to lean out her bedroom window in order to capture a glimpse of the view from between roof-tops. These, she said, were the view that she opened her shutters to every morning and represented all that she loved about country living.



Similarly, outsider resident, Nadine also espoused the beauty of her panoramic view of the vineyards from her garden. She described how she loved to sit on the steps to her French windows, and survey the antics of her son and dog playing together against the peaceful backdrop of the view.

Nadine watches as her son, Theo plays. The view is framed, not only by the mountain side, but by an ornament in the shape of an old well and wheel. The retention of the traditional feature is a deliberate attempt to aestheticise the garden space of the apartment which Nadine and her partner rent. Her placement of table and chairs with oil-cloth in front of the view from either French window of the house, renders contradictory an aesthetic discourse, which must compete with the more functional value of the table, chairs and car. The juxtaposition of spectacle with functional, confuses the intention of use for this space.

Quite clearly, possession of a garden in Gireux enables that resident to a view of the surrounding countryside and to a greater freedom of private external space, similar to the residents in Dúnfarrraig. Crucially, this view of the countryside, allows the resident visual access to the same, without needing to leave the spatial remit of his/her garden. This means that there is no need to walk through the village, which would present greater opportunities for residents to meet each other. Instead, if residents wish to meet the owner of this house and garden, she must walk past that household and hope to glimpse the owner mowing the lawn or tending to flowers, both of which are associated with suburban practices.

Thus, the garden actually facilitates a social isolation from the community, if not from the 'neighbour' in the detached house beside. While it could be argued that this is merely a stereotype of 'suburbia' (Jagose, 2003; Girling and Helphand, 1994; Jackson, 1985), a decision recently made by the committee to refuse permission to build a terrace<sup>22</sup> (see chapter 9) in the full-time residence of a British couple, suggests otherwise. The construction of a terrace would have provided a mechanism for social isolation and detachment from the local community, so that this refusal indicates that these practices are negatively affecting both outsider and local residents, in their perception of how these social relations will come to constitute the community of Gireux in future years.

### **7.5 Summary**

In Gireux, a type of stalemate is occurring between temporary and permanent outsider residents<sup>23</sup> and the local residents. This situation which was covert, is being articulated through holiday home interest in Gireux. On the one hand, it could be argued that the holiday home is providing a means through which the local residents are now openly expressing their frustration with the social practices of the outsider resident which they view as characteristic of 'suburbia' (Jagose, 2003; Haumont, 2001). However this research shows that reaction to the holiday home phenomenon is articulating an existing tension surrounding the relationship between socialisation practices and the use of space. This tension is heightened by both local and outsider understanding of Gireux as a rural village, but which is perceived as becoming more suburban through the social practices of its inhabitants.

The local residents understand Gireux as a village whose rural aspect defines it in terms of family and friends which make up a community, and structures like the primary school which both supports that community, in as much as it then relies on that community for its continuation. Whereas although the outsider resident appreciates Gireux for its rural aspect, undeniably there is less place attachment, and arguably, less loyalty to the village structures such as the school. This encapsulates

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<sup>22</sup> Which is a variant of the garden, involving reconstructing the attic space to build a space which is open to the elements.

<sup>23</sup> With the exception of the Portuguese and Spanish residents, who, similar to most social groups, grumble about difficulties within their own circle of outsiders, but are indifferent to the changes in the social structure of the village, as long as it doesn't affect their own position.

Nadine's and Laeticia's, but particularly Claudine's attitude towards Gireux. A slightly different, but related problem arises when the outsider comes to a rural village like Gireux, and expects to be able to socialise, or at least, meet the local residents easily precisely because of its rural character. In other words, apply the same understanding of what 'rural' means in the Irish, English or Parisian context, to the rural context of Gireux. Outsider inability to access the local residents for purposes of socialising, means that she will socialise either outside of the village of Gireux, and/or stay within her house in Gireux.

Although these two examples indicate somewhat different approaches adopted by the outsider towards integrating in the village, common to nearly all outsiders, was the perception of Gireux as geographically rural, but characterised as 'suburban' or 'closed' through the social practices of the local residents. Similarly, local residents have defined Gireux as 'rural' through the importance attributed to family, but use the example of Claudine or holiday home owners to show the emergence of the suburbanite.

## **Chapter 8 The View from the Inside, Out.**

### **8.1 Introduction**

A changing relationship to the landscape, and of houses within that landscape, is being conceptualised in terms of a culture of 'viewing' in the Irish context, and the symbolic construction of 'social spatializations' (Shields, 1991) in the French context. Both refer to how 'external' spaces in each village is being constructed through a modality of dialectical interaction between the resident and the landscape. Therefore, what is being problematised in this chapter, is how this modality of interaction, or how social relations (Massey, 1994) between the resident and the social and/or physical landscape, have affected the dynamic of *internal* space – that is, of space within the house<sup>1</sup>.

In the Irish context of Dúnfarrraig, this change in the dynamic of the internal space of the house has evolved from an exclusive focus on the family hearth (as a collective focal point [Urry, 1990]), to a more dominant focus on a view of the sea and coastline (as the individual focal point [Urry, 1990]). It is contended that this new focus is apparent in the orientation of spaces within the house towards the view, while the old focus becomes a symbolic representation of that landscape, transformed into a performative role as a 'totem' of the vernacular (Slater, 2000; Lefebvre, 1991). In this way, the home becomes an important staging area of the aesthetic claims of residents' 'taste' (Bourdieu, 1984), as it demonstrates residents' ability to perceive the vernacular in terms of form, rather than function.

### **8.2 The ideological basis of 'taste' in its particular context**

In Dúnfarrraig, the focal point of interest is the sea and it has been argued that houses are now being built with an emphasis on this view. Where the local residents once perceived the sea in terms of its functional role, for fishing and for an indication of weather, now it is understood in terms of an aesthetic or leisure experience. What is of particular interest, is *how* this changing emphasis expressed through the architectural - features and design of the house, is being understood by residents: in terms of a *conceptual* change to the built landscape which reflects this practice of gazing, or in more general terms of a landscape which has physically changed because of the

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter 6 for a discussion of how the *external* structures of the house, such as the bay window or balcony, now provide 'viewing frames' of the coastline.

increasing number of houses – particularly holiday homes – which are being built in Dúnfarrraig. It is argued that those residents (outsider and local) who have been able to identify the conceptual basis for this change, may attempt a similar construction of this emphasis in their own house. However, those who have interpreted the increased number of houses on the landscape in terms of its modernisation, may seek to change their house by updating furniture and so forth, which, it is argued, will not affect the dynamic of that space. This means that the internal space of the house will continue to reflect the everyday, more practical experiences of that family or individual, rather than represent the ideological or conceptual basis for that change.

To this end, photographs taken by outsider and local residents of their homes, may be particularly useful in illustrating residents' understanding of the conceptual basis for this change. This is providing the conceptual framework through which understandings of 'taste' are being analysed in the rural context of Dúnfarrraig in Ireland.

### **8.3 Constructing a 'representation of space' (Lefebvre, 1991) through a hybrid of the 'old' with the 'new' (Slater, 2000; O'Connor, 1993).**

In Dúnfarrraig, a trend has emerged whereby non-local residents have tended to buy old dilapidated structures such as the Irish cottage, renovate them and then add an extension to the rear. This extension will take the form of a balcony, sunroom, extra room and so forth, which will provide an internal viewing platform for the resident, of the coastline. What is significant about the construction of this extension is that it has provided the dominant focal point of attention in the house. That is not to say that it will eradicate collective spaces such as the kitchen dining table in the house. Rather, that the construction of a viewing structure such as a set of large windows, patio door, balcony and so forth, marks a change in the dynamic of the living space of the house, from a collective view or time centred around the family hearth, to a more individualised time and view, focused towards this new structure.

This retention of the 'vernacular' structure of the old cottage, alongside the modern structure, is a practice more particular to the outsider's construction of the internal space of the house, than the local residents', who have tended to reject the cottage on the basis of the amount of internal living space which is considered to be too small

and limited in terms of its structural possibilities. Instead, some local residents are using the idea of the façade to construct an appearance of the traditional cottage to the outside of their houses, while modernising the internal space. Here, the difference between constructions of space lie between outsider's tendency to buy the old structures in order to renovate, while the local will construct new structures, and then cover with a façade. So while on the exterior the representation of the old aesthetic is essentially the same, the interior of the house reveals a different dynamic.

An outsider, Deirdre, provides an example of how this practice of constructing a dynamic of viewing within the house is achieved. When she arrived to Dúnfarrraig two years ago, she bought a dilapidated stone cottage which she has since renovated and added a large extension out the rear. This dynamic of viewing looking out at the landscape is constructed through the use of the 'viewing frame', and from within the house, through the display of objects carefully retained from the original structure of the cottage. These objects, such as wooden beams, once served a functional purpose, but now assume a performative role through the practice of display (Slater, 2000). Their connection to the social and structural history of the house, lends them a symbolic, rather than practical value, while their use to construct a dynamic of viewing, transforms these objects into artefacts of that vernacular history.

In her photographs, Deirdre described her love of all things 'traditional', and has shown how she carefully renovated the cottage, extending out the rear in order to provide a larger living space for herself and her son.



Figure 8.3.1 A 'hybridisation' (Slater, 2000; O'Connor, 1993) of influences.



While relatively unremarkable, Deirdre's own bedroom clearly displays an orientation towards a view of the sea. The bed is positioned so that its occupants may sleep facing the view. From the decked patio area, a panoramic view of the 'village' of Dúnfarrraig and the coastline is unveiled. The new focus towards the sea contrasts with the original orientation of the old cottage which faced the mountain rather than the sea. Deirdre has affixed prominent black hinges and knocker to the front door of the old part of the house, and incorporated the same features in all the internal doors of the house, as pictured here. Her bedroom thus displays the juxtaposition of the more traditional features of the house, beside the wide expanse of the modern double doors.



Similarly, she has retained the stone wall behind the original fireplace in the living room, but replaced its inefficient and dirty method of heating, with the more modern black stove. Various oddments adorn the room, but the most noticeable are the wooden beams in the ceiling, the flowers in the vase which are an assortment of heathers, the candelabra in the corner of the room, and the internal door with its obligatory black hinges. Alongside these tokens or 'totems' of traditional identity (Slater, 2000), are more contemporary items, featured beside the old, such as the lamp beside the candelabra, the television beside the stone shelf and the lights. Their functional presence in the room, indicates that the use of the candelabra, flowers and so forth, is an aesthetic one, designed to recreate "a sense of the traditional past" (Deirdre's description of the room).



A view of the same room, looking towards the old entrance porch and door. The double door frame replaces the original which would have been a single, rather than double door. Deirdre has combined lattice windows with wood, in an attempt to aestheticise this 'totem' of the past history of the cottage (MacCannell, 1976; Slater, 2000).



Although the kitchen and its large table continue to be one of the dominant spaces in the house, the orientation is towards the windows featured here and towards the French windows in the living room section of this room, which yield a view of the coastline. Throughout the large room, she has continued her practice of exposing the wooden beams, as token signifiers of the 'traditional'.



The combined sitting room and family room on the ground level. A further sitting room is on the first level. Both rooms features large windows, which are not shown here. Sliding double doors lead out to the patio. A recurring theme of the 'traditional' is emphasised here particularly through the use of kitchen cabinet and carefully exposed wooden beams as signifiers of an 'authentic past' (Peace, 1989).



An external view of Deirdre's house, which gives more literal emphasis to Slater (2000) and O'Connor's (1993) notion of the 'hybridisation' of the vernacular form with other cultural forms, as the old structure of the cottage (marked here by an 'X') is attached by a staircase to the extension out the rear (as noted by a 'Y') which encapsulates this new orientation of the internal social space towards a view of the coastline.

Deirdre explains that she has kept the internal layout of the cottage as it was when she first bought it in order to retain a sense of its past history, and how she has opened up the living space by adding the extension. She pointed out that she has not touched the structure of the original living room in the cottage (featured in the photographs above), and has used the rooms on either side of that room, as a bedroom for her son and as a guestroom. Her own bedroom and another guest bedroom are located in the first floor part of the extension, while a small wooden staircase leads downstairs to the kitchen and open plan sitting room. The same staircase also leads upstairs to a large sitting room which spans the length of the kitchen and sitting area downstairs. One wall of this upstairs living area has been constructed from glass, in order to afford a viewing platform of the entire vista of Dúnfarrraig.

A similar attempt at retaining the old structure, is offered by Cathy, outsider resident living for the past few years in Dúnfarrraig with her partner and two young daughters<sup>2</sup>. The house is located in the Caher Valley, whose slightly different attraction is the Caher river, rather than the immediate coastline of Dúnfarrraig. She bought the cottage from her landlord and landlady, a couple living in Ennis, and has slowly incorporated features of her old suburban life into the internal space of the original structure. The layout of the cottage features a small porch area opening onto the living room which boasts a fire place. The kitchen runs the length of the back of the house, while the two sides of the house include two small bedrooms and one large bedroom.

Cathy explains that they have compromised on expanding and knocking down one of the internal walls, in favour of keeping the original features. These include keeping the dividing wall between living room and kitchen, Brigid's crosses on the ceiling of the living room, hooks for hanging bacon, similar fireplaces in bedrooms and living room, and an antique wooden cabinet with mirror in her bedroom. However, Cathy's sentimental considerations are not without pragmatic understanding. The internal wall is filled with rubble which she admits has been a factor in the retention of the original structure. She comments that when the house was first sold to them, "there were potatoes growin' on the floor, things like that...it was in a fairly bad state of repair."

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<sup>2</sup> Although a camera was given to Cathy with a request to take photographs of her house, she stated her preference for an oral tour instead.

The overall effect of which, was to lend the house an “old-fashioned” atmosphere, where “everything you see in this room is as it was”.

Cathy’s description of potatoes growing through the floor-boards of the cottage, renders a primitive air to the place, suggesting that the house was literally inseparable from the field in which it had been built. Leaving as much of the original structure in place, Cathy and her partner have decided to extend out the back of the house, breaking through the kitchen wall to create a bigger space which will accommodate both the kitchen units and a dining room. The central living space of the house is the kitchen, where the views from the dining area are of a pond structure which has been created out the back of the property.

Cathy’s plans include knocking the dividing wall between the two small bedrooms in order to provide her three year old daughter with her own room, separate from the new baby and her parents.

“We’re goin’ to, when we have the extension, we’re gonna join these two rooms into one, because she [Cathy’s older daughter, Frances] doesn’t have her own room. And if there was another kid, I’d like her to have her own space.”

Her plans to extend and renovate the house are significant given the particular importance attributed to separating the sleeping quarters for each child. During the nineteenth century, and for most of the twentieth century, space would have been at a premium, so children slept in one bedroom and sometimes, in the same bed.

“...Houses built in the last half of the nineteenth century are what people today refer to as a traditional Irish cottage. This cottage was extremely simple and in many ways excellently suited to the terrain: constructed directly on the earth from rough stone...The ground floor was simple: a large kitchen, a small room at the west end of the house and a loft created by a platform built under the kitchen roof. The older children slept on this platform, while the parents and the younger children slept in the kitchen. The west room was for the retired couple. In this way the new and the old part of the family were formally divided, and the old people were guaranteed some privacy in a very public home” (Brody, 1973: 114-5).

By keeping key signifiers of the past social history of the cottage, such as the Brigid's crosses and meat hooks, and yet changing the layout of space within the internal structure of the house to enable greater individualisation of space to each family member, Cathy is creating a hybrid between the vernacular features within the house, and her own suburban emphasis on separate spaces. Cathy states that;

“And we do want to – I mean, we have an acre here, an’ this house is on one half of the acre and hopefully like, as time goes on, we do stay here. I would like to have something for Frances later on like...I mean, she’d not want to live next door to us I’m sure, but at least she’d have it there. And y’know, I’m not saying she’d get planning. She might not, but at least there’d be something there for her, bit of room to do something herself even.”

Cathy’s plans for Frances include retaining a portion of land beside the house in order to be able to provide her daughter with a choice of building her own house on that land, or selling it. However, this means that Cathy’s current plans for extending out the rear of the property in order to create this sense of space for the bedrooms, are restricted by her long-term plan for Frances. This is a conundrum also faced by many of the local residents who have elected to retain land for their children to build on, or sell<sup>3</sup>. As a result, many of the locals who are currently raising families, live in close proximity to the family homestead and consequently, have tended to stay in Dúnfarrraig. This pattern has crucial implications for the social and geographical reproduction of the dispersed area which now comprises ‘Dúnfarrraig’, as it continues the spatial legacy of the townlands.

Unlike Deirdre however, Cathy renovated the cottage in order to live in it, rather than to display it. Although this implies two quite different relationships to the ‘vernacular’ history of either cottage, both outsiders have retained existing objects of the social structure of that house, as a symbolic representation of its history. This coupled with their similar emphasis on a ‘viewing frame’ at the rear of either property, demonstrates the complex way in which the ‘vernacular’ is being appropriated and constructed.

Local resident and builder Dave, rejects the notion of this dynamic of viewing which takes its emphasis from the concept of the ‘viewing frame’. Interestingly, he uses the

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<sup>3</sup> As revealed by many of the local residents during the interviews.

term 'ethnic' to refer to this sense of the 'vernacular' design of the stone cottage, stating that although the use of large windows has become popular practice among home-owners in Dúnfarrraig, his smaller windows will present a more faithful reconstruction of the traditional stone cottage. While he recognises that his house has far more internal space than the stone cottage of old, the use of small windows will actively prevent a better view of the coastline. In an attempt to continue this emphasis of an 'old' aesthetic, Dave states that he wants his garage, which is being built beside his house, to "look like a stable."

"Even though my own house is very small [uses very small windows], with what a cottage uses, but that's because I didn't want to take from the look of it, even though I would wish to have big windows inside. But outside, I wouldn't like lookin' up at big windows, so it was very ethnic that I kept them the same size as old cottage windows. *It would've changed the design of the house.*"  
(Italics added)

Therefore this decision to have small windows is highly significant, as it demonstrates Dave's understanding of how the internal space of many of the houses in Dúnfarrraig now reflect the changing relationship of the home owner to the landscape. Although on the one hand it could be argued that the use of stylistic details will construct a symbolic representation of the cottage - similar to the effect of Cathy and Deirdre's houses - the elimination of a 'viewing frame' of the external landscape, should mean that the dynamic of interaction will take its focus from within the house.

Figure 8.3.2 A symbolic representation of the vernacular (Slater, 2000).



Dave explains that “it’s supposed to look like a very old council cottage, but really it’s much bigger....So, to look at it, the initial look of it as you drive past is that it looks like an old council cottage with the plaster work knocked off. I want to keep the path (entrance driveway) more narrow to make it look like an old road up to it, like.”



Dave shows the view of the coastline from his house. The meadow to the fore of the picture, is demarcated by a boundary wall on every side. To the road side, Dave has built a stone wall. In the right hand corner of the photograph, is a small kerb – the suburban lawn import (Silverstone, 1997; Girling and Helphand, 1994; Jackson, 1985). Dave rejects the idea of a garden, as it “wouldn’t be in keeping with tradition. Something – a dry stone wall and small bit of a lawn out front. but it’ll be basic.”



It is this preoccupation with either retaining or recreating an aspect of the vernacular through renovating the traditional cottage structure or creating a façade to give the appearance of living in the same, which has caught the attention of an artist living in Dúnfarrraig. She grapples with the idea of ‘proportion’, to articulate her difficulty with the aesthetic implications of this construction of space on the landscape. This problem, as she understands it, is both a visual and a spatial one, caused by the crude marriage of textures such as the stone-cut alongside the whitewash façade of the farm cottage, and by the renovation of the latter. What Geraldine is articulating, is the reconstruction of the design of the rural cottage according to the values of the outsider as ‘suburbanite’, city dweller and other. This practice of renovating the old structure has been initiated by the outsider, while a version of this idea is now being demonstrated by the local in its visual form through the use of stone-cut facades. Geraldine explains that a difficulty arises when the design confuses the boundary between the internal living space of the house and the external landscape. She states that the sense of ‘proportion’ or separation between spaces which was so evident in the traditional stone cottage, has been exploited or confused in the new modern dwelling, and is changing the way in which we now relate to the landscape.

In explanation, Geraldine refers to photographs which she took some years ago of the architecture of the older, indigenous house, to show how the different of the way in which space was used within the house acknowledged the external landscape without attempting to intrude on the same space.

Figure 8.3.3 Separating spaces



“In the old houses, was the eh feeling that you’re inside, looking out...The picture window [of the new house], I feel, creates terrible confusion, because you’re not sure whether you’re inside or outside! Y’know, in some of the [new] bungalows, the way you’d have an armchair and the glass coming down, and I just feel that it’s unsettling. It’s not like...letting light in, it’s nearly as if you’re sitting in a field.

“You have two separate spaces. To engage with it while you’re inside. You are looking out onto it and you’re aware of it being...very much outside. So that everything is framed as well. You look out, and it’s, you have a landsc- and it’s framed. It’s not the size of the windows so much as the idea. You were very aware of looking out. And yet it was terribly simple from the outside”.

Geraldine traces the line of the frame of the window in the old cottage, showing how the thickness of the stone wall restricted the angle of viewing for the resident, while arguably, affording greater clarity to the view. Unlike more modern houses, the window was connected to the greater structure of the house with a keystone or slab of smooth limestone rock, binding the two walls of either side of the window together. It is contended that this concept of construction, enabled the window to be a part of the overall proportion of the house, blending into the landscape and yet, by partially obscuring the view for the resident, reminding the resident of the quite *separate* spaces of the house and the landscape respectively.

“I love the idea of a wall being inside and then this whole other world outside. So in the old cottages...there’s the thick wall of course, you’re looking out into...so you’re not trying to bring the outside in, more accepting the fact that

it's another. It's even the fact that the window isn't, isn't a whole wall, or isn't...y'know, you're very aware of being inside and that that's a different world to being outside."

Geraldine argues that this awareness of dwelling in a different space to that of the view, demonstrated respect for the surrounding hinterland. It is this extrinsic quality in the construction of the older houses which Geraldine argues is lacking in the design of new, modern houses. In their desire to appropriate a view of the sea and mountains, the resident has added on parts such as a balcony, sunroom and conservatory, which breaks the line of the house and seeks to place the resident within the space of the landscape being viewed<sup>4</sup>. This effect collapses the sense of difference between the internal and external living spaces, to visually and structurally intrude on the view. Not only does this encroach on the landscape, but in its hurry to incorporate the object of view within sight of the house, it asserts a visual dominance over the object being viewed. While the object is just about visible to the home-owner who is proximally near the site, the large and visually striking nature of the new house claims the greater attention. This is managed through height, texture and colour. Thus, while the object has not been physically removed from the landscape, the way in which the internal space of the house has been constructed to appropriate this view of the object, actually disembeds the object from the landscape through asserting a visual dominance of space over the object. Simultaneously, this practice excludes a public view of the object, through distracting the 'gaze' of the flow towards the new visuality of the house, rather than the cultural or geological artefact in the landscape.

Combined with this conceptualisation of the house as new 'visuality' (Friedberg, 2001) in the landscape, is the notion of catching the gaze of the neighbouring residents. Geraldine comments in bewildered fashion how flowers given by the neighbour to the home owner when visiting, disappear from their wrapping, only to reappear on the window-sill "behind the curtain...for outside people to see". The display of the flowers becomes a way of displaying the house. By relegating the flowers to an area only visible to those outside the house, the resident is using their

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<sup>4</sup> This is more easily evident in the example of the conservatory, where the use of glass as a different texture to the stone or brick wall of the structure of the house, extends the internal space further into the landscape in which the house is situated. The 180 degree view of the landscape afforded by the glass walls, accentuates this feeling of being surrounded by the hinterland, rather than of being within the house.

decorative function to engage the attention of the passer by. Thus, this simple gesture such as the giving of flowers, is transformed into an act of representation (Lefebvre, 1991) whereby the flowers provide an essential contribution to the viewing discourse of the house.

Although Geraldine presents various photographs showing a vase of flowers on the table in her kitchen and on the window-sill, she points out that she has no blinds or curtains. While undeniably, the flowers aestheticise the frame of the window, the orientation of the space in her room remains unchanged. However, the example of the flowers demonstrates the performative use of objects within the house, either to direct or articulate the orientation of the house. From a focus on the 'collective' (Urry, 1990, 2002), traditionally associated with icons such as the fireplace or the kitchen table, the dynamic of interaction has shifted to a focus on the view of the landscape. This has meant a more focused use of objects which facilitate that 'view' from within the house, such as the placement of an armchair in front of the window, bay windows, sliding doors and French windows.

Figure 8.3.4 Flowers as the anti-‘curtain’ (Schivelbusch, 1988) stance – drawing the public gaze into the private space.



Despite her criticism of residents' use of flowers to draw public attention to the house, Geraldine similarly displays a vase of flowers on her window-sill. She explains that she was experimenting with colour and objects, and lines of symmetry. The angle of the photograph has taken the line of the window, and followed through with the lines of the wall. However, of greater interest here, is her own depiction of her house, which would appear to indicate the same emphasis of a view, complete with flowers. The ornaments and books have been carelessly heaped in a corner beside and on top of the window-sill, their haphazard position contrasting with the attention afforded to the arrangement of the flowers. The colour of the flowers match the paint on the wall, while the stems have been given alternating lengths in order to bring the gaze down and balance the symmetry. Further, a tiny twig has been placed between the flowers, to suggest that the flowers have been borrowed from an obliging field, rather than a shop.

The impression given, is of a rustic retreat. However, rather than taking a photograph directly of the window, which would entail excluding the vision of scattered books and other oddments, Geraldine has chosen to take this image at an angle which includes the books. Applying Slater's (2000) framework of the social construction of the 'local' in the 'global' setting, it is contended that although this image would appear to suggest Geraldine's quite haphazard approach, both to her house and her work, the very precise way in which the photograph has been taken, indicates the mix of her ideas and materials with the local setting of the house, in order to recreate a sense of the 'local' rustic retreat (MacCannell, 1976).

Despite her criticisms of the built landscape of Dúnfarrraig, Geraldine admits that she designed her own studio in the likeness of a farmyard barn. This was to complement her existing house which is one of the oldest structures in Dúnfarrraig. Geraldine had hoped that the studio would provide a handy retreat for her art work and a sympathetic enjoiner to the residence. The attempt to recreate the farmyard barn failed, partly due to poor workmanship in the area, but crucially also, because her design ideas have proven incompatible with this structure. She explains that while she studied art in Paris, she lived in a garret attic and wanted to incorporate some of the French design ideas such as the French window, into the structure of her bedroom windows and studio. The brick work and French double doors means that the studio has adopted quite a modern appearance, contrary to Geraldine's vision. Therefore, according to Slater (1999), the success of this barn is being determined by her attempt to get the right balance between incorporating the concept of 'French window' to the local structure of the barn, in order to continue a structural sense of the 'local' from the house to the studio. However, according to Slater's framework (1999), in this hybrid mix, there is no possibility of recreating the authentic barn.

Figure 8.3.5 Reconstructing the 'vernacular' (MacCannell, 1976).



A view of the 'teachers residence' to the left of the photograph, and her studio.



Fionuala's studio and bedroom. The concrete stairs lead to the studio, which features two velux's to the mountain side. Access to her bedroom on the ground floor, is gained through the double doors, featured to the left of the photograph.

Given her own failure to recreate a vernacular feature of the landscape, such as the farmyard barn in a sympathetic fashion, she offers photographs of a nearby cottage, recently purchased by a musician who has been renovating parts of it in stages. She uses this cottage as an example of a renovation job which is taking care to retain the internal space of the cottage as it was, rather than change the dynamic of that space.



“...Whereas em, there’s, the traditional way of extending houses was to do it length ways. And so just a room on either side. So there’s a kind of – to be really, really posh – long door looking in. So, from one side of the house, you can look down through the doorways to the end, to look in at the end. And there’s – I suppose it’s the height of the ceiling too of course. Y’know, the kitchen has the whole – the very high – just the whole attic. It would be the traditional way. Cottage more. The [new houses] bungalows wouldn’t have the high ceilings...and they’d have picture windows and things. And you have a garret [in this cottage], and you kind of sleep in this little place that you’re nearly, y’know, crouched down in. But the height of the kitchen and the kind of space. The simplicity of it.”





The light from the open shutters of the windows, affords a glimpse of chairs, table in the centre of the room, and fireplace with uplighter. What is particularly striking about the arrangement of the décor in this room, is the aesthetic sensibilities manifest in the contrasting use of pastel paint on the walls against the black vividness of the fireplace, flanked by the rust colour of the shutters with their suggestion as original pieces of the cottage. To the centre of the picture, is a white vase of long grasses and dried flowers - presumably from the field in which the cottage is situated - and three black and white photographs depicting various persons. To the left of this arrangement, stands an uplighter, whose beam at evening time, will be focussed on the pastel shades of the ceiling, affecting a muted tone to the rest of the room.

The organisation of light, - both artificial and natural - furniture and décor, play a collaborative role in the creation of an aesthetic of the vernacular rural cottage (Slater, 2000). It is suggested that these are objects chosen and displayed for their symbolic value, rather than their functional value. This would appear to be confirmed through the use of uplighter, rather than oil lamp or candles, which would have been the more traditional method of lighting in this cottage. Instead, the flexibility of the modern uplighter facilitates a stronger, more effective light at night time, while also producing a muted light effect in the room. The apparent careless scattering of old books against the bottom of the shutters on the window sills, in contrast to the very careful placement of three black and white pictures with exact spacing between each, demonstrates a symmetry in the affectation of an aesthetic discourse which echoes Geraldine's own construction of the 'rustic retreat' in Dúnfarrraig (MacCannell, 1976).

The effect of this organisation of space, is to create a room which reflects the creative and artistic talents of the owner, musician, but whose emphasis would be more in-keeping with a living room in the English countryside with its rolling hills and pastures, rather than in the rocky Burren landscape. Although Geraldine clearly sees his use of the internal space as retaining the original features of the cottage and thereby constructing a greater sense of proportion between internal and external living spaces, it is argued that the effect of symmetry and use of aesthetics, is more reflective of the values of the artist, than of the landscape.

The kitchen area presents a less contrived feel due to the greater retention of furniture, which then appears to dominate the space, than the living room. However, it is suggested that this space has also been rationalised according to a desire to recreate the Irish cottage, using signifiers such as the kitchen dresser and table in order to provide a symbolic representation of the 'vernacular'.



These attempts to recreate the original atmosphere of the cottage, are met with difficulties. As candle-wick or the oil lamp provides an insufficient level of light, the musician has placed a lamp on the window sill, alongside a mixing bowl, vase of dried flowers and other oddments. However, rather than pointing the light from the lamp towards the work, as befits this type of lamp normally associated with a desk, the lamp has been placed in an upright position. The deflection of the light towards the ceiling of the window frame, suggests that the lamp is being used for aesthetic purposes, than for its regular, functional purpose, as it lights up a section of the internal wall, rather than providing direct light for the job at hand. This represents an attempt by the musician, to combine his own understanding of the internal aesthetic, with the local structure (O'Connor, 1993).



Next to the lamp, is a series of cords emerging from a plug socket, leading to a number of kitchen accessories. A very basic living requirement. However, to the left of the lamp stands a lamp shade which indicates the use of localised and soft light settings. Beside this again stands an upright dress cabinet, reminiscent of rustic splendour. While one angle of the kitchen table admits a vision of stacks of books and candles, the alternating angle of the table reveals a chair positioned beside the books, sporting a straw hat. As the weather in Co.Clare is usually very windy and almost always raining, this is a mannered projection of lifestyle and values onto the internal landscape of the cottage. Further, the barely visible presence of a light bulb hanging bravely from the ceiling in the kitchen, confirms the existence of electricity in the house, which would appear to suggest that the appeal of the various lamps and uplighter lies in their ability to provide muted (as romanticised), rather than direct lighting within each room. A further stack of books on a desk in the 'study' area of the house, signified as such through the purposeful positioning of chair against a slim table which is pressed against the wall, clearly affects an atmosphere of study.

Returning to her central concern, Geraldine maintains that the cottage still retains a sense of proportion and 'space' to each room, the thickness of the stone walls and windows reminding the resident of the difference between the internal space of the house and the external space of the landscape. This sense of space, she argues, is lost in the modern house, where "the big windows" have meant "losing a sense that the inside space is different to [the] outside space". This is a very interesting view of the changing dynamic of the house, articulated through this emphasis on a view of the sea.

Local awareness of this emphasis is heightened through the repeated use of bay windows, large double windows and balcony. Those local residents who had built houses prior to this structural emphasis, have expressed their regret and disappointment that their own windows are now too small by comparison, to facilitate the same method of viewing.

Instead, shop owner Eileen, shows a picture of her daughter, Rachel, playing the piano. This is the first example of a 'social' view of the internal space of the house, where the dynamic of interaction takes its focus from traditional icons such as the family hearth, rather than a view of the sea.

Figure 8.3.6 A view centred on the 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1985) of the household.



However, it is argued that this photograph indicates the same principles of 'viewing', as this representation of her house, is taking its emphasis from the display of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1984), akin to the ideological basis of the viewing frame.

Eileen remarks that although she has a view of the sea from her house, she says that "I've small windows and in a way, I regret that because I'd like to have a better view." Thus, Eileen understands not only the importance of having a view of the sea, but of having the type of architectural features necessary to provide such a view. It is suggested therefore, that this photograph of her daughter playing the piano, is her

attempt to portray a modern emphasis within her house, which is similar to the modern emphasis accorded to a view in other houses.

Similarly, local resident and publican, Jimmy, comments that his house - which he built upon his return from travels abroad - is now "right beside my home house". The latter is defined as the original family home where he spent his childhood. Jimmy says that although he has a patio at the back of the house facing the mountain, it is "not the best side", as the favoured view in Dúnfarrraig is of the sea. His kitchen has been designed to run the length of the house, with one window looking out towards the sea, and the other looking up at the mountain. Although Jimmy was not asked to take any photographs of his house due to his repeated statements of time constraints, Eileen refused to take any photographs of her own house, explaining that it was constantly untidy and that neither she nor her husband Tim had the time to tidy it. Possibly one of the most revealing insights into this project, has been local disinclination to take a photograph of either a view of their house from the outside, or of within their home. There is a greater awareness and understanding among the community of locals and outsiders, of how a sense of the 'aesthetic' is being determined by this new structural emphasis of a view of the coastline, which necessarily involves appropriating this view into the dynamic of the house. This awareness has meant a heightened understanding of what one's own house lacks, or how it subscribes to a different dynamic, which is being defined as 'traditional' against the backdrop of the current structural emphases of other houses in the same area.

Although referring to a different context, Brody (1973) also spoke of local understanding of this sense of lack, when he described how the local residents of Inishkillane were being demoralised through the comparison of their own lifestyles with those depicted through television programmes. While that is a more dramatic depiction of attitudinal change than merits the story in Dúnfarrraig in 2006, this awareness has meant a greater reluctance on the part of *some* of the local residents, to provide photographs showing the inside of their houses. However, one local resident was happy to show photographs of the layout of her uncle's house, where she is staying before leaving for travels abroad.

Deirdre explained that the house initially comprised of one room, but two side rooms were later added by her grandfather's brother. These side rooms were initially used as the kitchen, bathroom and bedroom quarters of her uncle, with the main room used for general living purposes.

Figure 8.3.7 A modernising landscape.



These rooms show how the local resident has carefully modernised every feature of the interior of this cottage, leaving no traces of the old structure. It is argued that these renovations reflect the owner's perception of how the landscape of Dúnfarrraig is changing: in terms of a general process of modernisation which has gathered momentum through the increase of holiday home and others, rather than in terms of a *culture of 'viewing'* which is affecting the design of the built landscape.



The bathroom



The kitchen features a contemporary design using units, colour and dramatic splashdeck.



Since Deirdre's arrival, her uncle has extended out the back of the house, in order to make room for a new bedroom. This has involved extending onto the existing tiny utility room which is being converted into the new sleeping quarters for her uncle, while Deirdre has moved into her uncle's old bedroom, at his insistence.



What is striking about the front of this cottage, is the use of pots of flowers and shrubs, to create a symbolic front garden (Peillon and Slater, 2005). Secondly, each pot is a vivid green colour, which focalises the eye towards the front door, which also sports the colour green as a border of cornicing around the edge of the roof, and the half door. This use of the half door, gives the appearance of a barn door, or entrance to a stables, and performs an important role as a façade.



The photographs of the house, depict a modern bathroom<sup>5</sup>, bedroom and kitchen<sup>6</sup>, with a reminder of work in progress on the new extension at the rear of the house, and the front of the house. While the dimension of each room is quite limited, the way in which the furniture has been thoughtfully arranged, lends an unusual sense of space to each room. Arguably, this is a characteristic of the modern dwelling rather than the traditional house. Crucially however, all signs of the original structure in its traditional form have been eliminated in the renovation process, with the shell of the cottage – particularly the entrance to the front - remaining as a symbolic representation of its former traditional form (Slater, 2000).

On the one hand, the visual representation of the vernacular features of the cottage as a façade on the external walls of the house, while modernising the interior space, suggests that the resident is presenting the vernacular in its symbolic form and crucially, is aware of values of display and consumption. However, this research is particularly interested in exploring the role of the vernacular within the house – as form or function. Thus, the complete modernisation of the interior suggests that the dynamic of the rooms remains unchanged, as an important part of the role of the vernacular in its symbolic form, lies in its contribution to a discourse of viewing of the vernacular landscape, as a ‘hybridisation’ (Slater, 2000; O’Connor, 1993) of the physical landscape and the symbolic landscape.

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<sup>5</sup> The bath has been panelled in horizontal planks of wood, which not only aestheticises what is normally a very ordinary object, but enlarges the existing space of the bathroom by drawing the eye down the length of the bath. Further, the use of bright, large square tiles on the floor, opens up the space of the room, the result of which, both sink and bath seem almost lost in the vast space.

<sup>6</sup> The kitchen demonstrates a careful design which maximises potential living and working space. While the room is clearly small, thoughtful use of large tiles on the floor, ample lighting, an L shaped kitchen and dramatic use of colourful tiles between counter top and presses, has enlarged the visual capacity of the room. Moreover, the presence of a wooden pelmet presumably to hide the top of a future blind over the window, adds an aestheticising effect to the design, as well as playing a vital role in contributing to the flow of wood throughout the kitchen. The contrast between the dramatic colour opposites of black and white tiles, and the warmer wall colour tones, add considerable interest to this room by constructing different visual areas upon which the eye will focus. However, it is the positioning of wooden stools against the wall and kitchen units, which indicates the potential living space available in this room. The living space is unconsciously measured against the amount of tiles in between both stools. This then, becomes a barometer for the reassessment of the size of the kitchen, which is enlarged quite considerably through the visual perception of the amount of available living space.

#### **8.4 Living with the tourist**

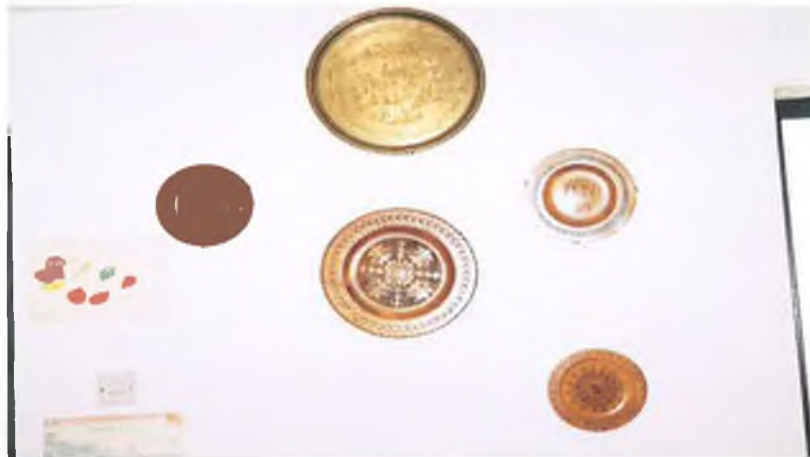
A repeated emphasis given by outsiders and locals working with an aspect of tourism, is on the need for space within the house separate from their guests, and a view – not for their guests, but for themselves. This has been reiterated in many informal conversations with residents in the community, and represents a common view for many.

One outsider, Rose, addresses the spatial layout of her house in terms of a psychological construct intimately connected with the creation of a time for self, and in terms of a ‘collective’ or shared time with guests. Both constructions of space are necessarily separate, and embedded within alternating conceptualisations of the gaze as ‘romantic’ or solitary, and ‘collective’ (Urry, 1990, 2002). Rose explains that when she first purchased her house, it was divided into a number of very small rooms. Her first task was to knock down walls, to create “the very large lounge and the kitchen”.

Figure 8.4.1 Alternating constructions of space.



At a glance, the front entrance opens directly onto a large rectangular table, which is the dining area for her guests. Three doors open off this room, leading into the kitchen, 'music-room' and sitting-room. Various bedrooms are upstairs and downstairs alternatively. The kitchen features a small staircase leading up to Rose's bedroom. Rose herself, sits in an easy chair beside the stairs, facing the door and the main window of the kitchen. From this angle, a clear 'panoptic' (Foucault, 1977) view is afforded of the landscape, but crucially, of the 'green road'<sup>1</sup> which flows past her property. Her position in the kitchen enables her to observe activity on the road and be alerted to potential guests walking up to her house.



This is a close up picture of the plates or discs shown on the kitchen wall beside the table. Rose explained that these were a family collection of Russian plates which she has kept. Ironically, instead of constructing a 'representation of space' (Lefebvre, 1991) through a symbolic representation of the vernacular, Rose is representing the foreign influence.

Rose remarks that although she may not remember the names of past guests, “once they come to the back door, I’ll remember their faces”. Paradoxically, what Rose refers to here as the “back door”, is actually the front door of her house. While this expression and its sentiment of remembrance is familiar to non-representational theory, it is being used here to construct a sense of intimacy and friendship which Rose deliberately invokes through a complex interplay between the space of the back door, her philosophy of shared spaces – which includes the breakfast table - and her marked casual manner with guests.

She goes on to describe her typical working day, rising at a quarter to seven, or six thirty every morning. However, this time is not devoted to preparing breakfasts, as tomatoes, pudding and mushrooms have been sliced and diced since the night before. Rather, this is Rose’s time for herself,

“Because I like my own space in the morning, y’know that hour and a half, two hours. Then when the breakfast is on, let’s say breakfast is at 8, that first bit of time and space...So I serve breakfast and read while they’re eating.”

Crucially, after breakfast is served, Rose relinquishes her business role, leaving them “to entertain each other”. However, this is not an idle supposition of guests interacting with each other, rather, it is managed through the careful construction of a social space centred around the informal medium of one large table at which all guests sit.



The 'breakfast room'. The door to the right, is the entrance to the property, which Rose refers to as the 'back door'. The door to the left, opens on to a smaller sitting room and corridor to the bedrooms.

"That's why I have one table. And everybody sits around it. Y'know, instead of having individual tables...this works for me and it works for this house. They get to know each other, and it's quite funny trying to communicate in English when some of them can't speak English, so we have a lot of sign language, waving of arms. It's lovely. It does work. And I like the sharing of it. For example, someone would have – wants more toast, and someone has too much toast, so the baskets are all flying around the table. Sharing."



This is another close up of two portraits which are behind the dining table in the main room. Rose explained that these are family portraits, which provide a focal point for fun when family comes visiting, as the relatives take turns comparing their own likeness from these.

It is suggested that the construction of this collective space of encounter, enables Rose to retain a sense of 'home' to her house, rather than organise a breakfast room with individual tables, which would formalise her home as a business venture<sup>7</sup>. The practice of facilitating interaction between guests, means that they leave as friends and become reacquainted on their repeat visit (depending on time). In a conversation with a guest, Rose placed herself in the role of friend, rather than as hostess of the establishment:

Rose: Did you phone about the restaurant?

Guest: I didn't. Tomorrow night we're going out, 'coz it'll be the last night we'll be here so...

Rose: What are you doing tonight then?

Guest: Don't know yet.

Later in the conversation, Rose's involvement as friend becomes more pointed.

Ruth: What do you do in the evenings when you come back here?

Guest: Eat, chill out.

Rose: Talk.

Guest: Have a glass of wine...em, yeah, just relax...

Rose: Cook for Rose.

Guest: Cook for Rose. And normally there's friends from around that come round.

A number of things emerge of interest here. First, despite stating her need for a personal time and space, Rose would appear to intrude quite frequently on the time and space of her guests. This is managed through the practice of arranging a uniform time and space for breakfast, when guests are thrown together and required rather forcibly, to interact with each other in order to obtain food. Secondly, Rose's inquiries regarding the evening plans of her young guest, imply her desire for inclusion in their social activities. This is despite the fact that this guest is staying with his girlfriend

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<sup>7</sup> In an informal conversation with Rose, she confided that although she "hated" the Bed and Breakfast job, she loved the interaction with her guests. She comments that "I still find people the most interesting thing about the B&B. You just listen to them, y'know, it's absolutely wonderful. And don't forget, the whole world comes to me. French, all nationalities." This would suggest that Rose considers her house in terms of a collective encounter for people, as symbolised by the use of breakfast table.

and presumably wants time alone together. Thirdly, Rose's ready response that her guest would cook for her 'in the evenings', implies either a reversal of roles or the relinquishment of Rose's role as business woman past the hour of breakfast in the morning. Rose is making it quite clear that her economic role is restricted to the morning period only, rather than the afternoon and evening time, when her role becomes a social one. The addition of "friends from around" [the Dúnfarrraig area] is the final triumph in the construction of the collective space in the house, as social.

However, despite projecting an atmosphere of social inclusion, Rose is also acutely aware of the holiday requirements of her guests, while on their stay in her house in Dúnfarrraig.

"Because most people go away on holiday to visit, come to Dúnfarrraig, to my house to get away. ...To get away from their daily routine. So for their inner peace, to exercise all of that. And if you provide them with exactly what they've got at home, they're trapped...into the same routine. So why go away? So I let them roam free, let them discover."

In order to provide this restful atmosphere, Rose names her other living spaces as the 'music room' and 'sitting room' respectively. The first bears a few couches, keyboard propped against a wall, and a cd collection. Rose admitted that the keyboard is never used by either herself or visitors, but she constantly plays cds on her music system. The real focus of the room, is indicated by an easy chair, positioned in front of a pair of sliding double doors which yield a view of the coastline. Rose describes spending many hours in this chair, listening to music and gazing, or "absorbing the view".

Figure 8.4.2 A 'representation of space' (Lefebvre, 1991) as 'individual' time (Urry, 1990, 2002).



The 'music room'. Rose shows her armchair which has been positioned immediately in front of the double doors. This enables her to engage with the landscape from the weatherproof comfort of her armchair.

The sitting and music room are visually separate to the kitchen, but it is the use of the kitchen for 'shared' or collective activities, and music and sitting room for private use, which defines each living space within the house, according to the 'romantic' and 'collective' gaze (Urry, 1990, 2002). Rose states that

"I create my own time. I close the kitchen door."

By closing the door to the kitchen which houses the staircase to her bedroom, Rose is defining the space as private. This practice constructs a sense of time which is spatially different to that of her guests. Similarly, Rose's appreciation of her guests' requirement for 'individual' and 'collective' spaces (Urry, 1990, 2002), is realised through her organisation of the layout of spaces within the house. Crucially, it is contended that the dynamic of each room will change according to the type of appropriation required – be it of the *social* landscape through collective encounter around the dining table, or of a 'semi-spiritual relationship' with the *physical*



landscape through a solitary engagement (Urry, *ibid*) through the double French windows – at various times of the day<sup>8</sup>.

However, this flexible arrangement of space is unusual, as the houses which have been built since Rose's arrival to Dúnfarrraig in the early 1990s, demonstrate a clear orientation within the entire house structure, towards a view of the landscape. This is particularly evident in one outsider's house, Kate, who lets her house in Dúnfarrraig during the summer months while she lives and works in her hotel in Lismaroon, returning home at the end of the tourist season. In the last year, Kate has added a sunroom to the back of her house, enabling a 180 degree view of the surrounding coastline. She remarks that while the sunroom has added considerably to her enjoyment of the space in the house and provided a better view of the sea, her favourite spot in the house is sitting at the large table in the kitchen.

“..We've actually opened say what was our sitting room, kitchen room. We've now opened the kitchen sitting room and sunroom, so it's huge. The whole space. It would be, I dunno...it's forty feet from one side to the other, but definitely the focal point is the kitchen.”

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted, that some guesthouses in Dúnfarrraig differ slightly in their arrangement of public (guest) and private (home owners own) space in the house. Although at least two guesthouses have two living rooms in order to facilitate this separation of social space, most houses keep the kitchen space as the family room or living room during the tourist season, giving the guests freedom to use the main living room in the house.

Figure 8.4.3 A conceptual emphasis of change.



While Kate collapses the space of the main room into a triad of kitchen, sitting and sunroom, the placement of furniture clearly differentiates the room according to specific functions. The couch and armchair have been positioned with their backs to the dining and kitchen area, facing the view from the sunroom, creating a restful space independent to the rest of the room. The dining area is also clearly separated from the kitchen, through the placement of a ledge against the counter top of the presses. While the kitchen in particular, would appear to use the dominant white motif of colour and wood to construct an aesthetic discourse of rustic simplicity, the presses clearly resemble the ‘shaker’ design, an urban kitchen design which incorporates the concept of a spartan simplicity with clinical lines and texture.

Despite this recent structural emphasis on a panoramic view of the coastline which would appear to demonstrate the new orientation of the house, Kate is adamant that the heart of the house is the kitchen.

“Y’know, I came from a farmhouse, the kitchen was the hub of our house. And I suppose for the two years we were living in the hotel, I didn’t have it. And I suppose I really missed it. So...we got a kitchen table made. Huge. And...just literally to live. Everything in the kitchen. And it needed to go [face] both ways. I needed to have a view of the sea and of the mountains.”

Not unlike Rose whose arrangement of the internal space of her house assumes a more heterogeneous layout according to different requirements of ‘collective’ and ‘individual’ time (Urry, 1990, 2002), Kate has also rationalised the largest living

space of her house into two sections, to represent the different types of encounter with the landscape, both social and physical. However, in adding the extension to her house, Kate has completely modernised the interior. Notably, this house was built by Kate, rather than bought for its appeal as an Irish stone cottage. Therefore unlike outsiders Cathy and Deirdre, whose houses reflect quite a literal representation of the vernacular through their display of wooden beams, door hinges, St. Brigid's crosses and so forth, or even unlike local resident Dave's notion of recreating the spatial aesthetic of the old council house, local resident Kate has sought to incorporate a view of the physical landscape into her house, as a crucial part of the dynamic of social encounter. This is made explicit by Kate in her description of sitting at the table where she can have "a view of the sea and of the mountains"<sup>9</sup>.

Although Kate added the sunroom onto her existing house, because of her own love of the view of the sea, other residents who operate guesthouses in Dúnfarrraig, have been forced to consider adding this type of viewing framework onto their house, in order both to keep their existing tourist base, and provide a means of attracting new business. One outsider, Hazel, who used to operate a guesthouse, explained that she decided to discontinue the business because of her inability to meet tourist expectations of a room with a view. She stated that had already attempted to accommodate tourist demand within her home, by moving her family into the attic space every summer, thus giving the best rooms they had. Now however, tourists demand a room with a view of the sea, which is impossible from the ground floor level, and an ensuite bathroom. To provide this requirement, Hazel would have to convert her attic space into a number of bedrooms, which would elevate the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990, 2002) over the rooftops of the houses opposite. However, Hazel's difficulty has been shared by a number of other residents, who have spoken informally of their difficulty in selling bedrooms without a view of the sea. Unlike Hazel, these residents have had to alter the orientation of spaces within their house. Hazel shows a photograph of a Bed and Breakfast in order to demonstrate the criterion for competing in this sector.

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<sup>9</sup> Kate also took photographs of various landscape scenes taken on walks up the mountain with her dog. She emphasised her love of walking around Dúnfarrraig, and remarked that people are more likely to meet her walking the "hills", rather than in her house or in the pub – the latter which is a popular social space for the community.

Figure 8.4.4 The tourist as change agent.



“That is a brand new Bed and Breakfast that was built. Very modern and up to date and that really is the way it is going with the Bed and Breakfasts. People are looking for y’know, a good quality service and em, the old fashioned houses would not be as popular anymore. Everybody wants an ensuite and modern looking house with plenty of parking around. Modern facility, where years ago they were more flexible. When we first started now, we had four rooms and we had one bathroom and that wasn’t a problem. And two years later everybody wanted an ensuite and we had to put them in. So that’s what people are looking for when they’re coming in, and tourism, they want a nice little modern place to stay. Because they like the environment to be natural and old-fashioned, but they want their comforts.”

Thus, in order to attract business from tourism, the residents must project a ‘representation of space’ as traditional, achieved through features such as a façade, in order to ‘focalise’ (Ingram, 1991) the gazing motorist towards their house. However, the internal space must reflect modern living comforts, rather than the ‘lived experience’ of the ‘traditional’ (Lefebvre, 1991). It is these demands which have informed other residents’ understanding of the dynamic qualities of space and the importance of viewing.

### 8.5 Summary

What has been problematised here, is how a dynamic of viewing the landscape has come to rationalise the internal space of the house, while simultaneously recognising that the development of this culture of viewing across the built landscape, will be

uneven in character. Therefore, what is of particular interest to this research, is how changes to the built landscape of Dúnfarrraig, have been understood by the residents in terms of a concept of viewing, or in general terms of the modernisation of the landscape. Crucially, as the very basis of this 'viewing' is based on appropriating and representing the 'vernacular', as a hybrid construct of the physical and symbolic landscape, modernising the internal space of the house has entailed eliminating any trace of the vernacular which is perceived as traditional. A local farmer, Joseph, who spoke of the changing attitude of farmers towards the landscape, reflected that;

“...People come and go, but Dúnfarrraig...Dúnfarrraig stays, doesn't it, like...No, I mean, Dúnfarrraig is changing, changing so fast that eh...we're even getting' to the point that we'll forget what it was like before all these houses. And all the bulldozing. There you are. But it's still near to Nature, y'know what I mean.”

Ironically, this perception is based on the more elemental aspect of Dúnfarrraig, which is sandwiched in between the sea, mountains and the sky. Whereas the culture of 'viewing' discussed here, is premised on the notion of appropriating the landscape into the house, to construct a *social* vision of Nature.

## Chapter 9 Inhabiting the view

### 9.1 Introduction

What has made such a significant difference between the impact of holiday homes on the physical landscape in Gireux and Dúnfarrraig, has been the degree of control exercised at the local level of the village or '*commune*', over applications to build, convert or extend any section of the house in the French context. This is adversely affecting outsiders' ability to construct a similar type of viewing frame such as the terrace within the *terraced* house<sup>1</sup>, as they would have done in the Irish context of Dúnfarrraig, thus prohibiting this method of appropriating the public landscape, for private consumption. Although the viewing frame has determined how the internal space of the house is constructed in Dúnfarrraig, this focus has recently been forbidden as a practice in Gireux<sup>2</sup>. Instead, the outsider must either be content with the layout of the house as an expression of a past social history, or reorganise the space, similar to the efforts of the outsider in Dúnfarrraig to reflect their own social dynamic (Massey, 1994). However, this research is exploring how the ideological structures of the vernacular are used in representations of space as an expression of a collective social dynamic of relations, an individual social dynamic (Urry, 1990, 2002), and/or both, given the local context.

### 9.2. Constructing a different dynamic

In Gireux, the idea of prioritising a view of the landscape is not as recent as its Irish counterpart, particularly given the traditional clustered nature of village development in rural parts of France. Although a similar desire to incorporate a view of the landscape within the house was gaining momentum under the guise of the outsider, this structural practice was stopped very recently by the ruling by the local committee. The applicant was an English couple who wanted to renovate two dilapidated houses in the village. It is contended that this decision demonstrates local unwillingness to allow the abstract construction of 'social spatializations' (Shields, 1991) by the

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<sup>1</sup> The 10 holiday homes in Gireux are all terraced houses, located in the village core or 'centre'.

<sup>2</sup> This is a recent development in Gireux, as two terraced houses, currently being used for holiday purposes, already have a terrace. One of these terraced houses was owned by a British couple, who were living on a full-time basis for twenty years in Gireux, and who were successful in their application to build a terrace, during that time. When the husband died, his widow decided to sell the house, and an Irish couple now use that house as a holiday home. The other house was purchased by three English families five years ago, and during that time, were also successful in their application to build a terrace. However, these two are the only terraced houses to have a terrace.

outsider, become a structural reality. While secondly, it implies local valorisation of the 'vernacular' and refusal to allow this form of structural colonisation of this particular form of change to the built landscape of the village.

While the 'view' is defined as the sea in the Irish context of Dúnfarrraig, it is defined as the vineyards in Gireux. Immediately, this presents a difficulty for the terraced house, whose view is that of the house opposite, or the 'neighbour' (Jagose, 2003). Instead, one must live outside the clustered environs of the village in order to see the surrounding hinterland. Therefore, the preferred living space in Gireux, is on the outskirts of the village where unparalleled views of the vineyards is possible.

However, to possess a view of the countryside in Gireux, presupposes having a garden, which in turn means living on the outskirts of the village. This is because the quite close proximity of each terraced street in the village means that there is not enough space either in front of or behind the house, to allow the resident to see over the rooftop of the house in front<sup>3</sup>.

Simultaneously, there is a very real difficulty in creating a garden within the immediate front space of the terraced house, as this is the public space of the street. Potted plants and window boxes on the window-sills of the terraced house, provide a symbolic representation of the 'front garden' (Peillon and Slater, 2005) beside or underneath the ground floor windows, but do not intrude on the public space of the street. The flowers aestheticise the external façade of the house, albeit for a public gaze of the same. In order to construct a *private* gaze of the public landscape, similar to the residents in Dúnfarrraig, the local and outsider resident must either be content to live with glimpses of a view of the mountainside between streets, from a window high up in the house, or become inventive in their use of space *within* the house.

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<sup>3</sup> In an article on the front garden in suburban Dublin, in Ireland, Slater and Peillon (2005) comment that the height of the boundary wall of the front garden, differed according to the requirements of the resident. In the houses of the more affluent, higher middle class resident, the amount of garden space around the front of the house, was large enough to merit a high boundary wall, which would ensure privacy as well as security for the home owner. In contrast, the houses of the lower middle class and working class resident, tended to have low boundary walls. This then placed on 'view' the front garden space of the house, which was arranged according to particular understandings of the 'aesthetic'. Here in the terraced house in Gireux however, bereft of garden, the resident arranges the façade of the house in order to reconstruct this idea of this aesthetic according to the limited space provided.

It is suggested that the outsider has come to Gireux with a preconceived notion of what it would be like to live in rural France at the foot of the Pyrenees. If the house in the rural village has a garden, it is usually separate from the house, which means that the home owner must access the garden via the public space of the street. Similarly with the garage which is typically either across the street or towards the end of the street, spatially separate from the house. This is unlike the American, British or Irish experience of the domestic garden. This means that although the owner of the terraced house may possess a garden, the outsider's understanding of that space is in terms of a public space, as this describes the way in which the home owner must access it. That is, walking from the private space of the house, across the public space of the road or lane, to enter the garden.

This presents a dilemma for the outsider, who wishes to have both a house in rural France and a garden in which he/she can sit and enjoy the sun, preferably with a view of the vineyards. Not unlike Dúnfarrraig, the way in which the outsider can achieve this ideal is through restructuring the internal space of the house in order to let the sunlight enter the house. This involves removing a small section of the roof of the house in order to create an external space within the house. Defined as a 'terrace', this space becomes the American equivalent of a patio area, which can accommodate a barbeque, deck-chair area and/or garden table and chairs. Crucially, the elevated position of the terrace on a level with roof-tops and on the second floor of the house, enables a panoramic view of the vineyards which means that the outsider may now visually consume the rural landscape without interference from public gaze, or without needing to leave the house in order to gaze upon (Urry, 1990, 2002) the landscape.



Figure 9.2.1 Creating a 'viewing frame': the terrace



A view of a terrace from the road, built in the home of a British family who live on a temporary basis in Gireux.



A view of the same terrace, over the rooftops of a line of terraced houses. This shows quite clearly how a section of the roof has been cut away in order to provide an open space for the terrace.



Another terrace where the use of garden table and chairs, suggests a patio-type effect. However, unlike the terrace pictured in the first picture which has an outer 'wall' to the street scape of railings, that would allow some degree of public visibility of that resident, this terrace has a concrete wall which blocks the public view of the private space of the resident.

However, the local resident has remained disapproving of this change to the structure of the terraced house. From informal conversations with local residents, this stems from the concern that the outsider resident is restructuring the house in order to enable a type of retreat from the community as one reminder of their suburban existence at home.

Instead of the terrace, a small number of the locally owned houses boast a balcony. These balconies are on the first floor level (rather than the second floor level), and can easily be viewed from the public streetscape. Occasionally an elderly local resident takes her tea on the balcony and delights in the exchange of pleasantries from the passers-by below. Crucially, the difference in height between the balcony and the terrace, has determined local agitation regarding the use of the house for social invisibility from the local community. While it is possible to 'view' the local residents on the balcony from the street, the more elevated position of the terrace renders the outsider resident invisible, although the noise of chat is still audible.

Figure 9.2.2 The balcony: a compromise



Both of these show various uses of balconies in the houses of local residents in Gireux. The quite selective use of stone work as façade for the exterior front of this local house, bears striking similarity to similar use of stone-cut in the house of the local and outsider resident in Dúnfarrraig, with its use of the ‘vernacular’ in its symbolic, rather than functional role (Slater, 2000).

One British family showed photographs which they took of their house when they first bought it from an elderly British couple, over five years ago. They have since redecorated the house, partly using the furniture which was included in the sale price of the house, and converted the attic space into a separate kitchen, living and dining room. However, what emerges of interest from these pictures - apart from the different organisation of the space of each living room - is the way in which the current owners have *reused*, rather than merely display (as has been done by the

outsider in Dúnfarrraig) objects such as the armchair in order to construct a rhetoric of the 'vernacular' which is not based on 'tourist images' (O'Connor, 1993) alone.

In the first picture, the orientation of activity takes an inward focus (based on the positioning of furniture), while the dynamic of activity in the second instance, adopts both an inward *and* an outward focus. This construction of space to facilitate both aspects, corresponds to the construction of an individual, as well as a collective 'gaze' (Urry, 1990, 2002) and demonstrates that a viewing frame of the landscape is not a determining criterion in the French rural context, for the organisation of social space according to this dynamic of viewing.

Figure 9.2.3 A rhetoric of the 'vernacular'.

Before...



Here, a social space is constructed through the positioning of furniture to face each other. This means that the orientation of activity is focused into the room, as the sofa has been placed with its back to the windows which look out into the street space.

and now.



By contrast, the dynamic of activity takes twin emphases in this organisation of space. First, the sofa which had been placed with its back to the window in the first photograph, has now been positioned with its back against the wall. A table with four chairs has been put in its place, but suggests that the focus when seated could be any of four directions, rather than with its back to the two windows.

Before...



and now.



This is another angle of the same living room, but shows a completely different organisation of the room, according to the placement of the table and chairs to construct different types of social spaces. The table shown in the picture on the left shows the dining space in the room, while the sofa and chairs are arranged to facilitate social interaction. The dynamic of the room is inward and self-contained. By contrast, the picture on the right reveals that the table has been replaced by a single armchair with its focus towards the fire, rather than towards the table and sofa. This particular arrangement suggests that this space is being constructed according to the requirements of the 'romantic gaze' (Urry, 1990, 2002), as introspective, gazing into the fire.

However, although the appearance of the room has greatly changed with the ownership of the British couple, if anything, it now assumes a more *traditional* feel, as vernacular structures such as the fireplace and the armchair with its regional wood, have been emphasised. While the lighting, difference in wall colour, matt and use of soft furnishings similarly play a vital role towards this difference, their peripheral use has been to modernise the more old-fashioned appearance of the sitting room shown in the first picture, while the armchair and hearth provide the focal points of attention.

Before...



This is the attic space which was divided into two rooms with adjoining bathroom when the British family first bought it. The terrace had been built at this stage.

And now.



As photographed during the spring of 2004, this room now accommodates three distinct living areas: the kitchen and dining space, as indicated by the kitchen and table with chairs; the living and reading area, indicated by the futon and two bookshelves; and the terrace, as the 'garden' or patio area (not shown in this photograph). What is worth noting here, is the clear attempt to create a living space which reflects quintessential images of rural France. This has been achieved through the décor of the kitchen furniture, with its blue and white checked seat cloths, coupled with the retention of the original wooden beams in the ceiling. It could be argued that the kitchen furniture betrays the 'staged' (MacCannell, 1976) effect of this theme, with its emphasis on recreating a sense of the vernacular. Against this, the sofa and armchair in the living room on the ground floor demonstrate that the regional French wood is much heavier and more ornate than these wooden pieces (of mobile cabinet with drawers, and table with chairs) shown here, would indicate. The owners remarked that they bought this furniture in the large IKEA store in Toulouse. Notably, IKEA is a Swedish, rather than French store. The owners have clearly sought to emphasise the vernacular aspect of their house, by buying 'totems' of identity (Slater, 2000), where they have been unable to find the same within the house.

However, similar to Máire's attempt to retain the wooden beams as an aspect of the vernacular structure of her cottage in Dúnfarrraig, this British family have not only kept the wooden beams in the ceiling, but have painted white between each, which accentuates their presence as part of the structure of the room and house. Thus, the ideological intention for this room is clearly apparent in the way in which images (such as the furniture) have either been imported through the idea of the outsider, or represented (the wooden beams) in symbolic form (Slater, 2000; O'Connor, 1993).



This is the other view of the kitchen and double French windows which lead out to the terrace. Instead of rebuilding the kitchen units, the owners have placed a curtain of blue and white checked cloth, similar to that of the cushions, to hide the crockery in the press. This theme of the checked cloth, is an aesthetic which has been popularised in images of the south of France, and which is now being used to symbolically represent the vernacular.

Ironically, the decision made some years ago by the local committee to grant permission to build a terrace, has enabled a practice of viewing from this upstairs living area. However, what is of interest in this house, is that the dynamic of interaction or focus for the orientation of either living spaces is not dependent upon this 'viewing frame' unlike its Irish counterpart. Rather, the dynamic of 'gazing' which has been a determining framework for the social construction of internal space in Dúnfarrraig, takes the form of the 'collective' and 'romantic' gaze (Urry, 1990, 2002), visible through the layout of furniture to provide both communal spaces around table and chairs, or a solitary time for the individual through the positioning of armchair in front of the fire.

With a slow but steady increase of outsider residents – particularly of British nationality – into Gireux, the local committee has now imposed planning restrictions preventing the construction of the terrace in the terraced house, as a protective measure of the vernacular structure of the village core, but simultaneously contesting its use as a device enabling socially isolated behavioural practices from the local community. One such British outsider, described her plans for her terraced house, and her upset at the decline of her application for a terrace on the second floor and a pair





of double windows on the first floor bedroom. She states that the reason which the local committee gave for this refusal, was the protection of the vernacular structure of the village 'core'.

In her distress, Janine pointed to two terraced houses on a parallel road in the village, which boast terraces. Both of these houses are holiday homes<sup>4</sup>. Like every other terraced house in Gireux, there is no garden. Local residents have exploited the space in front of their house, placing large window boxes and potted plants to break the monotony of the street and aestheticise the front of the house. While Janine is resigned to doing the same with her small house, her plans for the grocery involve retaining the outside walls, but using some of the internal space of the building to provide a garden.

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<sup>4</sup> As shown in earlier photographs of the terrace.

Figure 9.2.4 A contested 'representation' (Lefebvre, 1991).



Janine's house is indicated by the symbol 'X', at the far end of a row of locally owned houses. The last house on that row of terraced houses, is owned by a young French outsider couple in their late twenties who are in the process of renovating the entire structure. In their tour of the outline of the house, they explained that the committee had recently granted them permission to erect a large balcony on the first floor of the house. Janine was incensed by this information, despite the fact that her own application regarded the construction of a terrace on the *second* floor, rather than on the first. Although the first floor will not provide a view of the physical landscape for the French couple unlike a terrace, it is in keeping with some of the other local houses, which also boast balconies. Crucially, having a balcony means that the activities of that resident are within the view of the community, unlike the terrace on the top floor.

As it stands, the grocery looks directly out onto the main street and square of the village. Its immediate proximity to the street space, means that a garden to the fore of the structure, would be impossible. Instead, Janine plans to convert the rotting garage to the side of the house, into a garden with different levels containing herbs, flowers and grasses. While the garden will still be small, it will require breaking through at least two of the internal walls of the house at ground level.



The grocery (*epicerie*) which has been bought by Janine and her partner. The front door to the right of the picture and indicated by the symbol 'X', is the old front entrance of the grocery. Several choice items such as a used frying pan and many old newspapers were left by the old owners for Janine to dispose of. A staircase to the rear of the shop opens on to the first floor which runs the length of the building. Downstairs, the double doors herald the garage or 'store' area. The tiny window, marked by the symbol 'Y', indicates a small room with two small steps leading into the last part of the 'house', and it is this last area that Janine plans to convert into a garden. That means that Janine and her partner essentially own the entire structure as photographed above.

Almost anticipating the designs of the English pair, the mayor has bought a small side section of the grocery from the original owners, beside the planned garden. Janine is uncertain of the mayor's plans for that section, but it is alarmingly clear that any future structure proposed by the mayor, will negatively affect the light needed for the garden.



The front and side view of Janine's house. The yellow post box beside the door appears to be the only existing one in the village. At present, the couple are busy rebuilding the house from within, in order not to disturb the outer framework of the house. The exterior façade and framework of the house will remain as it always has, with only the internal space changed to suit the living requirements of the new residents. Thus, the internal space will be completely modernised, while the external walls will assume a more symbolic role in their representation of the vernacular terraced house (Lefebvre, 1991).



This is the top floor in the house, which they are using as their bedroom for the moment. This is actually the attic space, which they are in the process of converting. This explains why the window is so low. Most local residents have chosen to leave this space as an attic, using the ground floor as a living and kitchen space, and the first floor for bedrooms and a bathroom. By converting this space into a bedroom, Janine and Paul are creating a small, second floor in the house.



This is the landing on the first floor, which Janine wants to expand in order to create a large second bedroom, break through the wall shown there and build on a second bathroom. Janine explained that her application for double windows on this floor overlooking the street had also been rejected by the committee, as an unsustainable practice for this type of house.



This is the entrance hall to the house which will feature a large hall, stairs and small living room. This used to be the office area for the old post office in Gireux. With the exception of her vision of a terrace on the second floor overlooking the street, and the creation of a second bathroom, Janine's plans reflect the current layout of many homes in Gireux.

Given her failure to secure planning permission for her terrace, Janine said that she would need to reassess her plans for the house. She explained that she bought the derelict structure on the strength of a vision of a house in the south of France. She wanted to renovate the structure in order to sell it. The capital generated by the sale of the house was to be invested into the complete remodelling of the building which once housed the grocery. If her plan to construct a terrace and double windows had succeeded, then the interior space of the first and second floor would have adopted an outward focus towards the street with an elevated view of the vineyards. Janine will now have to redesign her plans for the internal layout, to reflect a more inward focus, similar to the British family, rather than an outward one. This will reflect the current orientation of nearly all terraced houses in Gireux, where the emphasis is on a collective (Urry, 1990, 2002) space of representation (Lefebvre, 1991) with family and friends, around the kitchen table and living room. However, this design does not appeal to British outsider Janine, who favours the notion of a rustic retreat which boasts a view of the *vineyards*, rather than of her family.

Ironically, local preservation or protection of the vernacular structure of the terraced house of the outsider, means that a dichotomy is emerging similar to that in Dúnfarrraig in Ireland. On the one hand, the symbolic representation of the vernacular within the house in Gireux has actually taken a more dominant focus than that of Dúnfarrraig, where modernising the interior has involved 'staging' objects of the past history of that house (MacCannell, 1976). Unlike Dúnfarrraig, the vernacular assumes both a symbolic *and* a functional role in this rural context. On the other hand, Janine has gutted the entire interior of her terraced house, leaving only the shell of the external walls behind. Similar to some of the local residents in Dúnfarrraig, Janine is eliminating every aspect of the internal original structure in order to modernise the same, while retaining the external walls as a façade. Ironically, 'modernising' the interior of the house in the first British family's home, has entailed recreating a stronger emphasis on a version or rhetoric of the 'vernacular' through a hybridisation of 'tourist images' (O'Connor, 1993) with objects or structures already present in the house.

However, photographs shown by a French outsider, Nicole<sup>5</sup>, who has lived most of her life in Gireux, indicate a move away from this emphasis on the 'vernacular', in favour of a stronger emphasis on an 'old' English aesthetic. Nicole's house boasts a large balcony on the first floor and French windows, similar to many of the other houses which are locally owned in the village. Inside, Nicole has decorated the rooms in a classic traditional English style, taking ideas from catalogues such as "Past Times". Although her love of the English style and design could be viewed in terms of a modernising effect on the structure of the house, it is suggested that this simplifies how Nicole is constructing spaces within the house. In the first house, the British family were clearly using 'totems' of the vernacular such as the armchair and other furniture in the kitchen, to construct a symbolic representation of the rural French house. In this case, Nicole is using the English style to construct an English identity throughout the internal space of her house and in her garden, but in its symbolic as well as its structural form. Where this departs from the practice of the British family, is in her use of foreign (English) influences and style, rather than the vernacular, to construct an identity. Interestingly, Nicole explains that her love of the English style is frowned upon by the local residents, who value the 'vernacular' as an expression of community and place.

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<sup>5</sup> Although Nicole is of Italian descent, she has spent most of her youth and adult life in France. Her father moved her family from their first home in Italy, to find work as a labourer in Gireux. Their first home in Gireux, was a terraced house in the village centre. During Nicole's teenage years, the family moved from this house, to a much larger, detached house by the side of the road on the outskirts of the village. When Nicole finished school, she went to university in England, and has developed a strong love for the more traditional style of English interior decoration, represented through the Laura Ashley style. She has since moved back to Gireux, where she has been living for over fifteen years, and has redecorated the family home, to reflect her love of the old English style.



Figure 9.2.5 Nicole's house



The external impression of her house, bears striking resemblance to Haumont's (2001) conceptualisation of '*les pavillonnaires*', which translates along similar lines to the American model of the house in 'suburbia', with a long path leading from a small gate at the roadside, to a set of stairs which lead to her front door. Nicole used to maintain a lawn to either side of this path, iconic of the suburban 'front lawn' (Jagose, 2003), but has decided to assign one side of the path, as a garden for growing herbs and vegetables instead. This decision has been prompted by her wish to have the smell of herbs throughout her garden and house, while the other side of the path is lined with English roses and shrubs.

For Nicole, the heart of her house is her kitchen which has two small windows and shutters. The sitting room is structured in two parts: dining and sitting. Just off the sitting room, is a set of French windows which provide access to the large balcony. These three areas represent the public space of the house, while the bedrooms represent the private. The dominant view is of the road, as indicated by the location of the large balcony. However, Nicole admits that the positioning of the balcony on this side of the house was a mistake, as the more striking view is of the vineyards and surrounding hinterland, which is available on the other side of the house. In theory, the balcony does provide a 'viewing frame' for the house, but unlike the houses of outsiders in Dúnfarrraig, the social space of the living room is unaffected by this dynamic of viewing, favouring a collective, rather than more individualistic point of encounter (Urry, 1990, 2002).



The door is very similar to all other doors in Gireux, comprising two parts: the wooden frame which has an iron grid pattern to signify the door, and a separate glass part which is hinged to the wooden frame. The idea of the twin door-frame, is to open the glass section to allow a breeze through the house on a hot summer day, while keeping the door frame closed.

When showing these pictures, Nicole pointed proudly to her display of the décor - with the hall lamp, open box of roses and Laura Ashley wallpaper – as proof of her love and admiration of the English style. However, it should be noted that similar to the practice of the British family who have bought furniture from IKEA in order to recreate a sense of the rural vernacular French in their house, this is a display of an old English aesthetic which has been imported through the design ideas of “Past Times”.



The kitchen reflects this mixture of the vernacular French structure in the use of window with shutters, and English style through the use of soft furnishings such as the tea-towel hanging from the rail of the oven door.



This is the combined sitting and dining room, the latter which leads to the balcony. What is remarkable about this room, is the dominant use of English furniture and décor amidst the fireplace which is part of the original structure of the house. Similarly, the dining table and chairs are products of the regional craft. Although the room depicts a hybrid collection of influences, it is clear that the display of the English aesthetic holds a greater symbolic value for Nicole.



Behind the dining table, is a set of French windows which lead out onto the balcony overlooking the garden and road.

Both house and garden spaces have been constructed to represent a 'hybridisation' (Slater, 2000; O'Connor, 1993) of English style and décor within a French setting and structure. It is suggested that despite the many symbolic and structural representations of an English aesthetic, the dynamic of the house reflects a focus on the collective - either around the television, the dining table, or the kitchen table - rather than on a view of the physical landscape. Because of this, the spatial layout of the rooms remains very similar to other houses owned by local and outsider residents in Gireux, despite her love of the English style.

A somewhat different 'representation of space' (Lefebvre, 1991) is provided by a French outsider couple who run a perfumery business on the outskirts of Gireux. The couple arrived in Gireux some years ago and purchased a derelict building which they have subsequently rebuilt and decorated. Laeticia describes the layout of the house, when they bought it.

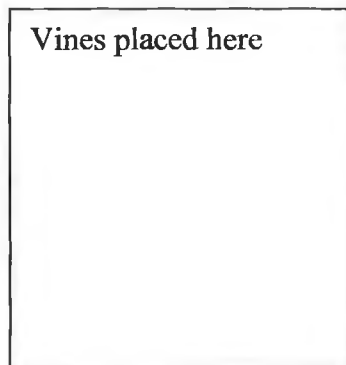
"In fact the house was in two parts. The first floor had bedrooms and here (on the ground floor) you had storage for the vine and different kind of corns. There was only four, four eh walls. 20 years (of neglect) is a long time for a house. We worked with eh, a home craftsman with the house. So the shop is over there (to the side of the house) and the kitchen and living part (sitting room) here."

She adds that

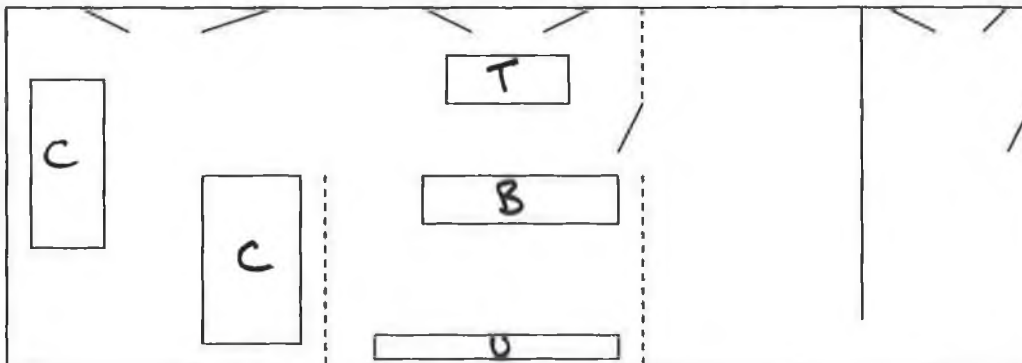
“Eh, in fact when we bought it, it was all grass. We plant them [the herbs for the perfumery]. So we have to do everything. And eh, maybe we sell it, because we try to improve the idea we have. Some of them say this is a village where you have wine and perfume and eh, I think it’s a good thing from the point of view of house or...”

Figure 9.2.6 *From derelict building...*

Ground floor of original structure where vines were placed.



...*To home and business.* The dashed lines indicate the original four walls of the building. Laeticia has extended to either side of these walls, to accommodate a living space, office area and the studio where she mixes the fragrances.



Extending onto either side of the existing framework of the building to provide a living and office space, yet visually incorporating these additional parts into the one building, has meant constructing a façade over the external wall of the extension to match the stone and mortar material of the original building. This use of the façade as a symbolic representation of the vernacular design, is a familiar spatial practice also used by local residents in Dúnfarrraig, Ireland. In Dúnfarrraig, locals have used a façade to construct or ‘stage’ (MacCannell, 1976) an appearance of the traditional, while modernising the interior space. Similarly, the interior of Laeticia’s house comprises an open plan of living room with two couches (symbol ‘C’); a dining area (symbol ‘T’), with a kitchen modelled along the American style of bar counter and units (bar counter marked as ‘B’, units as ‘U’). This design of the living space as an open-plan area, contrasts with most houses in Gireux where the internal space is separated into specific rooms. What is remarkable about this house, is that the orientation or the dynamic of the internal space is focused on the view of the surrounding mountain scape immediately beside the house. As this house is located on an elevated site on the outskirts of Gireux, there is a prominent view of the hinterland, uninterrupted by rows of terraced rooftops. This orientation towards the view of the landscape, is more similar to houses owned by outsiders in Dúnfarrraig, than that of locally owned houses in Gireux, as it takes its dynamic from an outward focus on the elements, rather than an inward focus on the social.

### **9.3 The ‘vernacular’: connecting the past to the present**

Similar to both outsider and local residents in Dúnfarrraig, the residents in Gireux showed a disinclination to take photographs within their homes. Instead, they took photographs of spaces within the village, such as the school, a tree in front of the café<sup>6</sup>, the café and the castle. However, when probed further on their use of these spaces in their daily or weekly activities, they remarked that their social activities were specific to events for family and friends which take place within the home, rather than within these public spaces. Therefore, although the house emerged of central importance to the local and outsider (French, Portuguese, Spanish) resident, these residents politely refused to take photographs of their home. However, when requested, some residents did offer an explanation, but not a tour, of the layout of the

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<sup>6</sup> Which was planted by the first mayor in Gireux, and is thus a very important landmark symbolising the first local committee in the village.

house. While the difficulty of gaining visual access to the internal space of the residents' house has posed as a methodological problem for this research, it concurs with earlier accounts of the importance of the home to the private socialising activities of the residents.

Further, when residents spoke of life outside the physical space of the house, it was to raise more macro issues such as the stability of the community through the school, social integration of the village through the fete, the chateau as a symbol of the first development of the village, and so forth. It is suggested that the framework of the photographs and interview provided a forum through which these issues of integration, solidarity and community, could be articulated. It is strongly felt that in these instances, the resident used the space of the follow-up interview, to actively posit the values of rural living through an examination of the photographs - all of which depicted scenes at the heart of village life in Gireux. Therefore while the interview did allow a subjective discourse to emerge, it was to illustrate a particular argument for rural values using scenes and structures around the village, rather than to necessarily provide a depiction of the respondents' understanding of Gireux<sup>7</sup>. Quite obviously, the two discourses are very closely intertwined, and undeniably, the values projected by the respondent are those which shape his/her life in the village. The point of this argument is to highlight that in some cases the photographs served a more *aspirational* value, rather than reflective of the specific practices shaping the representation of lived space. Thus, it would appear that this research enabled a space through which these values were then expressed.

Despite these methodological difficulties, the resident did provide an account of changes which he or she had made to the house. These are incorporated into a rough sketch of the floor plan where possible, of each house visited, in order to outline any structural changes affected by the resident.

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<sup>7</sup> Which, by their own accounts, is based on private socialising practices within a network of family and friends.

Born and bred in Gireux, the fishmonger, Pierre<sup>8</sup>, lives with his partner (from Paris) and their two children, in his late grandmother's terraced house. Unlike either Janine's house or the British family's house (both which are terraced houses), the layout of Pierre's home spans two floors only, with living room and kitchen downstairs, and two small bedrooms upstairs. The living quarters of this house are constructed through the everyday lived experiences of this family. The couple have redecorated the house since the grandmother's death and although the use to which furniture and décor in each room is put, expresses a predominantly practical rather than necessarily representational value (Lefebvre, 1991), Pierre reveals how they retained the kitchen cabinet as one item, for both sentimental and practical purposes.

What is important to note, is that the ideological value of the furniture - namely the kitchen cabinet - only becomes apparent through Pierre's oral narrative of his childhood. This is unlike Dunfarrig, where memorabilia from the social past of the house, are placed on display as a point of interest in the house. This quite visual way of constructing a representation of that space, lends itself more readily towards the classification of a space as possessing a 'representational' (Lefebvre, 1991) quality, whereas in Gireux, a similar classification of space is constructed through memory which is accessed predominantly through oral narratives. Both types of narrative - visual and oral - are present in their rural contexts as variations on a particular 'representation of space', but because the visual narrative constructs a more immediate impact, it is easier to dismiss or overlook different practices of representation.

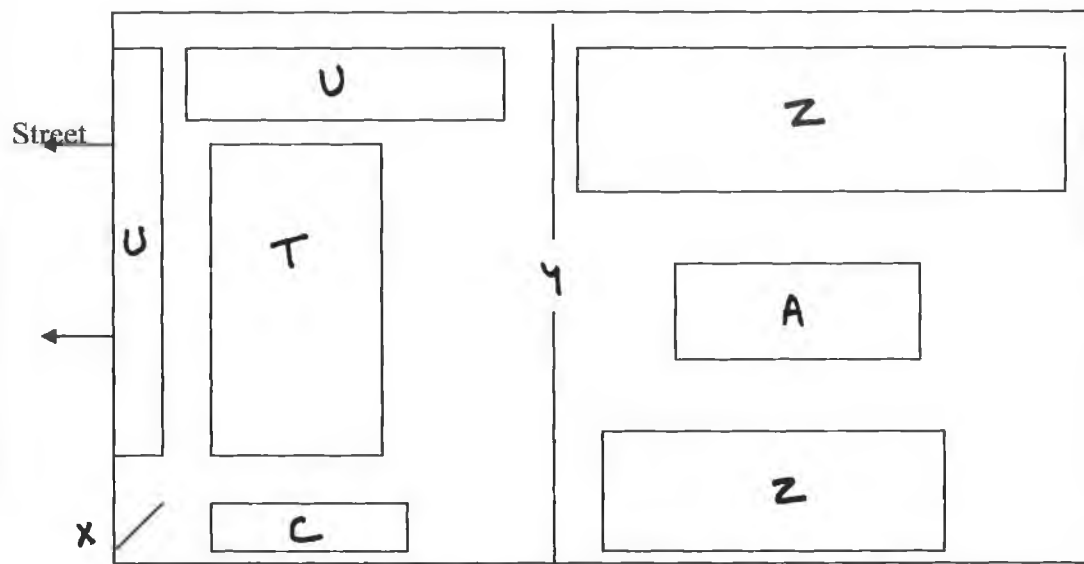
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<sup>8</sup> He moved from his family's house - situated on the outskirts of Gireux - when he met his partner at her workplace in the neighbouring town of Ste.Saron. They currently live in situ, saving money in order to afford a larger house in the village.



Figure 9.3.1 A 'use'ful past.

Plan of ground floor – kitchen and sitting room



The front door to the house (symbol 'X') opens immediately into the kitchen and dining area, with a curtain of rods (symbol 'Y') separating this front room from the back sitting room. The fishmonger's partner, Nathalie, describes how she painted the walls and ceiling a vibrant blue to cover the old wallpaper present during the grandmother's time. A large kitchen table (symbol 'T') dominates the living space of the front room, and is used for poker nights and dinner parties among friends in Gireux, and more formally, for entertaining visitors while responding to last minute requests from residents in the community, for fish.

As the two windows (indicated by arrows) open on to the street with terraced house and car opposite, rather than the mountainside, Nathalie dismisses the quality of this scene as a 'view', presenting instead two pictures taken from her bedroom on the first floor, of her view of the mountain side, as glimpsed between rooftops of houses.

Pierre and Nathalie have retained his grandmother's gnarled wooden kitchen cabinet (symbol 'C'), which contrasts with the new kitchen units (symbol 'U'). It is precisely because of this sentimental value, this connection with the social past which has imbued this display cabinet with a symbolic meaning of the vernacular history of the house. Similar to other houses in Gireux, the 'vernacular' claims a functional, as well as symbolic role unlike in the houses in Dúnfarrraig. A possible reason for this difference lies in the valorisation of the vernacular as an expression of the social history – past as well as present – of the *community* as a collective unit.

The rest of the living space downstairs has been modernised through paint and other various oddments. The kitchen is treated as the public space of the house, for both receiving visitors and entertaining friends, the curtain rods lead into the private space of the house, into which friends adjourn when the game of poker or dinner is finished. This space is easily identifiable as the sitting room, with two couches (symbol 'Z') positioned against opposite walls. A television is placed against the back wall of the house and a low table (symbol 'A') fits between the couches. The grim coldness of the floor tiles in the sitting room - a common feature of flooring in the rural south of France - is softened by a large rug which covers nearly the entire living space, while a throw has been tossed over each of the couches.

Access to the two bedrooms upstairs, is via a small staircase to the back of the sitting room. Although the couple have attempted to modernise the house through changing furnishings and colour, they have not changed the original structure – either externally or internally – of the house<sup>9</sup>. Despite the inward focus represented through the organisation of space in the house, the couple articulate the importance of a view of the vineyards and countryside. Similar to the local residents in Dúnfarrraig, they are equally aware of the shortcomings of their house in its inability to provide a view of the same. However, they talk repeatedly of having dinner, drinks or playing cards with friends during the weekends or week-nights, in each other's houses. Nathalie pulls out a family album, in which she has stored numerous photographs taken of

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<sup>9</sup> Nathalie tells of their wish to buy their own house in Gireux, stating that the house in which they now live, has been given to them on a temporary basis by his father. The fishmonger has one brother who is impatient to leave home, but not Gireux, and views the grandmother's house as affording a space where he can wait for a house within the village, to be sold. Recently, a local resident did put up his house for sale. Natalie says that they made an offer which was rejected by the local on the basis that he was looking for a higher offer which he could then divide between relatives. A triad of English families saw the house on a visit through the area, and also made an offer. The acceptance of this latter offer, has meant that Natalie and her partner must wait either for the development of further social housing within the village, or make an offer on the future development of four new house units on the far side of the main road in Gireux.

friends at house parties<sup>10</sup>. This emphasis on a collective and social encounter, takes precedent over a view of the physical landscape which has less relevance to their lives.

On the other hand, a Portuguese couple who have recently moved from their small terraced house in the village centre, to a large detached bungalow on the outskirts of the village, delight in providing a tour of their new house and of the garden. This includes a number of sheds for their farm animals and an expanse of land where the couple are growing vines and other crops. The house is oriented towards this view of the vineyard, with its structural emphasis on large double windows on the first and second floor<sup>11</sup>. Although the internal space is constructed according to a rationale of formal and informal rooms, rather than in terms of a symbolic representation of the vernacular, an ideology of viewing is imbued throughout the house. However, it is suggested that this manner of framing the 'vernacular' as the physical landscape, is bound up in notions of conspicuous consumption – where this refers to how they are showing off their ability to view the landscape – to neighbours and friends, rather than in terms of its representational value. Their move from the terraced house to the outskirts of Gireux has not only provided them with additional internal space, but crucially, has now afforded them a view of the vineyards. Thus, the house is presented as modern, bright and spacious, but without the ideological structures of the 'vernacular'.

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<sup>10</sup> Many of these friends grew up in Gireux and attended the primary school with Nathalie's partner. He explains that they initially moved away from Gireux in order to get educated or find a job, and have returned to the village to settle down with their new family.

<sup>11</sup> The house is a testimony to the hard labour and determination of the couple to succeed. On each visit to see Madame Citue, she proudly gave a guided tour of her house, gesturing the type hard labour involved in maintaining the house and its large white tiled floors, to its pristine condition. Visitors are brought into the front room, a large kitchen. Behind this, is the sitting room, a large room with high double windows looking out over the vineyards. Downstairs is a huge kitchen, filling the entire space of the basement and whose French windows open out onto the 'garden'.

Despite the impressive size of the house and its land, no attempt has been made to create a garden in either the front or back space of the house. Instead, the back of the house, accommodates various sheds for the animals, and fields of home grown crops and vines, affording no space for leisure, for the couple.

Similarly, the front space of the house is occupied by gas cylinders, purchased by Madame Citue in the likely event that a holiday home owner will be sent her way requesting a supply of gas. The front of the house is clearly advertised by its distinctive Spanish arches. Cars parked carelessly by the side descent of the house leading to the basement entrance at the back of the house, indicates the presence of family guests and friends, whose familiarity with the Gomes's entitles them to enter by the back door.

Predominantly however, the internal space of the local residents' house has been constructed according to a dynamic of collective encounter and of the everyday (Urry, 1990, Lefebvre, 1991). This is evident in the home of local business women, Perrine and Sarah, who sell the regional wine from their doorstep by the side of the road. Perrine, elderly local resident and mother of Sarah, explained that during her youth, her parents operated a guesthouse to provide rooms for the Portuguese and Spanish labourers, who came to the Languedoc region looking for work in the vineyards. Later the guesthouse adopted a more tourist centred approach with the arrival of the first tourists to Gireux in 1987. However, the business has since been discontinued due to increasing work demands from the vineyards and with the expansion of Perrine's family<sup>12</sup>. Although the house does have views of the surrounding countryside of Gireux, the internal space adopts an inward, rather than outward looking focus.

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<sup>12</sup> With pride, Perrine stated that their house on the road side was among "the first houses of Gireux, at the entrance to the village." Sara supplemented that a date is visible above the door on the opposite house, and commented that the thickness of the stone wall is a clear indication of the age of each house. Perrine explains that although she was not born specifically in Gireux, "it's as if I was born here" as when her parents came to live in the village, she was six months old. Originally, Perrine and her family lived in a street adjacent to the castle. She remarks that the same space has been transformed into a car park and describes descending to the bedrooms below, while climbing up to the attic.

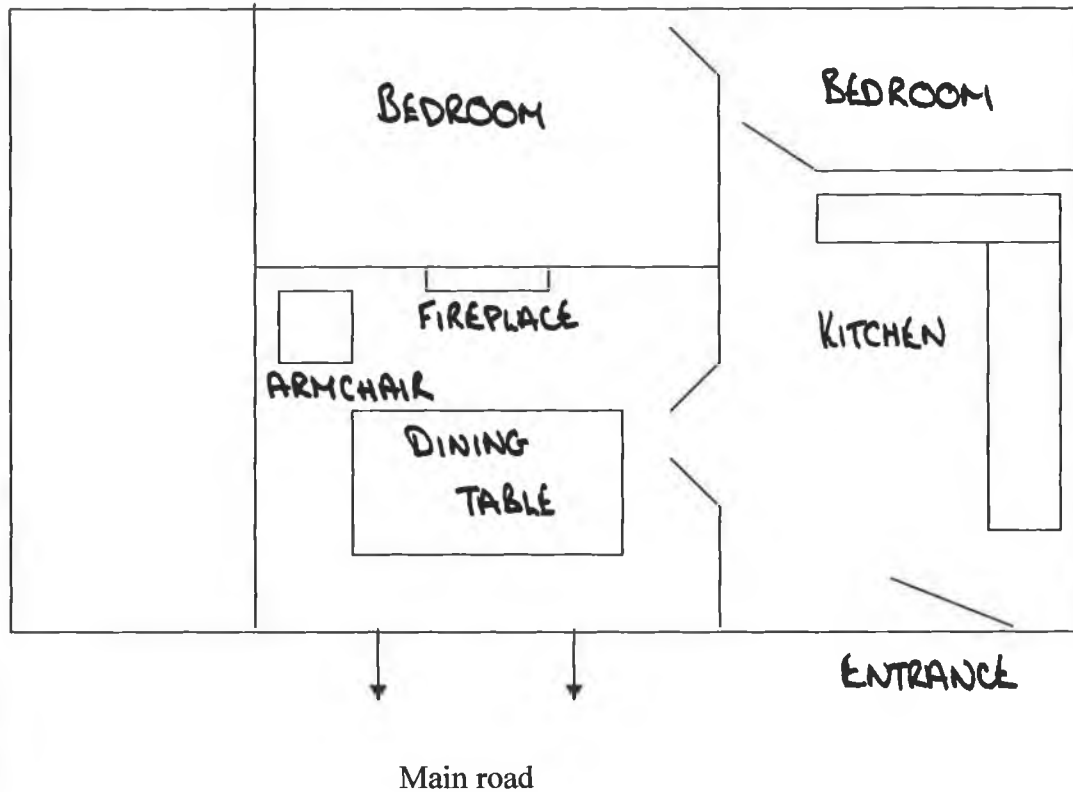
"The bedrooms were downstairs, we had to climb to the attic, well, it was old. It was ancient.

There are old houses in that street. It's very old down by the castle walls."

In recognition of their humble and very small living conditions, a local landowner invited the family to rent a house which he had just built by the side of the road. Gratefully, they moved to this, much larger stone house in 1942, renting both the house and the land, but paying the landlord the profit from their labour.

Sara explains that she used to work with her husband in the vineyards when they kept the horse, as the amount of work required a number of labourers. Her husband was reluctant to sell the horse, fearing the instability of modern technology - the tractor - on the sloping and unsteady terrain of the vineyards. Eventually they did exchange the horse for a tractor, so now Sara divides her time between selling the Blanquette to passing tourists and local residents, and maintaining the household.

Figure 9.3.2 The house structure as it was in 1942...and as it is in 2006.



The structure of the house has been altered to accommodate the changing needs of the family. In 1942, it comprised a large kitchen to the immediate entrance of the house, with dining and sitting room separated by double doors, to the left of the front door. The bedrooms were to the back of the house and on the first level. The family kept a horse in the stable to the side of the house, "to work on the vineyards". In time, the horse was sold and replaced by a tractor which was housed in the old stable, now used as a garage. Within the garage, is a cellar which stores many crates of Blanquette. As the family progressed and Sara married, they converted a side part of the garage into a 'granny flat'. Perrine now lives in relative independence from the new family beside her, tending to her many pots of flowers in front of the house.

This way of constructing social space according to everyday interaction, is the dominant form in which the internal space of the house has been framed in Gireux. It departs from the practice of 'representing space' in terms of a hybridisation of forms (Slater, 2000; O'Connor, 1993), as seen in the homes of outsiders in Dúnfarrraig. One way of explaining this difference in the way in which people construct spaces within

their homes, is due to the type of relationship which people seek in the physical and social landscape of a place. It is suggested that in the case of the outsider, this relationship begins through exposure to a range of 'tourist images' (O'Connor, 1993) of the local setting such as the rural French village of Gireux, before the outsider arrives to that village, which constructs a sense of difference between the individual's lifestyle and living environment, and that of the tourist destination. What becomes crucial, is how these images becomes manifest in the built environment through either framing devices of the physical landscape, or the symbolic representation of the 'vernacular' (Slater, 2000).

Local representation of Gireux within the home, is in terms of a rhetoric of the 'vernacular' embedded in *social* constructs such as 'community', unique to that place. Local pride of place is asserted frequently, through descriptions of lineage and knowledge of the social and structural history of the place, but more particularly, through participation and involvement at family events. It is argued that this sense of "solidarity"<sup>13</sup> between locals, articulates an intangible and elusive quality which has become central to local construction of what it means to be 'local'. For tourists and residents outside this circle, this "solidarity" means their exclusion from private local events. Therefore inclusion or admittance at these family gatherings is viewed in terms of the highest level of 'authenticity' (MacCannell, 1976). Although all residents speak of the "beautiful landscapes" in which Gireux is situated, their own depiction of place is based on the intimacy of community and values of village life.

The implication of the protection of the vernacular structure of the village, is shown by a visiting tourist, Niamh, in her depiction of Gireux which she compares with a neighbouring village in the south of France, Reneau.

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<sup>13</sup> As coined by a local resident, of the atmosphere between the local population.

Figure 9.3.3 Comparing different emphases on the social.



She shows how the dominant use of large windows, balconies and terraces in the village of Reneau, has quite dramatically changed the visual character of the village.



...compared with her depiction of the typical 'local' house in Gireux. Niamh pointed to the houses in Gireux, to explain that the more traditional emphasis on shutters and smaller windows, gave the village a more 'local' atmosphere.

This Irish tourist, Niamh, explained that she was looking to relocate to a small village in the Carcassonne area, and was staying for a short spell in Ste.Saron, travelling into Gireux. She was greatly taken with the Cathar region, but was more interested in the type of atmosphere prevailing in those villages without a commercial dependency on the castles. Gireux appealed to her because she felt that the village had managed to retain its “local” features, despite the influx of the holiday home owner.

Niamh is undecided about where she could live in Gireux. Unlike other outsider residents who have bought unused properties and redecorated or restructured the interior, Niamh wants to buy a house which is in walk-in-condition, but with a view of the vineyards. To achieve this, she will have to wait for a house to become vacant, similar to the other local residents in the village.

#### **9.4 Summary**

What emerges from this exploration of the dynamic of internal space in Gireux, is quite a diverse range of constructions of social space within the house. Unlike the houses in Dúnfarrraig which reflect, by and large, a dichotomy of the way in which residents have understood changes to the landscape expressed in terms of the ‘viewing frame’ and its relationship to the vernacular, or in more generic terms of how the landscape has modernised as a result of greater numbers of houses being built, the houses in Gireux project a more multi-faceted relationship with the vernacular.

At its most basic and yet with considerable impact, control of planning at a local level can play a vital role in determining the level of outsider construction of the vernacular structure of the house to reflect a more subjective view of the countryside. On one level, this demonstrates the failure of our Irish planning system which has adopted a *reactive*, rather than a proactive approach to planning in the rural countryside; while on the other, it indicates local resistance to the structural realisation of design ideas (such as the terrace) for the house as a retreat from the community. The refusal of permission to build a terrace, means that the resident must enter the public space of the village in order to access a view of the landscape.

However, a view of the physical landscape is not the only factor determining the construction of social space in Gireux, as quite a number of houses have access to a



view of the countryside, yet have taken the orientation of space from the dynamic of activity occurring *within* the house, rather than of outside the house. As this activity predominantly takes the form of family events or meetings between friends, the organisation of space is based on a social view of the collective. The 'vernacular' is constructed in a myriad of differing but interconnected ways: through this emphasis on the collective spirit of community, through the social history of the place of Gireux, through 'totems' of tourist imagery of the south of France and through structures of the built landscape. Interestingly in Dúnfarrraig, the 'vernacular' is also constructed through displaying items which highlight the previous social history of the house. The difference between the treatment of the 'vernacular' in both villages, is that in the French context, the 'vernacular' takes both symbolic *as well* as functional expression.

## **Chapter 10 A car culture**

### **10.1 Introduction**

It is suggested that the concept of a 'car culture' must be understood in terms of its relationship to the landscape. This presupposes a dialectic of interaction between structures (within the landscape), and the agency of the individual (the car), which has led both to the construction of physical space as social, and defined the car in terms of social encounter.

In the Irish context, a culture of 'viewing' has emerged through the interpenetration between car and the landscape of the house and businesses. Particularly in the case of the latter, this has adopted the form of a 'drive-through' experience of Dúnfarrraig (Friedberg, 2002, Jackson, 1985), where the landscape has been constructed by its residents to enable social contact with the car. Perversely, the more problematic characteristics of car culture such as congestion, has also resulted from this dialectic, which has prompted the issue of how to mobilise flows through the landscape of Dúnfarrraig. While a theory of the 'suburban imaginary' is being used to explain the emergent relationship between the resident and landscape, a 'car culture' is referring here to the relationship between practices (of the resident) and the motorist.

### **10.2 The Irish context**

In Dúnfarrraig, this dialectical relationship is being determined by tourism and the 'suburban imaginary'. Businesses such as the pub, the shop and the Seaview Riding Centre which now operates as both a stables and tourist accommodation, seek to attract the attention of the passing tourist or motorist through the use of colour, objects and textures. The effect of these features is similar to that of the billboard, where the emphasis is quite clearly a visual one, intended to be seen from some distance away (Friedberg, 2002). However, it is contended that a large part of the success of the 'billboard' effect, is due to the construction of a new type of aesthetic through the hybridisation of the vernacular form with a modern style of presentation (Slater, 2000; O'Connor, 1993).

Simultaneously, a car culture is emerging from a dialectical relationship between the home owner and the motorist. Attempts to appropriate the view of the coastline through the construction of a 'viewing frame' such as a balcony or bay window, has

led to a culture of private viewing manifest on the built landscape, as residents seek to emulate or at least replicate the design of their 'neighbour's' house and garden (Jagose, 2003). The subsequent display of garden furniture, or of the house with its 'viewing frame', projects a representation of that space (Lefebvre, 1991) as one which not only demonstrates the residents' ability to appropriate an even better private view of the coastline than the neighbour, but crucially, seeks to attract the attention of the motorist, to the view of his/her private landscape.

This practice is highly significant, as it demonstrates that the resident or passing tourist is reacting to an aspect of that house and/or garden, and is not only tempted to stop and stay in Dúnfarrraig, but also to build in Dúnfarrraig, incorporating ideas from that house into the architectural design of his/her own house and garden. Thus, what becomes critically important, is how the home owner manages to capture the attention of the passing flow past the house and garden. Peillon and Slater (2005) suggest that in suburban Dublin, the private landscape of garden and house has been rationalised to effect a culture of 'viewing', not only for the resident from their position in the garden or house, but also for the motorist or pedestrian on the road (Peillon and Slater, 2005). This culture of 'viewing' is being conceptualised in this instance, in terms of a process of 'focalizing the view', which refers to how the careful positioning of items such as shrubs or lights in the garden, directs the eye of the moving tourist or resident, to the owned landscape of the resident. Crucially, this process is determined by the placement of these features within sight of the flow on the road<sup>1</sup>. The construction of the garden as a site for consumption, is being

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<sup>1</sup> The rockery represents a specific attempt to retain a section of the Burren rock and its flora, within the garden. Taking Slater's (1993) framework of the social vision of the tree, it is suggested that the creation of the rockery, "is the result of a set of meanings which are fixed before its construction", in terms of its location from the house and road scape, "as it suggests an intention to create an effect on the viewing person" (ibid:33). Crucially however, the viewing person now refers to the flow of passers-by on the road beside the house, who gaze into the garden and rockery, on their way past. Where before the construction of the ideological vision of the picturesque meant the detachment of the flow of the tourist, outsider or local, from the private landscape of the garden, now the display of rockery according to the viewing position from the road, encourages the attention of the flow.

However, it is uncertain as to whether the display of rockery necessarily demonstrates an attempt to create a sense of attachment for the flowing individual, to that landscape. The individual is invited to look and admire how effectively the Burren has been appropriated in the private garden, but not to explore. Thus, the ability to 'stage' (MacCannell, 1976) or create an aspect of cultural capital such as the rockery, is determining the construction of social space according to a social vision of the picturesque.

conceptualised here as the 'ensighting' of the garden, which refers to the practice of creating a sight to be consumed.

Similar to the Lake District in England (Urry, 1998), the development of Dúnfarrraig as a social space, is as dependent upon its visitors, as they are attracted to the place myth which surrounds and constitutes this social space. While a definition of that place myth is problematic, given its highly subjective meaning for each individual as he/she passes through the landscape, one way of exploring this relationship is through these practices of focalisation which, it is argued, assign meaning to a space (of the house or of businesses). Concurrently, this meaning is also representative of the relationship between the resident and the landscape, encoded into the architectural framework of the house and garden. Thus, what is suggested here is a dialogue of interaction between the resident, landscape and the flow of the motorist, which occurs simultaneously, yet interdependent of one another.

### **10.3 The private landscape for public consumption**

While it has been argued that the combined effect of lawn, rockery, decking, balcony and so forth, have constructed the private landscape of the house and garden in terms of a viewing frame for the *resident*, of the public landscape; it is also an argument of this thesis that the placement of these features in the garden, also rationalises this spatial entity according to the gaze of the passing motorist or *flaneur* on the road (Peillon and Slater, 2005). These features construct the garden space in terms of a viewing aesthetic for public consumption, by directing the gaze of the motorist or flaneur on the road, to specific aspects within the private landscape of the home owner. Crucially, it is argued that these practices are attempting to recreate aspects of the public landscape, in the private space of the garden.

This process of 'focalisation' is being achieved in different ways, by evening and by day. During the day, features such as height, the style and design of the house, and garden accessories such as decking, patio area and others, attract the attention of the tourist or neighbour on the road. While this emphasis on the visual would not be an unusual feature of public structures such as the local shop or pub, which need to attract the attention of the passing motorist in order to bring in trade, the extension of this notion to the private landscape of the house and garden would appear to show

how these owned spaces, exist as *both* public and private according to the ‘viewer’ of the landscape, as resident or motorist.

Figure 10.3.1 Features which catch the gaze – ‘focalization’



What is striking about this garden, is that the decking which is just visible here and indicated by the symbol ‘X’, shows that the view from the house, is of the coastline (Not visible because of the bad weather). Yet, the rockery is some distance from that angle of viewing. In fact, it is more clearly seen from the vantage point of the green road. Thus, what becomes apparent here, is that the resident’s view of the public landscape has been hidden from public consumption, while the rockery has been placed on view for public consumption.

Unlike the American house with balcony, where the rockery has been positioned within the view of the sea (see Figure 6.4.1), the rockery in this house has been constructed to be within the view of the passing resident or tourist on the green road. The quite strict structuring of space allotted to the rockery and lawn, as indicated by the lines on the photograph, signify the construction of the garden as ‘sublime’ and ‘beautiful’ (Barrell, 1972, Slater, 1993) respectively. Positioned beside the patch of tidied grass - an American import of the suburban lawn (Jagose, 2003) - the rockery is constructed in terms of its opposite: as wild and untamed – the virtual Burren landscape in the garden of the ‘beautiful’. However, this construction of the garden space is contradicted by the functional role of the washing line, whose presence competes against the aesthetic of the rockery and lawn. Ironically, this is probably the only place in the garden where it is possible to put the washing line, as the boundary wall and tree afford shelter.



A recent television documentary on the national school of Dúnfarrraig, ended the programme on a panoramic view of the coastline, but interestingly, focussed on a cordyline tree planted in the front garden of a local's house, as a backdrop for the credits. The cordyline tree is not indigenous to the Burren landscape, yet constructs the front garden as exotic through the spectacle of the tree, which has drawn the attention of the television crew and thus portrayed as representative of the changing physical and social landscape according to a discourse of visuality.



The lanterns, indicated by the symbol 'X', draw the eye of the motorist up the curve of the driveway, towards the house. The positioning of the garden lights is particularly interesting here, as most houses feature lights to either side of the entrance to the property, rather than within the garden. Their placement beside a shrub to either side of the lawn, highlights the shrub, but more importantly, the combined effect of shrub and light constructs a sense of a column to either side of the view both of the house (for the motorist and pedestrian) and of the coastline (for the resident). Essentially, they give a sense of two points of a viewing frame, 'staged' (MacCannell, 1976) by the use of light and shrub.

It is suggested that the curved shape of the driveway actually mirrors the sweeping arc shape of the coastline, so that there is a sense that this aspect of place which is specific to the shape of Dúnfarrraig as opposed to neighbouring towns or villages, is being carried into the design of the garden, and continues the view of the public landscape into the private space of the garden for the resident, while 'focussing the view' for the motorist, from the public to the private landscape of that resident.

This process of 'focalisation' is probably more forcibly articulated during the evening time, when these lanterns or garden lights are switched on, to highlight various aspects of the garden and house. The lantern is positioned at the foot of the boundary stone wall facing the house. When dusk falls, the floodlights beam up against the walls of the house, highlighting its height and detail against the night.

Figure 10.3.2 Illuminating the 'drive-through-Dúnfarrraig' experience.



Floodlights are embedded into the stone wall. The house is located on the 'green road', which is elevated above the main coast road. The angle at which this picture was taken, does not provide a sense of the distance between the house, the main road and the coastline.



This, then, is the view to which the motorist on the road will be subjected. The use of floodlights highlight the house when dark.

Undeniably, this use of light attracts the attention of the passer by on the road, both to the house and/or the garden. However, it is contended that the use of floodlights in particular, enable a specific type of visuality directed towards the gaze of the passing driver on the road. Previously, residents have articulated their consciousness of the tourist gaze passing in their car on the road, providing examples such as the Shetland ponies. Using floodlights to light up a side or feature of the house, creates a billboard type effect, which is visible for a considerable distance away. Crucially, it enables the motorist passing by at speed, time to look up at the house which gains clarity of focus with proximity. It is contended that the home owner – outsider or local – is aware of this gaze of motorist and the ‘neighbour’, and far from subduing the impact of the house on the landscape, floodlights are deliberately being used to *highlight* the structure against the surrounding landscape. Further, this practice is constructing a specific meaning in the social imagination of the motorist and neighbour. By lighting up the house during the evening and sometimes during the night, attention is distracted from the landscape in which the house is located. Therefore, what becomes the focus of the gaze of the passer by on the coast road, is not the view of the Burren landscape or the sea, but rather the view of the house.

An outsider resident living full-time in Dúnfarrraig, described the effect of this use of floodlights, in terms of competing landscapes, where the home owner is using lights to attract the attention of other residents and motorists to the view of his/her house. She expresses her sorrow at the way in which houses are being built, which visually dominates the landscape in which they are located. She compares the effect of this change, to that of “an American suburb”.

“I just feel the sort of wordliness of the area is what, and I think it’s a terrible pity that house up there, y’know, in front of Faunarooska, the one in front of the castle. Just because the lovely big forts there and the, the, it [the house] doesn’t fit into the landscape at all, and eh, the floodlights of it then. That’s something that does worry me, all these light, y’know, it’s like an American suburb. There’s lights on the gate. He’s a floodlight on the house and there’s another light somewhere else. So, it’ll end up like an American suburb.”

According to Schivelbusch (1988), the introduction of the street light, or outside light, relates to the social process of separating public from private, in bourgeois life. This process started in the eighteenth century and was premised on the idea that everything



private was shut off from the public. The street light represented the invasion of the 'public' into private space, as although the illumination of the street space meant that the private space of the room was cast in darkness for the public eye, the street light also flooded the internal space of the front room, when lit. To prevent this intrusion, the curtain was created to block the glaring light of the street space. Schivelbusch remarks that around 1900, the countryside got rid of its curtains, as light was no longer coming from the street alone, but from the garden space (Pp185-6). This is really important with regard to residents' use of the lantern and garden lights in Dúnfarrraig. Developing from Schivelbusch's argument, it is contended that residents' use of the garden light and lantern not only highlights this space as private, but is a focalising practice which is used to draw the public attention to specific features of interest in the garden, and of the house (Silverstone, 1997; Girling and Helphand, 1994; Slater and Peillon, 2005).

Geraldine points to the street lights which now grace the crossroads at the village 'centre', and comments how Dúnfarrraig is becoming "like an American suburb".

Figure 10.3.3 Street lights as symbolic of 'suburbia' (Jagose, 2003; Jackson, 1985) in Dúnfarrraig.



The Rural Housing Organisation (RHO), the brainchild of Fr. Harry Bowan which was the first 'suburban' type structure to be introduced to Dúnfarrraig (Jackson, 1985). The 'sweep' of the lawn is typically American in its conception. More recent development of land, includes a similar structure of suburbia, but with an emphasis on the visual. Geraldine is referring to the presence of streetlights as shown here, but which continue from this point, through to the village 'centre' of Dúnfarrraig.



Street lights in Dúnfarrraig. This is a private development of houses, built by a developer living in Co. Clare, but not-local to Dúnfarrraig. Three of these houses are owned by local residents: one is the full-time residence of that local, while the other two are holiday homes which are let out to tourists. The fourth house is a holiday home, which is owned by a Dublin resident and not leased.

Arguably, the way in which lights are used, demonstrates the changing emphasis: from a focus on a public view of the coastline, to a focus on the house with its private view of that coastline. Geraldine articulates this change, describing it in terms “of owning the land”.

“The houses down here [on the ‘green road’] also have lots of lights going y’know. It’s interesting why people do it. What they’re trying to do is own the land, isn’t it? Tame it and own it. And I feel it’s a pity if they’re doing that. Why not stay in the suburbs then? Y’know?”

Crucially, she understands this change in terms of local attitude towards the landscape, manifest in their efforts to ‘tame’ the same through the use of lights.

“They are local [homes], aren’t they? They’re beginning to have lights and yeah, I remember...there was Katy Kelly who was living down in the Bowan [RHO] houses. She had to come up here to see the sky because they have their street lights....Coz you don’t see the sky [with street lights]. I mean, that was one of the benefits, wasn’t it, of the power cut in New York? They finally saw the stars.”

However, one outsider has described her use of outdoor lights in functional terms, stating that the absence of any light during the late evening and night house makes it quite difficult, if not dangerous, for visitors to make their way safely from the front door to the car. Her outdoor lamp is attached to the wall and holds no visual appeal.

Figure 10.3.4 Light as “functional” or aesthetic?



The lanterns are marked by the symbol ‘X’ on this house. As they are being used to indicate a separate entrance to the adjoining property on the same site, theirs is a functional role.



Similarly, the lanterns indicate the entrance to this property.

While the use of lanterns in this guise could arguably be described as functional, the use of floodlights to light up a section of the house, is assuredly not. Geraldine shows a different set of photographs taken some years ago, of a cottage which was replaced by a much larger house. Although the new house reflects the large windows and sliding doors which have become a feature common to many of the local and outsider houses in Dúnfarrraig, the placement of floodlights within the garden, but at the base of the wall in order to project light up against the façade of the house when dark, constructs the house as spectacle framed against the backdrop of the Burren mountain. As an artist, Geraldine is preoccupied with the difference which this use of light makes to the aesthetic of the built landscape of Dúnfarrraig, and compares the height and use of windows in the old cottage, to this new house in order to illustrate the difference. She draws particular attention to the idea of proportion in the new houses and describes the difference in terms of a display of affluence. This perception of conspicuous consumption, resonates with another aspect of the American model of ‘suburbia’ and the relationship of the resident to the ‘neighbour’ – ‘status seeking’ (Jagose et al, 2003; Jackson, 1985).

“[The new house] is not aware...the whole aesthetic of it is not there. It’s just slap...The old cottages, the proportion was exquisite. Now it’s been bound to rooms or something, showing that you’re not poor anymore.”

Figure 10.3.5 Use of light to 'status seek' (Jagose et al, 2003).



Geraldine's photograph of the ruin of the cottage as it was. She points out the sense of proportion of the window to either side of the door, in symmetry with the line of chimneys. She adds that of these three chimneys, only one worked. The other two provided a visual sense of symmetry. Taken from this angle, Geraldine must have taken a similar position to the floodlight in the other house, bending down, as the view reflects up towards the house, rather than directly face on. Ironically, this gives the cottage a larger appearance than was probably the case.



A photograph of the house which has replaced the cottage. While lanterns to either side of the gate post indicate the entrance to the property in a functional way, the symbol 'X' marks the location of the floodlights which beam up against the house. This house is positioned slightly further up the mountain from the bulk of houses along the coast road, which heightens the dramatic effect of the floodlights, framed against the mountain side.

What these examples show, is the relationship between the public gaze from the roadside, and practices of display and conspicuous consumption on the part of the home owner, of their home and garden. Applying Corcoran's (2004) framework of the dialectic between the car and the development of the mall in suburban Dublin, it is contended that these houses are being materially and symbolically constructed from the empty space of the landscape. The dialectical relationship between the motorist and resident is incurring a repetition of the concept of the 'viewing frame' (on the house) and practices of 'focalisation' (in the garden). Corcoran remarks that the effect of the dialectic between car and development of the mall, has resulted in "a similarity of design" where the mall "offers the same bland possibilities of experience" (2004:97). Nevertheless, it is argued here that this relationship has not necessarily implied the "weakening of the identity" of Dúnfarrraig. Indisputably, it has resulted in more houses being built in Dúnfarrraig as motorists arrive to stay in the village, first as visitors on a weekend break or for a week, then choose either to buy a caravan or build a house.

However, although the repetition of the idea of the 'viewing frame' has incurred a sense of uniformity of design across the built landscape of Dúnfarrraig, the concept was originally based on the notion that it could continue the relationship between the home owner and the landscape, into the home. As this relationship is unique to that individual or family (as the 'romantic' or 'collective' gaze or both [Urry, 1990, 2002]), the way in which the 'viewing frame' as balcony, large window or patio, has been incorporated into the design of the house, attempts to express this value. Through this dialectical relationship with the car, 'focalisation' practices have transformed this culture of 'viewing' into an attitude of display and consumption, where it is not only a question of demonstrating an ability to appropriate a view of the coastline, but an ability to *appropriate that view in a unique and individuated manner*. Therefore, this means that the dialectic between the car and the development of this culture of 'viewing' should show a built landscape of *difference*, rather than of sameness.

This process of 'focalization' can also be applied to practices used by tourist businesses in Dúnfarrraig to lure the gazing tourist or resident. The height of the building, colour and signage are methods used to attract the attention of the flow, and

because of their visibility from some distance away, their effect is similar to the industrial billboard. To a large extent, proximity to the main road in Dúnfarrraig is also a factor determining the success of the business, as 48% of Dúnfarrraig's residents are commuters.

Figure 10.3.6 The 'new' and the 'old' aesthetic



The old shop and post office which was family owned throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. At a glance, this picture depicts the 'sublime' aspect of Dúnfarrraig, with the mist of rain over the mountain and sea, blurring the clarity of view of either; the dark grey colour of the tarmacaddam in front of the shop; and stains of damp on the whitewashed walls of the shop and behind the telephone box and bin.



The new shop, 'Siopa Dúnfarrraig' in the same space as the shop pictured above. What is remarkable about this change to the shopping 'space' in Dúnfarrraig, is the difference in height, signage, colour and use of flower pot. The visual contrast with the former shop structure alone, constructs this recent development of shop units, in terms of the 'beautiful' aspect of the picturesque (Barrell, 1972; Slater, 1993). Although the picture has been taken against a backdrop of sunny weather, there are distinct features such as the use of wood and lettering both in Irish and in italics, which provides a hybridisation of the 'local' vernacular aspect and a contemporary style of presentation (O'Connor, 1993, Slater, 2000). This combined with the change of colours but similar door frames for all three units, represents this space (now defined by Clare County Council as the 'village core') in terms of a 'new' aesthetic.



Figure 10.3.7 The lure of colour (Slater, 1998).



The pub is one of the oldest structures in Dúnfarrraig, at the crossroads opposite the shops. The quite dramatic use of colour and billboard effect of the signage, advertises its presence from some distance away. Not unlike the village of Eyeries in Co.Cork, businesses are trying to survive by using colour to enhance the physical appearance of its commercial buildings, as a way of promoting its economic performance (Slater, 1998:36).



Similarly, the Seaview Riding Centre has printed this logo of a horse on the side wall of the stables, which attracts the gazing motorist.

Thus, the gaze (Urry, 1990, 2002) of the tourist (and motorist) is drawn to those features in the built landscape (both commercial and domestic) which now demand a higher visual appeal than the unique Burren landscape in which they are situated. Dúnfarrraig, which has previously been known for its stunning and unique coastline with beach - defined by residents and tourists as a “seaside village” - is now associated with planning difficulties for *both* tourist businesses and housing, and controversy, as residents vie to build a house which has a better view of that coastline and is more visually striking than the last.

Therefore the construction of the house as spectacle, depends upon the display of patio, decking, balcony and rockery, in order to visually demonstrate the ‘cultural capital’ of the home owner (Bourdieu, 1984). Crucially, this ‘representation of space’ (Lefebvre, 1991) is being achieved through this process of ‘focalization’ (Ingram, 1991).

However, the reverse is also true of the construction of some houses in Dúnfarrraig. One local resident who works as a builder, emphasised his wish to make his house blend *into* the landscape, describing in some detail how he had excavated into the mountain side, rather than build on top, in order to hide the physical structure. He also used stone cut as a façade, not just for the front of the house, as has been the practice of many other local and outsider residents, but for the entire structure. This method ensures a lesser degree of visibility from the road.

“It won’t be visible if I do [add a garage], ‘coz I’ll hide it into the hill or something. It’ll look like an old barn eventually. It’ll probably be visible if you drive up to the house, but not from any side looking at the house from the road or anything, no. Well, I don’t want to see a garage, it’d take from it and that. But even, I don’t want to see it myself. It’s not other people viewing the house, it’s for me.”

A central part of this culture of focalisation, has been the recognition of a car culture through and in, Dúnfarrraig. Jackson (1985:247) comments that the concept of the ‘drive-in’ first emerged in America as a response to the way in which the automobile and the suburb had combined through the daily experience of residents. Similarly in Dúnfarrraig, the new development of housing demonstrates this emphasis on a car

culture, which has arisen through the emergence of the commuter, by subordinating the lawn within the garden space, to the greater need for a car parking space.

#### 10.4 Commuter culture now rationalising garden space

As a concession to suburbia, the houses will have boundary walls between the spaces of each front garden, demarcating each space. However, the front garden will be comprised of nearly all concrete with a very small lawn as space is limited. According to the local builder, the garden space will feature a;

“Very limited lawn. Only a corner of it [the garden], ‘coz it’s so tight. When you divide the four of them up. But that’s the way the, the developer wants it. Personally, I’d rather leave it and maybe give the lawn area and some kind of a thing just to give it a different – so it wouldn’t look like a, a, a development that you’d see in a town really. But the customer’s always right.”

Figure 10.4.1 Enticing the commuter



Note the use of stone cut here, to create a façade for the top part of the brick boundary wall, separating each garden space from the other.

Arguably, the positioning of each house along the road facilitates a ‘drive-through’ culture for the car, whereby the motorist is able to view a line of detached dwellings in the same frame as the sea. It is suggested that in his analysis of ‘automobility’ and the tourist ‘gaze’, Urry (1999, 2000) has neglected the quite dialectical relationship between the motorist or car culture, and the home owner. His dismissal of the car as

'capsule' and treatment of the same as insulated from the landscape through which it flows, fundamentally ignores a crucial aspect of the abstract dialectic between car and the landscape. Far from remaining detached in the car, the motorist – be it tourist or resident – becomes subject to the same view of houses along the coast road. The idea of creating a 'viewing frame' of the landscape, coupled with how space has been privatised, are internalised by the motorist and then reproduced as a feature within his/her own home, using the same setting. An example where the effect of this relationship is evident, is in the caravan site<sup>2</sup>. While this interaction with ideas does not involve direct physical or social contact with the community, it clearly indicates the interaction of the motorist with the concept of viewing and its mechanisms, manifest through the built landscape of houses. It shows how the motorist is actively engaging with features in the landscape.

### **10.5 Constructing Dúnfarrraig as a 'drive-through' experience**

The importance then, of engaging the attention of the motorist for business purposes, is not lost on those residents in the tourism industry, pub and shop. The owners of the Seaview Riding Centre provide an excellent example of a business where 'focussing the view' of the motorist involves the use of a colourful logo on the side of the stables in a billboard type effect, and the creation of both entrance and exit areas from the compound, in order to provide easy access for the motorist as a 'drive-through' experience.

For those just wishing to make a booking, the owners created two separate entrances in between a large lawn and the car park. This effectively created a drive through effect, whereby motorists could pull in by one entrance, make a booking, and leave by the other exit without the hassle of turning the car around. The owner reflected that people would sometimes just pull in off the road when they saw the large sign for the centre, on the side of the stables, and that this flow of customers comprised their largest market segment<sup>3</sup>. Subsequent attempts to cater for an increase of business have involved filling the green field to the front of their house with rough stones to provide

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<sup>2</sup> As explained in Chapter 6.

<sup>3</sup> While the Riding Centre has ceased to offer horse-riding lessons in the past year, it continues to operate as a stables, racing horses and selling horses for livery. However, some of the stables have been converted into guest rooms for tourists, although there is no notice on the road side to advertise the business as a Bed and Breakfast guesthouse, unlike other tourist businesses in Dúnfarrraig.

a car park. This inevitably became filled with cars of parents waiting for their children to finish their trek across the fields. From green field to car park, it now became a waiting room.

Figure 10.5.1 Constructing Dúnfarrraig as a 'drive-through' experience (Jackson, 1985).



This business is attempting to lure the gazing motorist, by inviting the tourist or resident to literally drive through the property (The main road is indicated by the symbol 'X').



As photographed from the other side. The owners have also concreted an area of lawn in front of the house, to provide a parking-space for interested viewers.

The concept of a 'drive-through' is also manifest in the public spaces of the landscape. A clear example is the gradual transformation of one of the 'green roads'<sup>4</sup> in Dúnfarrraig, from dirt track through the mountain scape, to a minor road for vehicular traffic. Initially, the track was used to move cattle through, from one field to another. It was seldom used by cars, due to the amount of wild and unkempt briars tumbling over the stone walls into the road space at various points, which rendered it impassable. When rain fell, the dirt track was transformed into a mud track, very difficult for walking on. One local resident described childhood days walking along the dirt track from her house beside the shop, to the national school in Dúnfarrraig Beg. She recalled the joy of jumping over large puddles, only to be covered in muck when landing.

During the 1990s, the dirt track was covered by rough stones in order to make it easier for walking. In time however, the old puddles re-emerged and the grass re-surfaced. Finally, a cohort of local residents with economic interest in the development of that road, co-ordinated efforts to tarmacadam the road in order to create easier means of access to houses. With difficulty this was agreed, subject to the erection of a 'no-through road' sign at either end of the road. The road was tarmacadamed, but no sign ever appeared. Now pedestrians must yield to the motorist who demands the subordination of that spatial practice, to the car.

Crucially, the visual transformation of the road from 'green road', to tarmacadamed through road, has involved a parallel transformation. From space of leisure which privileged walking over the car, it has become a functional space. Crucially, each change to the road has affected a different type of pace, equal to the motorists' wish to increase the speed of the car.

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<sup>4</sup> This 'green road' is not a designated national walk way.

Figure 10.5.2 Mobilising space - from *flaneur* to motorist.



A picture of the 'green road' in the early to late 1980s.



First improvements made during the 1990s.



The 'green road' bereft of 'green'. As is.

These examples highlight the emerging dialectical relationship between practices adopted by residents and the car.

One outsider outlines the more practical need for a car given the geo-spatial spread of basic services around other towns. She remarks that her journeys are measured in terms of time to and from shops. However, she also uses the car to hunt out new routes around and outside the Dúnfarrraig area.

“...When I moved here, I thought the place was beautiful. I haven’t a clue what it was, but I still feel it sometimes, when I drive down the mountain from Lisdoonvarna and I see the sun set or something else. It’s just amazing like...”

The implications of Cathy’s use and perception of the car in this instance purports the ability of the car driver to *engage* with his/her environment, despite the technocratic medium within which that engagement occurs. Friedberg (2002) conceptualises the car in terms of a ‘viewing machine’ which facilitates the motorised form of the *flaneur*. She argues that driving enables a certain type of visuality through the windscreen, which operates as a framing device of the landscape through which the car moves. However, this would appear to reiterate Urry’s earlier analysis (1999, 2000) of the conceptual use of the windscreen, rather than addressing the more complex issue of the impact of this framing device on the ‘gaze’, or even speculating as to how the mobile position of the *flaneur* as motorist, might engage more discursively with the landscape. Cathy’s use of the car would suggest that this is dismissive of other forms which enable or facilitate the ‘gaze’, and which neglects possible types of interaction or practices arising from the proverbial drive (similar to the weatherproof *flaneur*) through the countryside.

Undeniably, our use of the car is replacing those spatial practices such as walking in the countryside which, within the tourism context, is specific to the explorer. This type of tourist is characterised by an urge to seek out new places when travelling, engaging with his/her environment through the ‘tourist gaze’ in its solitary or collective form. It presupposes an experiential form of engagement. However, Cathy’s emotional description of her sighting of the sun set and mountain, which provoked an intangible intrinsic sense of place, demonstrates her ability to engage with the landscape in a semi-spiritual way through the windscreen of the mobile car.



This experience has heightened her interest in the place of Dúnfarrraig, not only encouraging her to put down roots in the community, but has directed her understanding of this quality, that intangible sense of place, as specific to Dúnfarrraig. This is crucially significant when re-examining Cathy's continued search for a house in Dúnfarrraig, which became a parallel journey of reinstating qualities of her old suburban lifestyle in her new home in the west of Ireland. Her last comment regarding the state of disrepair of the cottage in the Caher valley, with potatoes growing through the floor, is particularly interesting given the romanticised nature of her first viewing of Dúnfarrraig<sup>5</sup>.

Cathy comments how she used to take the car as a means of exploring new pathways and roads in Dúnfarrraig. Her imaginative use of the car demonstrates the possibility of understanding the road space, previously analysed and depicted as an inert space containing the passive traveller in the car as cell, now described as a *space of difference* which is *interacting* with her, *directing* her to new places.

"I used to drive a lot. I used to get in the car and drive around everywhere. I'd say, gosh that's new, see where it takes me, and I'd drive down, see where it'd take me and stuff."

Perversely Matthew, who manages his own tour guiding business of the Burren mountains, argues that driving through the landscape "diminishes the experience". His anti-car perspective concurs with Urry's (1999, 2000) conceptualisation of the car as a 'technocratic', 'individualised cell'. According to Matthew:

"You're in an individual or technolised cell, y'know, driving through a place. You may as well watch a video about the Burren as look out through [the windscreen] at it. If you want to see it, get out of the car."

This school of thought (Urry, 1999, 2000; Friedberg, 2002) maintains that the car incapacitates the actor. Dominating this reasoning, is the ideology that 'seeing' is experiential, a sensual experience. Matthew's invitation to walk the mountain, then drink tea and eat mackerel, suggests that a more noble insight into the landscape is possible only through activities.

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<sup>5</sup> See chapter 6, 'Symbolically suburban', for more details.

Despite this, Matthew reveals that he doesn't walk the Burren himself in his spare time. Further, that walking holds a very functional role for him, comparable to the farmer walking a herd of cows, or "a guard on the beat, on patrol". The act of walking has become a practice of business, rather than of pleasure. Similarly, the Burren mountains have become a place of work for Matthew. He explains that he surfs in the sea during his spare time, admitting that he will take the surf-board in the family car and *drive* to the sea, rather than walk. However, this is undeniably a functional use of the car, as he is not using the car to experience the landscape.

"And if I'm walking in relation to bringing my tours up, y'know, I'll be working walking. So I don't see walking as a leisure time."

Encoded within his business rationale is an ideologically bound endeavour. Matthew states that "walking makes you part of your landscape", in that "you become at least a little more involved with it when you walk into it". Urry (1995) states that in the Lake District, walking established a particular way of relating to 'nature' as one which "supposedly exemplifies good taste" (P201)<sup>6</sup>. Although this act of walking assumes a solitary experience contemplating one's own thoughts, the routes taken by visitors, were those written about, by writers who had frequented the Lake District in the past. Therefore these routes became imbued with meaning taken from these written accounts, and informed the "thinking activity" of later visitors who would walk the same routes. Matthew argues that while he doesn't mind tourists wandering aimlessly through his land, his oral narratives would inform their understanding of the social and geological history of that land, and increase their social experience of the landscape of the Burren.

Nevertheless, it begs the question; will eating fish and tea up the Burren mountains necessarily provide a better understanding of that landscape, than driving through the same? Or is it just a different type of understanding?

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<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, Urry does not expand upon this notion of 'taste', referring instead to Wallace's (1995) description of factors which transformed the material and ideological shape of walking, such as transport and agricultural changes (P201).

The point being made here, is not to deride the very intelligent efforts of Matthew to provide a more insightful understanding of the Burren landscape through his provision of a sensual experience of Nature. Rather to suggest that conceptualising the car in terms of a 'technocratic' machine (Urry, 1999, 2000), which has informed non-representational views of the same, dismisses the dialectical relationship between the car and the landscape; be it of the development of the mall (Corcoran, 2004), the 'cultural environment through which we see ourselves as human' (Miller, 2001), as a means to resist alienation (Young, 2001), as a contested symbol of modernism (Inglis, 2004), or even as a platform for tasks such as the office and so forth (Laurier, 2004).

### **10.6 'Ensigning' the public landscape**

One youth described his interest in the folklore and archaeology of the mountains in the Burren, which has prompted him to set-up a tour guiding business for tourists. He remarked that his understanding of the mountains is inherited from his father, who was keen to introduce the landscape to his family, in historical, as well as agricultural terms. Matthew now wishes to present the landscape to tourists "in a different sense rather than what you might read in a text about the Burren", "comin' from the heart, comin' from the origin, from the y'know, people who know". Quite firmly, he states that "I might have more insight into the landscape than outsiders as such". Matthew has named his company, "The Burren Experience", which claims:

"to understand the very nature of Nature itself, especially with regard to the landscape, the harshness of the landscape. It's not a benevolent force that is, y'know, cultivated and pasteurised down to what we can stroll through. Y'know, there's lots of elements of wildness about it, hence the name of my tour company, the Burren Experience."

Central to his aim of presenting a different insight to the landscape, is his method of introduction to the same. Matthew remarks that while other tour companies claim an experience of the landscape, the visitor becomes "detached because things are almost designed for your comfort" rather than for contact with "the nature of the landscape". Matthew's more unusual aim, is to provide a sensual introduction to the landscape, based on the idea of inviting a guest into the home and offering them something to eat. Thus, tea is boiled in an old kettle halfway up the mountains in a sheltered nook under the trees, while smoked mackerel is served for the guests' ready consumption.

Matthew emphasises that this aims to be “a special service, introducing [the visitor] to the landscape in ways that they become a participant rather than a spectator”. He advocates an experiential understanding, arguing that driving through the landscape in the car provides a limited, one dimensional aspect of the same. This concurs with Urry’s (1999, 2000) conceptualisation of the car as ‘capsule’, insulating the body from the environment through which it passes.

Despite this rather whole hearted approach to dining in the countryside, Matthew’s rationale betrays a marketing strategy.

“If they become a participant rather than a spectator, then y’know, they can take something back with them. That’ll inspire them to come again.”

Arguably, Matthew claims a superior approach to his introduction to the mountain, on the basis that he specifically seeks to give a service unrequested and unpaid, to his visitors. This practice of providing a tea and fish service as part of the tour of the mountains, is an unusual one, and, it is contended, establishes a sense of difference to this social experience of the landscape (Urry, 1995). However, similar to the appeal of riding horses along the beach, the idea of having a picnic up the mountains constructs this experience of the landscape in terms of a spectacle of action. Unlike the effect of the floodlight on the house which is a static one, this experience of the landscape is premised on a requirement of behaviour of the visitor, who becomes a participant through this action of eating, drinking and walking.

As Matthew walks and explains the history of the mountain through fort or stone wall, he is actualising his mantra of “walking into your landscape...” to become “at least more involved with it”. His own involvement is more personalised, as he explains that this is a landscape “that I in one sense possess, technically possess the deeds<sup>7</sup> to this land”.

It could be argued that by charging access to his personal historical narrative of the mountain, Matthew is commodifying the landscape. Instead, it is suggested that his

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<sup>7</sup> The deeds to which he refers, is of a document of ownership of the mountain, similar to that of a house.

search for a more alternative, non-agricultural way of engaging with the landscape, could also be seen as a more subtle expression of this macro changing relationship with the Burren. The landscape becomes an extension of the family's owned space, albeit external to the more private space of the garden. While Matthew clearly sees a difference between his garden space as "manicured and cultivated", and the mountain as "wild", he states his ownership of both, by virtue of possessing the deeds. His understanding of the importance of a "view of the mountains", echo earlier comments of outsider and local residents, whose positioning of house and garden space, attempts to recreate a sense of the solitary, romantic tourist gaze, from the window, balcony, decking or rockery. However, it is suggested that Matthew perceives the garden space as qualitatively different from that of the "wild and harsh" mountain scape, because the former is being viewed from the privacy of his bedroom windows - albeit double windows - while his engagement with the mountain side is being influenced by the collective stories of his father and grandfather, then recreated through the very social experience with his visitors, in the collective tourist gaze (Urry, 1990, 2002). These quite different ways of experiencing the landscape – as individual or collective – constructs the garden space as private, and the mountain as public; while these spaces are physically differentiated by the use of boundary walls (as fence and tree) between mountain and garden.

Thus, the two ways of viewing the landscape: the private and romantic gaze which remains static<sup>8</sup>, and the collective, social gaze of the tourist which is mobilised through the act of walking, correspond to specific ways of organising and engaging with the landscape<sup>9</sup>.

However, the relationship with Nature is expressed in conflictual terms, personified through the arrival of Coise the dolphin, to the shores of a cove in Dúnfarrraig. Coise stopped frequenting the seas around Knockree some five years ago, and arrived to a cove in Dúnfarrraig. Such has been her appeal with tourists and residents alike, that one local reported:

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<sup>8</sup> As through the structure of the 'viewing frame'.

<sup>9</sup> As a social experience swimming with Coise, walking with Matthew through the mountain or going horse riding along the beach.

“She has completely taken the emphasis off the beach now. She’s the focus of the tourists visiting Dúnfarrraig now. They’re all going to the other end of the parish now.”

One resident who owns a Bed and Breakfast, remarked that tourists can now be categorised as ‘dolphin tourists’ or ‘non-dolphin tourists’, depending on their level of interest or awareness of Coise. Most tourists who come to Dúnfarrraig to see the dolphin tend to be frequent visitors and stay in Bed and Breakfast houses near the cove where she swims. It is possible to venture down through fields to the small rocky slipway and wade into the water where Coise will emerge ready to play.

Such is the interest in the antics of Coise, who apparently “likes bringing presents like seaweed and plastic bags” and “adores giving plastic bags”. Her ability to ‘play’ with people is coined by one tourist who is a frequent visitor to Dúnfarrraig. He states that “it is like swimming with a dog, playing with a dog.” The unequivocal comparison of Coise with the dog, reputedly ‘man’s best friend’, has gained her an almost human status, perpetuating all the qualities of a human friend, such as loyalty, fun and also, a confidante. One outsider speaks of this last, in her tale of a tourist to her Bed and Breakfast.

“I’ll tell you a nice story. Jane came very early one day and Coise sensed, or knew somehow or other – I don’t know, knew that Jane was upset, so she swam away and came back with the biggest, wild salmon you ever saw. I couldn’t lift it. And she [Coise] uses, she’s sharing her food. A whole one [salmon]. There wasn’t a knock on it. She just knocked it out and gave it to Jane and insisted that Jane take it, and Jane was crying, “no, no, I can’t take your food”. Talked to the dolphin as if it was human, and honestly, she had to take it!”

The treatment of dolphin as human, through her apparent display of concern, resounds in another residents’ description of an incident that occurred when she was swimming with the dolphin. In this instance, the dolphin displayed uncertain behaviour, both preventing her from returning to land, then pushing her back home. The tenuous line between fun and danger is articulated by one tourist who stated that;

“She is wild. She’s a mammal. She’s in the water. She’s in the sea. She’s free to come and go, to choose who she swims with.”

Yet this statement is made alongside a description of the cove as the place “where she hangs around”, which commandeers a word association with that of the teenager with friends. However, other residents treat the dolphin with relative detachment, one local stating rather cautiously that:

“...Just em...I think that people always have to be careful in the water, y’know? And I mean, he’s a dolphin, he’s not a person, y’know? He doesn’t...I mean, he could hurt somebody easily without...without meaning to, y’know?”

While another resident remarked that he had passed by the spot many times in his car, and had never seen her.

Despite stories of danger told by *The Irish Times*, and residents’ cautious behaviour and treatment of the dolphin continues to draw crowds to Dúnfarrraig. Throngs of people will climb over the stone wall and gate into the field, where they will walk down to the concrete slip way to the side of the cove. Usually people will stand on this slip way, watching people standing and swimming in the water, clad in their wetsuits, looking for an opportunity to pet the dolphin or swim alongside her. Unlike the golden sands of the beach which tend to attract people on sunny days only, interest in Coise is unpredictable, based on a tourist or local resident sighting the dolphin playing in the water. One visitor stated his lack of interest in the Burren landscape, remarking that “it’s just the dolphin really” which has brought him to Dúnfarrraig. Further, that the landscape of the area “would be very much like parts of England”.

So from the spectacle of horse riders at the sea, it is Coise who is now providing a highly interactive experience with Nature. This experience with Nature can be both a collective one, through the presence of crowds of tourists to the cove, and a solitary romantic one (Urry, 1990, 2002), as witnessed through Jane’s story. Two residents described how they would wait until evening when the crowds have dispersed, to swim with her. It is argued that the advent of Coise, coupled with the familiar spectacle of horse riders trotting by the seashore and elsewhere in Dúnfarrraig, have facilitated a more leisured approach to engaging with Nature - both on horseback through the fields, and in the water.

Another example of changing perception and subsequent practice with the physical landscape, is of the international fishing competition which takes place annually in Dúnfarrraig during the month of July. This attracts a large number of tourists from as near as neighbouring towns in Co.Clare, and as far away as Germany or America. These fishermen fish around Blackhead, on the approach to Dúnfarrraig from Knockree. This is quite a narrow stretch of road, which has to accommodate lines of cars parked by the side of the road. Over time, the continued practice of cars parking at this section of the road, has caused a number of small clefts to appear. Similar to the effect of cars parked by the side of the road to see Coise, this line of parked cars creates a large amount of car congestion, as the motorist must wait patiently for a bus, caravan or car, to weave its way through the crowds of people and cars. The shop in Dúnfarrraig sells fishing rods to interested tourists, eager to try in the fun.

This presents quite a dramatic contrast with previous representations of the west of Ireland, where films such as *Man of Aran* depicted Nature as a force against mankind, rather than one with which a relationship of leisure was possible. It is difficult to say exactly when this change in the perception of Nature first occurred, but it is suggested that the catalyst was provided by the Seaview Riding Centre in their unusual offer of a trek along the beach. Riders were always accompanied by a guide from the Centre, so that any element of novelty or risk, was carefully overseen and managed. The vision of riders by the sea, encouraged later interaction with Coise the dolphin, and popularised the idea of fishing at Blackhead, one of the most dangerous sheer spots in the road when arriving into Dúnfarrraig. It is suggested that concurrent with these practices, has been the manipulating and 'taming' of the natural landscape through the creation of rockeries and particularly the lawn in the private space of the garden.

Thus, these practices demonstrate residents' changing relationship with the landscape, with houses in the landscape, and by extension, with Nature. Nature can now be experienced socially through encounter with the playful dolphin, or through a historical narrative up the 'wild' Burren landscape, where a very civilised service of tea and smoked mackerel are offered as part of the process.

### **10.7 Car problems**

However, one local resident firmly stated that;



“We might be just as well pleased if she [Coise] did take off some place else, ‘coz it’s dangerous like, traffic wise. It’s a death trap at times. We were down there one time and there was traffic jams all down the road.”

Siobhán’s dislike is not necessarily of the dolphin, but of the stress and tension created by the traffic and crowds who have come to see her. Every weekend during the summer, the bend in the road is thronged by crowds in their cars who have come to see Coise. These cars which are parked by the side of the road, attract the attention of the motorist, who will slow down in order to glimpse the reason for this excitement. This practice of slowing down in order to gaze, coupled with the need to slow down in order to yield to approaching cars, has created congestion in Dúnfarrraig. Further, the exit of people from cars, or use of car doors as cabins behind which they can change from wetsuit into everyday clothes, has also caused traffic jams, as car drivers are prepared to wait patiently behind another car while gazing at the cove.

Figure 10.7.1 Attempts to mobilise the flow.



Even the double yellow lines have not been able to prevent the motorist from parking by the side of the road (Two cars are parked *on* the yellow lines).



A contested site between car and resident. This house which is owned by a local resident, has placed a row of tyres along the grass margin of the road side. In suburbia, this would represent the footpath where cars would park. However, in rural Dúnfarrraig, the grass indicates the extension of the lawn beyond the boundary stone walls of the garden, and thus, the extension of the private property of the home owner. The row of tyres and traffic cones is a preventative measure blocking the driver from parking at this spot. For the purpose of this argument however, yellow and white flowers have been planted into the base of each tyre in an attempt to aestheticise the same. However, this attempt has only been partly successful, as the resident has had to paint a line of yellow along the rim of each tyre in order to illuminate the tyres, which have now become a dangerous hazard for the motorist travelling at night. This, coupled with the functional role of the traffic cone, means that attempts to aestheticise have been contradicted.

A number of houses which are positioned along this narrow stretch of road, have reacted with some frustration to this growing annoyance. Spare tyres have been nailed to the front garden space of some of the houses, in an attempt to prevent cars from parking there. Barrels, flower pots and 'no parking' signs have either been put down or erected, only to be ignored by enthusiastic visitors. In desperation and annoyance, the residents appealed to Clare County Council to take action. In response, the Council put down double yellow lines the length of the section of the road and erected warning signs of danger to tourists and residents alike.

Perversely, this had not only served to literally highlight the road as a place of interest to passing tourists (similar to effect of practices of focalisation in the suburban garden), but has come to represent the first manifestation of one of the negative effects of suburbia, on the landscape of Dúnfarrraig. As one local resident confided:

"It's a strange sight to see the double yellow lines in the middle of nowhere! And of course, the yellow lines draw attention. If you hadn't known about the dolphin, you'd sort of say, well what's this!"

Figure 10.7.2 The Double Yellow line as the new Golden 'M' sign.



An outsider remarked "I never thought I'd see double yellow lines in Dúnfarrraig." These lines also cross over the entrance to the property of these houses which open onto the road. Ironically, the double yellow lines have created a 'billboard' (Friedberg, 2002) effect on the road, similar to the golden 'M' sign, visible for some distance away.

Initially the local residents sympathised with the local landowner, whose field has been used by tourists to gain access to the cove frequented by the dolphin. The suggestion of a car-park in the field of the landowner was vetoed by the residents in favour of less drastic preventative measures such as placing tyres, stones and 'no parking' signs on that strip of road. However, with an increase in cars stopping by the side of the road in order to gaze at Coise, the dolphin, these sympathies have changed quite dramatically. Now the residents feel that the landowner *should* turn the field into a car park which would ease the level of congestion on the road, enabling everyone to conduct their business at ease. Residents from other townlands in Dúnfarrraig have speculated somewhat dryly on the possibility of an entrance charge to the car-park. Somewhat perversely, Nature as represented through the field, may become commoditized as one way of solving traffic congestion in Dúnfarrraig.

One local youth laughed saying,

“There’s traffic jams...in Dúnfarrraig! That aren’t caused by sheep wandering onto the road.”

This comment lends an insight into residents’ perception of the transformation of their place and community, from traditional agricultural society, to rural ‘suburbia’<sup>10</sup> (Jagose, 2003). It is a reference to popular postcard images of the country road in the west of Ireland, populated not by people, but by animals ‘wandering onto the road’. These depictions of rural Ireland, have served to perpetuate perceptions of the west as an agrarian, traditional society, devoid of the sense of rush, and congestion characteristic of the urban centre (O’Connor, 1993). Crucially, residents are identifying the double yellow lines as a visual manifestation of contradictions in the use of rural space in Dúnfarrraig.

Tension now surrounds the use of the road, a contested space between tourists and local residents. Where previously some of the local residents wanted to *detain* the tourist flowing through the landscape by luring them in to the side of the road in order

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<sup>10</sup> That is, suburbia which is occurring in symbolic form, in the rural setting of Dúnfarrraig.

to exact an economic return<sup>11</sup>, now they want to maintain a *continuing flow* of tourists through the road space.

Ironically, before the double yellow lines were painted on the road, it was observed that while the tyres, flower pots and stones had actively prevented people from parking at those spots in the road during the day, their low visual quality during the evening time, had rendered them hazardous objects of danger to the driver. To counter this unprecedented liability, the residents painted the surface area of the tyres and pots, white, while the Council placed white reflector lights at regular intervals at the tyres. The presence of the double yellow lines appeals to a number of different interpretations each of which are equally applicable: the emergence of the anti-social space in the countryside, suburbia, the privileging of certain spaces in the countryside, a contested space, and the unwanted presence of a car culture.

Arguably, a car culture has always been a necessary part of living in rural Ireland, particularly given the dispersed and remote nature of many villages in counties like Clare. Dúnfarrraig, which averages four square miles, would appear to encourage a reliance on the car by virtue of its ribbon linear type of settlement pattern. However, this reliance is not merely an issue of geography, but is a comment on the way in which the car is used in everyday activities. Some of the older residents in Dúnfarrraig described their childhood memories of playing on the roads, walking to school, fishing and playing football on the sand dunes. Now children are driven to school and to designated places to play football, such as the 'community field' in nearby village Knockree. Rather than play on the roads or on the beach, the children are now being dropped off at the houses of other children in Dúnfarrraig, where they can play with each other under the supervision of that parent. By alternating 'supervision times', the parents get an opportunity to catch up on work, relax and so forth. One outsider, Deirdre, stated that she was anxious for her child to socialise with the other children, partly because he was an only child and she wanted him to enjoy his childhood, but also because of the importance for him of participating in a scheme which included the same network of children in school, outside of school hours.

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<sup>11</sup> A practice more particular to the Bed and Breakfast house which is positioned on the main road, rather than the pub or shop, which has ample space for parking off the main road.

The effect of this scheme of 'play hour' and other activities which require the use of the car as an efficient means of compressing the amount of road space between houses, while maximising the potential time allotted to that activity, means that the flow of cars on the road has increased considerably in recent years. The pub owner remarked that while a few years ago the amount of cars on the road would have served as an indication of the changing seasons, from the quiet winter season, to the busier tourist season. Now however, he remarks that the road is constantly busy with cars, regardless of the season.

One such resident, Hazel, is particularly aware of this flow of cars on the road. She described her annoyance with neighbours' abuse of the space in front of her walls on the road, which in the city, would be called the kerb or footpath.

"Y'know, you'd get the odd one now that would – sometimes the neighbours now, they only seem to use their own parking space and sometimes they just park on the grass in front of our wall now. But that's not really the done thing y'know. Even down here around the country. There'd be certain respect for...like, you park, y'know, the walls are the spaces. The same as in the city now. Nobody minds the odd time, but it's not something that we..y'know, you'd do."<sup>12</sup>

This example of car congestion in Dúnfarrraig, illustrates the intrusion of the car and intention of driver, into a space readily identified by Hazel, as hers.

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<sup>12</sup> Comment given by Hazel, in Dúnfarrraig, Co.Clare.

Figure 10.7.3 The 'footpath' for cars in Dúnfarrraig and Gireux: Accommodating the motorist.



A car parked on the 'kerb' of a 'green road' in rural Dúnfarrraig.



Similarly, a car parked on the footpath, obstructing the way of the passer-by in rural Gireux.

This example provided by Hazel, of her differentiation between public and private uses of space, particularly given her authoritative attitude of the rights of the home owner, highlights yet another tension in the use of rural space. Her quiet annoyance at neighbours parking their cars in front of her walls, would appear unnecessary given that they have parked their car outside the boundary of her property as indicated by stone walls. Usually the explicit presence of a boundary wall would indicate a separation between the public space of the road and the private space of the house and/or garden. However, the design of the stone wall as two parts, shows a sweeping curve inwards, focalising the eye towards the main gate as entrance to the property and driveway. In demonstrating this curve, the stone wall actually *loses* a few feet from the garden of the home owner, which is left on the road side of the boundary wall. Thus, Hazel's annoyed reaction is not an extreme one. Rather it demonstrates the emerging complexity involved in differentiating public from private space, in the rural landscape of Dúnfarrraig.

The separation of the private space of the household from the public space of the road or landscape, becomes problematic when a grass verge on the road side in front of the boundary wall of the property, is mowed to indicate a lawn – which in turn, indicates that this is an extension of the private space of the house. In some houses however, this distinction is not a visual one, as the grass area is tarmacaddamed rather than maintained as a 'lawn'. This implies that to demarcate a space beside the road as 'private', requires the maintenance of that space in a very visual way, such as mowing the lawn, or positioning pots of plants, similar to the strategies adopted by the residents living opposite Coise. Although Hazel earlier described her use of the Shetland ponies to keep down the grass in her front garden – a common practice among residents - it would not be possible to direct the ponies to eat the grass in front of her boundary wall, without ensuring their safety from passing cars, or ensuring that they did not walk off down the road. Herein lies a contradiction of constructing a suburban design in the countryside, as the resident would be more likely to mow the grass in *front* of the property walls, rather than *within* the property walls.



Figure 10.7.4 The problem with constructing a 'middle landscape' (Rowe, 1992) in rural space.



Hazel's house, with sweeping driveway and dramatic 'porch' features. What is important here, is that the line of the lawn continues from the house, down the driveway, and around the corner. Her maintenance of the grass as 'lawn' (Girling and Helphand, 1994) denotes her ownership of this section of grass which continues beyond the boundary wall indicated here.

Understandably, Hazel articulates her frustration with the visual annoyance of the car in front of her wall. This area has unconsciously been privatised through the presence of neatly trimmed border of grass and hedging, and demonstrates an explicit claim to ownership of that space. However, it is argued that the emergence of suburban practices in the countryside, which will necessarily involve a car culture – a concept normally used in relation to the city - is transforming current understandings and use of rural space.

Already Hazel is describing how she schedules her family walk around 'car time', that is, when the road is quiet, emptied of cars.

"I like to go on the road over to the lighthouse now. Very quiet except for y'know, the cars on the road. At this time of the year [summer], you wouldn't walk in the middle of the day, because you'd spend all your time pulling in for cars and there's an element of danger with the children involved. But em, if you went walking in winter, you might only meet four or five cars the whole time you'd be out, y'know."

These sentiments are echoed by another outsider, Anna, who describes the transition of the type of tourist in Dúnfarrraig from explorer, to car and coach. “Now it’s cars, everybody gets into a tour bus or drives around in cars.” This change is also reflected in the community spirit of the residents. Anna highlights the use of cars, television and tea, to illustrate the changing social context. It is argued that her emphasis on these features, is unconsciously articulating aspects of life common to the suburban context.

“[In 1990] Most people didn’t have a television, or they were just drifting in. Fewer cars, so let’s say, the children would be driven by one mother. Siobhán O’Connor down the road had a van so she could pack in her 12 [children] to take them to some disco or some activity in Lisdoonvarna. You’d go into a house and out would come the teapot and the brown bread and the butter. That was it. And you chatted. *Now* you’ve got a time limit. Can’t go at this minute, can’t go then, ‘coz Coronation Street is on or this is on. And there are usually two televisions in the house and they’re blaring all the time. So it has changed. And they don’t even turn the television off. It’s become a background noise, it’s not rudeness. And the cups of tea have disappeared and white wine has appeared. So instead of ‘do have a cup of tea’, it’s ‘would you like a glass of wine?’”

Anna’s distinction of the use of the television as background noise, rather than as rudeness, serves as a reminder of the extent to which items of modernity such as the television has become so much part of our daily lives, to be virtually unnoticed in the back of the room, like an armchair or table. The programmes have given structure to our routines and like Weber’s cage of irrationality, similarly restrict our movements.

At the St.Patrick’s day parade in Dúnfarrraig in 2004, a passing joke was made by the commentator when a horse stubbornly refused to move after the commentary had finished.

“Looks like P.J. can’t get his horse into first gear!”

The inefficiency of traditional methods of transport such as the horse and donkey, was highlighted against the efficiency of the car. Local resident and farmer, Joseph, reflected on the changing requirement for animals in Dúnfarrraig, from a functional role, to visual role.

“Course all the tillage and all that is finished now. Thirty years ago, you’d get some lovely photos. You don’t see any donkey and carts, or horse and carts or anything like that. ‘Cept an auld parade.”

While the parade formalises the redundant functional value of the horse or donkey and cart, through representing it in highly visual, ‘staged’ (MacCannell, 1976) terms, that depiction is based on a changing real attitude towards the land and its animals. Far from being used in conjunction with labour on the land, the animals such as the lama’s and donkeys have now become part of the visual spectacle of Dúnfarrraig. Joseph refers to how the animals are visible from the road side in the car. It is suggested that the animals are now being used more for their visual effect, which is being supported by grant aid and the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS), than for farming.

### **10.8 Summary**

Similar to the Lake District in England (Urry, 1995), the development of Dúnfarrraig as a social space, is as dependent upon its visitors as they are attracted to the place myth which surrounds and constitutes this social space. So while Dúnfarrraig is famous for its dramatic rugged coastline and mountain scapes, it is also becoming synonymous with a distinctive built landscape particularly of houses. The *development*, rather than emergence of this place myth is being constructed through a dialectical relationship between the car and resident, manifest through focalising practices of their tourist business or of their house and garden. A large part of the importance of the dialectical relationship between the resident and car, lies in the articulation of the private gaze of the home owner of that landscape, inasmuch as it also engenders a sense of emulation between home owners, in the increasing levels of display of their homes – as witnessed through the progression from the house light, then lantern, to the floodlight.

Thus, how is this dialectical relationship between house and motorist occurring in its French counterpart, where a culture of ‘viewing’ is based on social practices, rather than on concrete material structures?

## **Chapter 11 The French Context**

### **11.1 Introduction**

In Gireux, it is suggested that a 'car culture', takes a predominantly different form to that of Dúnfarrraig. Although the relationship between the resident and the car is also a dialectical one, the type of engagement takes a more abstract expression, in terms of 'the humanity of the car' (Miler, 2001). The car facilitates a framework for social relations between residents through the provision of 'shop' services, while simultaneously generating tension in residents' use of rural space to privilege the car over the pedestrian.

Therefore, as the only 'shop' which has a structural permanence in Gireux is a local family business which sells the regional wine from a small table placed outside the house, tourism plays a peripheral, rather than determining role in the generation of this 'car culture'. However, while the 'suburban imaginary' describes conflicting perceptions of the social structure of the community based on different socialising practices, it is contended that a 'car culture' actually enables a cohesive framework for that community, through facilitating social interaction around 'shop' times and by encouraging residents to perceive spaces within their rural village, as open and porous, rather than as fixed entities which are positively or negatively constructed through social relations (Massey, 1994).

### **11.2 The French context**

First, and very briefly, to consider how focalising practices of the local business both respond to, and attract the mobile consumer or tourist. Similar to focalisation practices in Dúnfarrraig which use a combination of colour, signage and objects in order to attract the attention of the passing motorist, the local wine business uses signage in the form of a large cardboard wine bottle which is visible from some distance away. However, unlike Dúnfarrraig, this 'billboard effect' (Friedberg, 2001), acts in conjunction with the creation of a café space in front of the house, beside the road. This means that while the signage 'focalises the view' of the motorist travelling through the landscape at speed, the motorist will be tempted to slow down in order to get a better view of this spectacle of a café, 'staged' (MacCannell, 1976) through a table, complete with bottles of wine, and blue and white checked cloth. This is a clear 'representation of space' (Lefebvre, 1991), which appeals to tourist 'images'

(O'Connor, 1993) of the south of France, popularised in non-representational theory and tourist literature. What makes this particular construction of the rural cafe interesting, is how the success of this 'representation of space' feeds into an 'old' aesthetic which relies on romanticised images of the vernacular only. Whereas in Dúnfarrraig, this 'representation of space' is underpinned by a 'new' aesthetic which is constructed through the 'hybridization' of the vernacular with a modern style of presentation (Slater, 2000; O'Connor, 1993). In both rural contexts, the 'vernacular' adopts a performative role as a 'totem' of the identity of that place.

Apart from the family wine business, there are no shops or businesses in Gireux. This means that residents must travel to neighbouring villages for education, foodstuffs and leisure activities such as the 'local' rugby club in Ste.Saron – a ten minute drive from Gireux – so that car usage is quite high.

### **11.3 A car culture**

Historically, Gireux once boasted two groceries, a café and a newspaper shop, all of which were once part of the built framework of the village. This, coupled with a dominantly agricultural economy meant that the local residents of Gireux have had no need to commute to other villages for facilities. Basic services and work were provided within the village centre, so people walked, rather than drove around Gireux. As the population grew older, these services were discontinued in the village and each building or structure was boarded up. In recognition that the elderly residents still needed basic provisions such as bread and meat, mobile shops<sup>1</sup> such as the bread van and butcher's, were asked to serve Gireux on their route to other villages in the area. Although Gireux has experienced an influx of Portuguese, Spanish and French outsiders, these residents commute to work in the nearby town of Ste.Saron and neighbouring villages. These and the local residents now buy their provisions in supermarkets in Ste.Saron and Toulouse, rather than from the car shops. This is partly because of the time frame of the car service which comes around 10 o'clock in the morning, too late for most working residents who need to be at work by 8 o'clock.

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<sup>1</sup> In these shops, the driver is the sales assistant, who collects an order or allotment of bread, meat, clothes, fish and so forth, from the supplier, then drives in his/her van around a large number of villages who do not have that particular foodstuff. Although an estimated time of the arrival of the mobile service into each village is given, the length of time which each service will spend in a village will differ according to the level of social interaction and demand for the foodstuff.

However, removing these services from their physical space in the village means that using the car to access the same services in other villages and towns, has become a habit. This culture of car use has become a car dependency, as residents continue to use the car to access spaces in Gireux which are easily accessible by foot, such as the bar.

On one hand, this dependency on the car is displacing other practices more commonly associated with rural space, such as walking. On the other hand, these mobile services are *enabling* social interaction between residents. Interestingly, the fact that these services are mobile, rather than part of the built landscape of the village, means that these and other spaces in Gireux are constructed in terms of social relations according to the type of practice occurring there. Therefore the spaces in which these relations take place, are open and unstructured, given that it is social relations rather than the built landscape, which is constituting these spaces (Massey, 1994).

#### **11.4 A car culture – displacing other practices**

Both outsider and local resident identified a strong use of cars by the local residents as a very visible element of life in Gireux, particularly given the physically small and clustered nature of the village. One outsider expressed her surprise at the degree to which the local residents rely on their cars for quite simple, routine based activities such as driving from their house to the café, a two minute walk away. This reliance on cars, she surmises, has become a feature of habit replacing the practice of walking which now holds a more functional and purposeful value. This is an interesting perspective, as a culture of car usage tends to make walking a leisure activity because the car is seen in terms of its use value.

Figure 11.4.1 A car dependency



Claudine has taken this photograph of the road leading directly to the café, from her bedroom window to illustrate its spatial proximity to each resident within the village.

“To go to the bar in Gireux, you can go by foot...some people take their car to go to that bar because they don’t walk! A city person would walk more than a villager. That’s weird to say, but it’s true. Apart from the agriculture worker. He walks, runs after his cows, harvests in the vineyards. But we walk much less! That is a prejudice, this image of the walking villager, it’s wrong. The city person walks more. Because we’re fed up about the subway and the traffic jams. We run to catch the bus. We run to get out of the bus, we run because we want to be on time. But here, when I go for shopping in Ste.Saron, I put my butt in the car, I go to Ste.Saron. But when I go to Toulouse, I park the car and walk, because there are traffic jams or just too many cars. I have to go around another way otherwise I’d lose time. So we go by foot, because you can’t do it in any other way.”

These sentiments are acknowledged by a local resident who remarks that

“People have to use their car or a bike, nobody walks. We now live at a time when people take their car to do 100 metres. Most of the people going to the café take their car to go there, even if they only live 100 or 200 metres walk away from there.”

Central to Claudine's astonishment about the extent of car reliance in the rural village, is the dichotomy of practices between the country and the city. She points out that because car dependency in the city has resulted in congestion and traffic jams, it is actually easier to *walk* to places, rather than take the car. While attempts have been made to relieve congestion in certain spaces of the city through the use of one-way streets, perversely, it has affected an organisation of time. Claudine illustrates how she used to organise or map out her route in advance of leaving home, in order to take into account the extra city space which she must cover in order to avoid areas of congestion or traffic calming measures<sup>2</sup>.

Ironically, increasing constraints of time and space in the city means that the resident must choose either to run or walk to the destination, rather than take the car. Claudine states that perversely, because the local residents in Gireux don't have to negotiate the constraints of city space such as congestion and traffic jams, their reliance on cars is much greater. Therefore, she espouses that one is much more likely to walk in the *city*, because of the contradictions of space, than in the country.

Unhappily, she remarks how this culture of car dependency in Gireux, is actually inhibiting her use of the rural countryside. Claudine explains that the nature of the roads in Gireux to slope towards the road, means that it would be quite dangerous for her children to cycle on the roads without being in danger of speeding out of control. As a result, neither child can cycle, despite the fact that they live in the country. She remarks that if she wants to bring her children to practise riding their bicycles, she must put their bikes *into the car and drive* to the other side of the village where the road is flat. This resounds with practices associated with the constraints of urban city living, where increased car traffic flows have prompted many parents to drive their children to the public park with its open green spaces, in order to cycle. The contradictions of rural space in Gireux, where car flows have rendered the open space of the road unsafe, has occurred to Claudine who exclaims;

“So imagine, just to ride their bikes... I find it hard to accept the fact that you have to put the bikes in the car to go cycling during the weekend. If I was in a big city, I would say it's normal, but here? Even for walks there's nothing.”

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<sup>2</sup> A practice which is called rat running.



Even the main road leading from Ste.Saron to Gireux which she has walked many times, she describes as dangerous, “the cars don’t respect you, they don’t even go around you when they pass you.” To attempt to teach her two children how to ride their bicycles on this road would be quite dangerous, due the speed of passing cars. Instead, the girls must learn to ride their bicycles inside their house, or outside on the concrete veranda. Claudine dismisses the grass in her garden as too rough to cycle on.

These contradictions of rural space are also articulated by two local residents living on the main road of Gireux. The elderly woman, Perrine, describes her transition from life amongst noisy neighbours in the clustered environs of the village, to detached bliss by the side of the road. Here, she has been able to exercise more control over the amount of social contact which she receives from neighbours and friends, as she now walks into the village whenever she wants to chat to other residents, but otherwise remains socially removed from the social space of Gireux. However, in her movement away from the terraced house, she has incurred a different problem through her position living beside the road. Instead of noise from neighbours, she now has the noise of passing cars to contend with. In an attempt to block the noise, Perrine double-glazed her front windows which muffles the sound.

Perrine and her daughter have approached the mayor, requesting traffic-calming measures in order to make the road a safer space. It is anticipated that monies will be administered from the Department of the Aude to subsidise a roundabout, which is a popular traffic calming device used by other neighbouring rural villages. A pedestrian crossing already exists at the main junction on the road into both parts of Gireux. Perrine comments that there is an official speed limit of 50 kilometres an hour through residential areas, but there are no signs to indicate this to the passing cars.

Fearing a possible crash from the speeding cars into those vehicles parked by the road side, the local residents park their cars on the footpath in front of the boundary wall of their garden. While the removal of the parked car from the unstable and dangerous space of the road to the footpath, is a necessary one, it now means that in some cases, residents walking through the village environs must step *onto* the road in order to pass by the parked vehicle. Thus, protecting the car from the road, ironically means that the *resident* is now placed in danger from speeding cars.

Figure 11.4.2 Contradictions in the use of rural space.



This photograph shows how the car has been parked on the footpath, which is normally created as a space by the side of the road where pedestrians may walk in safety from passing cars and cyclists. To park the car in its entirety on the pavement, indicates a concern for the car and its visibility to the speeding motorist. However, this practice displaces the pedestrian from the safety of this space, placing him/her in the same danger that the car has been removed from. The house and its garden as shown to the right of this picture, features a large gravelled area which is normally used as a parking space for cars. Other residents whose front door opens onto the road space, tend to park their car in front of their house on the pavement, as indicated by the red car featured in this photograph.

These spatial contradictions are emerging from how the resident is engaging with the car flowing through the village environment, which is transforming their relationship or use of rural space. First of Claudine's despair at finding an area in the village for her children to cycle safely, and then by Perrine's movement from the noise of the neighbour in the village centre, to the noise of the car by the side of the road – both examples which highlight the tension generated by competing uses of rural space

### **11.5 A car culture – enabling social practices**

A very different way of understanding the car in terms of 'dependency' is provided by the local and outsider residents who identify the daily or twice weekly services such as the bread-van, butcher and fishmonger, as a necessary part of village life in Gireux. Notably, these services are not part of the permanent structural framework of the

village, but are provided as temporary mobile structures within the context of the car or van respectively. For six days of the week, the bread-van comes to Gireux, stopping at specific places in the village and hooting the horn to notify residents of its arrival. The local residents – mostly elderly – will come from various houses around, and line up behind the back door of the van or car, ready to pay for the daily croissant or doughnut from the driver. The back of the van is laid out in shelves in order to recreate a shop window display of pastries, twists and bread. After each resident has paid and received his/her bread, the back doors are shut and the driver hops back into the van, ready to drive off to the next spot in the same village. These mobile services represent the essence of a car culture, where material structures become mobilised.

These services are considered vital for the social fabric of the local community, as the elderly residents rely on the social contact provided by the individualised nature of this service. Thus, although these services do not have a structural permanence in Gireux, it is the social which is determining their contribution to village life (Massey, 1994). Similarly, the social is constituted by the arrival of these services to the village. This is acknowledged by the woman who drives the bread-van. She considers her role as much a social, as an economic one:

“...They [the residents] don't pay me all the time, either at the end of the week, on Sundays, or at the end of the month. I like to speak...it's nice. There is a relationship between the people and the person who sells the bread, a contact. For me, it is [important], I think it is for them too, because three quarters of them are elderly people, so I think that, as they're alone at home, just the fact they have a contact with me, or with the grocer (*epicier*), the postman, the fishmonger, or with the butcher...that's it. And everyday, then, there's this contact with people and I think they appreciate it...that we come. They can't go anywhere, or their children are not here, so they are far away.”

In contrast, the fishmonger lives in his grandmother's terraced house in Gireux, and speaks of how the residents ring him or call to the house to buy fish from him. Although he does not operate his business from the house, his structural permanence in the village centre of terraced houses, means that residents identify his spatial presence in terms of a shop, albeit with different 'opening hours' defined by evening, rather than by day. This practice of calling to the house of the shop owner, used to occur in Dúnfarrraig when the shop was family owned. The then owner, Andrew described how residents would call to their front door at all stages of the evening. A

large part of his and his wife's decision to sell the family business, was prompted by their desire for privacy from the community, given years of dedicated service. The current shop in Dúnfarrraig now exists as a commercial unit, spatially independent from the house of the shop owner.

Outsider Nadine contends that the elderly view the various services as a permanent part of village life due to their predictable time and place of arrival in Gireux. However, the same services, such as the clothes van (children's clothes), grocery, butchers and bread-van, are not, in her view, a permanent part of the village, precisely because of their temporality and highly mobile nature. She states that in order for them to be seen as 'permanent' in the village, they would need a structure of time (predictability of opening hours) or of place (material structure).

"Some are them [services] are permanent. You can consider them permanent because they come here all the time. They come every week, every week. And if one day, they can't come, well, everybody knows about it, because the mayor (*mairie*) keeps us informed with posters "Attention" Today the butcher won't come!" So we can say it is permanent. But for myself, the butcher is not a permanent, it's occasional. But on the other hand, it's permanent for some people in Gireux, elderly people who need the butcher, the grocer, etc."

[Why is it occasional for you?] "Because they don't live in Gireux. It's a service coming from another place, which is moving. For me, they are not people from Gireux, they are people from outside who come to help the people, that's all. Now, if the bakery from Ste.Saron was saying "So, tomorrow, we're opening a shop in Gireux", then that will become a permanent service...open from such and such a time, it will be permanent to me."

Figure 11.5.1 What makes a structure permanent? As a physical space where events are located (Curry, 1995), or the practice (Massey, 1994)?



The butcher in his mobile van, engaged in conversation with a local resident. What is important here is how the van unit provides the same type of structural appearance as the proverbial butcher's shop. The slanted glass to the fore of the shop, recreates the 'window' display of meat, for the inspection of the resident. These mobile services are not needed in Dúnfarrraig which has a shop, pub and café as part of the material structure of that place. Other services such as the butcher and grocery, are located in neighbouring villages of Lismaroon and Knockree, to which the residents must travel, similar to the Gireuxois.



Local residents making various purchases at the butchers 'van' and the bread 'van' respectively. In the case of the latter, white crates have been slanted to provide a visual display of patisseries, bread rolls and twists.

Figure 11.5.2 A “permanent” (definition supplied by local residents) service, because of the relationship between the social and the spatial.



The fishmonger: permanent due to his structural status amidst the community. This is his house where he lives with his partner and two children. The residents will call here to buy fish for their dinner, despite the fact that he operates his business from a van (similar to the butcher pictured above) and not from his house.

Crucially, space is now deriving its centrality or meaning, from social interaction around the car. Spatial distance is being dictated by constraints or fluidity of movement, imposed by the car. The mayor commented that:

“In time, Gireux people will be closer to the centre of Ste.Saron than people living in the Flassian neighbourhood because of the traffic jams and the traffic lights.”

Ste.Saron, which boasts a mixed population of 10,000 residents, is comprised of two parts. Flassian refers to the later development in the industrial part of Ste.Saron, just north of the ‘centre ville’ of the town. Although it is spatially proximate to the heart of Ste.Saron, it has taken the brunt of residential development and is dotted with traffic lights, pedestrian lines and roundabouts, to facilitate an increasing use of cars. One outsider resident who lives in Gireux but teaches English in a secondary school in a neighbouring village which is a ten minute drive away, stated that although she has an hour and a half for lunch every day, car congestion in Ste.Saron means that she does not have time to return home for lunch and be back in time for the start of class.

It is suggested that local residents do not recognise Gireux as dormitory village, because car congestion and traffic jams have not yet become part of their experience of life there. Instead, this restrictive aspect of car culture has come to define Ste.Saron as spatially different to Gireux, particularly given the visually distinctive measures such as traffic lights which have been put in place to cope with the demands of flows through space. However, increasingly Gireux is being considered in terms of time and its spatial proximity by car, to major destination centres like Toulouse and Barcelona.

This recognition of a car culture - first in its use to displace the spatial practice of walking and cycling, and yet in its ability to mobilise space through social exchange – would suggest that treatment of the car as a ‘character of domination’ (Urry, 2005:25), simplifies and negates the quite complex ways in which the car has become an essential part of residents’ dialectical relationship with the landscape. Miller refers to the car in terms of its ‘humanity’, to state that “it makes little sense to focus on the car as a vehicle of destruction without also considering the ways in which it has become an integral part of the cultural environment with which we see ourselves as human (2001:2). While this view does not celebrate the car or its use, it attempts to acknowledge, rather than dismiss the car as part of a system or ‘cultural environment’ which plays a dialogic role in our daily lives. Treating the car as a flowing mobile object, and medium of interaction between residents, requires problematising the type of discourse that is occurring as a result of this interaction, to provoke these definitions of ‘permanent’ and ‘occasional’ services. Rather than deconstruct these definitions further however, this research is more intrigued by the suggestion of a dialectical relationship between structure (of rural social space in Gireux) and agency (the residents) based on a fluidity of interactions in space, effected by this mobile culture of car ‘services’.

### **11.6 A dialectical relationship**

As these services stop at different points in the village, these spaces are being constructed in terms of social relations. As these social relations depend upon the practice of these mobile services to give material effect to these relations, the space in which these social encounters occur, remains unfixed and porous (Massey, 1994). This is particularly the case for those spaces in Gireux, whose identity has already been suggested through as a social practice, such as parking the car. The front yard in

front of the national school, formerly understood as the playground for the children, is now used as a parking space for cars owned by residents living in apartments above the old school. Yet, twice during the year, this same space is used for the local fete celebrations. The cars are removed, and trestle tables are put in their place. Thus, it is suggested that the ability to think of space in terms of its use for different practices, is enabled through this culture of mobile car services.

In contrast, in Dúnfarrraig, space tends not only to be structured and defined, but can be *contested* by different demands for the use of that space. The local residents have quite firmly stated that public meetings in the national school are impossible, due to the size of the community which numbers 216. They argue that a community hall would not only be of benefit to Dúnfarrraig, but is a very necessary addition to the area, despite the fact that the total number of residents to ever attend a public meeting has been forty, well within the capacity capabilities of the school. While in Gireux, the January festival is held in the small primary school due to bad weather conditions. This suggests that space in Dúnfarrraig tends to be defined according to a particular activity, with little leverage around that definition, whereas in Gireux, the local residents are somehow managing to relate to public spaces on a 'need' basis.

On the other hand, it would not be possible for the Gireuxois to use the 'salle', or room within the mayor's building where committee meetings take place, for the fete, as this space is too small to accommodate the size and number of trestle tables used for this purpose. The point which is being made here, is to suggest that some *thing* is perhaps shaping or influencing the residents' approach to space. Showing them how it is possible to rethink or 'recycle' spaces so as to speak, in order to continue past traditions such as the fete. Where the Dúnfarrraig residents are facing the same problem of limited public space, their approach is to *build*, rather than reconsider alternatives to the existing use of space.

An example of the Gireuxois' use of space, is the area in front of the primary school. This is used as a 'place' for the fete every winter and summer. The cars are removed and parked elsewhere, while trestle tables are laid out in front of a small stage where the band will perform. Later, the tables are removed and the same space is used as a dance area for the disco. Similarly a barbeque is laid out every summer as part of the



festivities of the fete, in the space normally occupied by the tennis courts beside the road.

Figure 11.6.1 Rural space in Gireux, constituted by social relations (Massey, 1994), and/or according to the type of activity occurring there (Harvey, 1996).



Hours before the fete. The space in front of the school and apartments operates as a car park.



Preparations are underway for the fete, as trestle tables are laid out for residents and their families. The car to the left of the picture, indicates the spot where the organising committee will sit. This position provides them with a vantage point, similar to the idea of the 'panoptic gaze' (Foucault, 1977) from which they can survey the line of tables and residents.



A view of the meal part of the fete. Decorative lights have been hung from lines connected from branch of tree, to the side of the buildings. A stage has been set up under the awning, ready for the musicians (regional) to play after the meal. The tables and chairs will be left as they are, during the disco. This allows people to sit down and chat, while others dance.

It is argued that the diversification of the type of activity occurring in the one space in Gireux, indicates a plurality of discourses surrounding the use of such a space. All local residents described the space of the school as the heart of the village, synonymous with education, but crucially, as the means of social regeneration. The same space in front of the school and apartments is easily identified as the parking lot for residents which serves a very functional purpose, while it becomes transformed through the discourse of entertainment through the social activities of the fete. This space is also a point at which the bread-van and fishmonger stop, on their travels around Gireux, where residents gather in the space to buy their food. These activities enable practices of social encounter and commercial value.

Therefore, the multi-functional nature of this space is subject to a variety of *co-existing*, rather than *competing* practices, albeit operating within differing time frames. From educational and social discourse, it is transformed into a space of entertainment, and later, to social and economic discourse. These co-existing practices enable residents to perceive spaces within the village environs as fluid, mobile and subject to the different interpretation and use of each spatial practice. Crucially, this

not only enables the reinvention of space, which is interpreted as an *open construct* rather than as a fixed construct which is subject to the formative practices of interaction between residents, but it redefines current conceptualisation and popular view of the car as a 'technocratic cell' (Urry, 1999, 2000, 2005). Thus, it is argued that this dialectical relationship between the car and space challenges the quite singular conceptualisation of car culture as posited by Urry (*ibid*).

The much more defined and structured nature of space in rural Ireland is illustrated through a particular instance some years ago on a sunny morning in Dúnfarrraig, when the parish priest decided to celebrate mass in the open air. With the help of the congregation, the pews were lifted out into the car park in front of the church and mass began. This gesture was a symbolic act, reinventing the use of that space from car park, to space for the celebration of mass. This practice reconceptualised the entire discourse of religion for that section of the congregation, by taking mass out of its structured place of prayer. The idea was received well by the community, who understood the practice as a reinvention of the discourse of *mass*, rather than of space.

Some time later however, when the same priest asked the congregation to leave their cars behind and walk to mass for the month of May, it caused covert levels of irritation among parishioners. The priest explained to the congregation, that when driving past each other in our cars or tractors, we tend only to give a cursory nod or wave in greeting. By leaving the car behind, not only are we suddenly in a position where we must talk to one another, but we also notice the landscape around us as we walk past it. Coffee and biscuits were provided for the community on trestle tables in the car park to facilitate this idea of social integration.

Ironically, the restructuring of the space of the car park through the replacement of cars and tractors for trestle tables for coffee, constructed a French like 'place' or square with associated discourse of community. After the first two weeks of diligent walking to mass, the cars returned and the trestle tables diminished in number.

Regardless, it was an attempt to reconstruct the use of that space from car-park, to place of interaction both between residents, and of residents with their surrounding landscape. Thus, it posed a very real ideological challenge to the congregation

through replacing features – such as table for car – in the visual representation of that spatial discourse. Critically, this change in the use of space attempted to see how changing the discourse would affect a different type of interaction between people and their landscape. The suggestion of this different approach to space was made through an earlier effort to drag out the pews from the church and get people physically sitting in that space where they would experience the more elemental side of the landscape<sup>3</sup>.

It should be stated that this more creative use of space reflects a continued practice by the leading priest of the Charismatic Week, who makes a concerted effort to celebrate mass in the open air at least once during that week in July. However, mass in this context is held within the immediate physical space of the landscape, such as a field, on a large piece of limestone rock, or by the side of the river. It is a deliberate decision to steer away from the structured space of prayer, in favour of a more elemental experience. While this is highly commendable, it makes no attempt to alter, change or subvert the stated discourse of any structured space, as the objective is to *blend in* and become part of the landscape. Whereas the parish priest of Dúnfarrraig is not only challenging the representation of space as a car-park rather than a space of interaction, but is posing a philosophical question over our dominant use of the car as the new closed space of interaction between neighbours in modernity.

This manipulation of space in order to change or subvert the dominant discourse occurring there, is vitally important in terms of its applicability to the macro question of the restructuring and reconstruction of rural space through interaction with flows, in both the Irish and French contexts. Conflicting understandings of ‘rural’ life emerge, with outsider perception of a car culture of dependency by local residents in Gireux, and local identification of a behavioural pattern, characterised in terms of suburbia, of outsider residents (and vice versa).

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<sup>3</sup> This ‘elemental experience’, also includes the weather, as France boasts sunnier climates than Ireland. However, it should be noted that the St. Patrick’s day festival in Dúnfarrraig, takes place outside, regardless of the weather. And by the same token, the January festival in Gireux takes place in doors, in the primary school, precisely because of the unpredictable nature of the weather. Thus, climate, or the weather is not a determining factor in the use of public spaces in either village. The point which is being made by this research, is that these car services which are provided in Gireux, but not in Dúnfarrraig, are encouraging the residents to think laterally in their use of spaces in the village.

According to Urry (1999, 2000), 'automobility' is constitutive of the modern, as a process of urbanisation. Emerging from this car culture in Gireux, are two schools of thought as reiterated by Nadine. First, of a dialectical relationship between spatial practices and the car, which is informing a very fluid and mobile conceptualisation of space according to the different type of discourses occurring there. Secondly, that this dialectical relationship does not render the need to see practices or institutions physically rooted or attached to place, as obsolete. Instead, it is argued that the 'virtual' or abstract form can co-exist with the physical.

Conversely, the example of the bread van and other associated daily mobile services to Gireux, quite clearly demonstrate a dialectical relationship between the car and the practices of social and economic exchange. Insofar as the bread van provides a necessary functional role for the residents in the village providing pastries and bread for the family household, the exchange of pleasantries and brief conversation – particularly with the elderly residents – provides an equally important function. The driver/sales assistant acknowledges both the economic and social importance of the daily 'visit' to Gireux, as to other rural isolated villages which rely on her mobile service. Through the car, she is able to pass through as many as 80 similarly rural villages in a day, gleaned an economic value from their lack of infrastructure and peripheral position. She explains that if she is not able to travel to a village, she will telephone the mayor (*mairie*) in advance, who will erect a notice for the community, to that effect.

In anticipation of her arrival to Gireux, the residents will slowly gather at the spaces in the villages, exchanging news and gossip. When the bread van, and the other services arrive, the residents will continue to chat, often including the driver or sales person in their joke. Crucially, this banter occurs in the backspace of the car, with the door open and shelves of bread or fish, on view to the cluster of residents. The sales person explains that some residents pay by month or week, yet still gather each morning with the other residents, preferring to use the time for chat both with neighbours and the sales person.

Rather than the 'closed spatial entity' coined by Urry, it is the presence of the service, embodied through the car, which constructs a social discourse around the physical

stopping point of the car on the street. Notably, these streets are normally *emptied* of residents engaged in conversation during the day, as most prefer to stay in the private space of their house. Therefore, it is argued that those residents who congregate on the streets in advance of these services, interpret the streetscape of the village in terms of a social discourse which is framed by the time schedule of the bread van and others. After the departure of the services, the small crowd disperses, only to re-emerge the next morning in the public meeting space of the designated stopping points of the cars in the village.

While this quite specific interpretation of space concurs with Urry's (1999) espousal of "fragments of time...increasingly compressed into taskscapes with automobilisation", his description of "public gatherings" as "lost to the private space of the car", attributes a static, singular and one dimensional character to the car, ignoring the possibility of a relationship between the landscape and the car. Even while mobile, it is argued that a discourse of social engagement between drivers *does exist*, through the acknowledgement of a courtesy on the road, gesture of wave of recognition and yelled greeting through the window of the car at another passing car or pedestrian. This was more forcibly highlighted in a couple of instances in France, when this researcher was compelled to wait for a number of minutes behind the wheel of the car, while the car in front slowed to roll down the window, and then stopped in the middle of a main road to engage in animated conversation with another car coming from the opposite direction.

However, undeniably, there still remains a spatial inequality generated by the dominance of the car on the street scape, over other practices such as walking or cycling. Claudine's description of packing the car with bicycles in order to drive to a place where her children could cycle safely, clearly depicts the street scape as a contested site, demanding the subordination of the pedestrian to the car.

Gireux is also defined in terms of what it is not, through active comparison with other towns and villages. Even 'local' services such as the grocery, bread-van and butcher, have become part of this dynamic of flow through the space of the village environs, contributing to this perception of suburbia which is defined in terms of movement. Time as predictable through opening hours and place specificity of services, have

come to comprise elements in a definition of permanence which Gireux lacks through its emphasis on flows. Even those spaces which have an identity of permanence such as the café, operate according to specific 'opening hours', but access to this space is negotiated through gender. Thus, contradictory understandings of the outsider, stem from practices which are embedded in specific discourses of the 'local' – both spatially and through resident.

### **11.7 Summary**

In Gireux, outsider residents have identified the quite dominant use of the car as an aspect of local behaviour. This culture of car usage, and the dangers of speeding associated with the same, is negatively affecting outsider ability to use spaces within the village, for other spatial practices such as walking which is more particular to the rural context of the countryside.

Perhaps even more significantly, residents are defining space in terms of the social interaction which the car affords. The car is affecting an understanding of space as mobile and changeable according to the type of activity occurring there. So while a 'car culture' has given rise to a sense of emulation between home owners in Dúnfarrraig, it is encouraging residents in Gireux to consider the alternative ways in which they might use spaces in their village. Despite the different ways in which residents of both villages are perceiving and relating to the car, Dúnfarrraig and Gireux also share a number of similarities in the way in which the more problematic aspect of a 'car culture' has become manifest; through a reliance on the car for minor tasks, the subordination of the pedestrian over the motorist, and problems with car-parking.

## **Chapter 12 Conclusion**

### **12.1 Introduction**

What this research has attempted to problematise, is how the rural community is restructuring itself as the 'outsider' is now living on either a temporary or permanent basis among that community. Exploring this question through the issue of how 'community' is socially constructed in two rural contexts in two different countries, has raised questions regarding how certain issues such as the nature of interaction between local and 'global' outsider have been debated. Crucially, debates inform opinion on issues of empirical relevance, which subsequently informs how we perceive social reality and interact with that reality – be it in our capacity as outsider or local. This is particularly evident in the case of Gireux, where differences in the use of space, coupled with preconceptions of the 'other', has resulted in the symbolic construction of community in terms of the 'suburban imaginary'. While this construction is emerging through the repetition of practices over time, it is suggested that this process highlights the lack of any real debate on the type of encounter between local and global, and crucially, a continuing emphasis in tourism studies on the tourist, as opposed to the local experience.

### **12.2 A conceptual comparison**

Two rural communities in two separate countries were chosen in order to provide a framework of comparative analysis of this problematic. This study approached the central issue by looking at how rural spaces within either community are being socially constructed both as a result of this interaction between local and outsider, and in terms of how rural space is affecting the dynamic involved in this interaction.

Although these two rural communities are empirically very similar<sup>1</sup>, their manner of interaction with the outsider is quite different. Similarly and somewhat paradoxically, while the type of processes which are occurring in either community are conceptually comparable, the way in which these processes are being identified by residents, is markedly different. Therefore, this study has investigated the research problematic

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<sup>1</sup> Gireux has a total population of 196, while Dúnfarrraig has a population of 216. Both rural villages are located in regions of cultural and historical interest to tourism, and have become home to the resident outsider. Because the infrastructure of either village has not developed in proportion to its increase of inhabitants, these residents tend to commute to neighbouring villages for facilities such as education, work and groceries; and amenities such as the rugby club and disco.



through a comparative framework of how these processes are being played out in either rural setting. Methodologically, this has enabled an investigation of these two quite different social realities in terms of their *conceptual*, rather than their empirical similarities. Not only because it facilitates investigation of either rural context as an entity in its own right, but because of the way in which this type of comparative framework works to enable insights into the different as well as the similar ways in which processes are occurring in two separate countries.

Theoretically, this framework of conceptual comparison has attempted to transcend the limitations of the conventional comparative framework which tends to let the empirical narrative determine the comparison. One of the more interesting aspects to emerge from this study, is how this model of a conceptual framework does not easily lend itself towards certain theorising of practices, particularly of how a 'car culture' (Peillon and Slater, 2005; Jackson, 1985) is being described in the French context. By the same token however, these findings of difference are of tremendous importance, in that they demonstrate the heterogeneous way in which the notion of the outsider is being negotiated by the local in its particular context, and as such, pose a challenge to assumptions of the demise of the local community.

### **12.3 What of the local community?**

The proliferation of the holiday home globally, has coincided with other global developments such as the mobility of capital, people and symbols, which has prompted concern for the fate of the local community. It is within this context, that this research is located.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, globalisation theorists viewed these and other global developments as problematic for the local, arguing that new media generated "no sense of place" (Meyrowtiz, 1985), with a loss of face-to-face certainty (Giddens, 1990, 1991; Jameson, 1991; Thrift, 1993; Harvey, 1993). As communication was no longer time or place dependent, practices became detached from their local settings, provoking fear of the eradication of the local community. However, Robertson's (1992) concept of 'global awareness', demonstrated a subtle shift in the thinking of globalisation theorists, to consider the potential of these new forms of connection and mobility, to rework social relationships and re-construct localities (Savage, 2005).

Consequently, rather than conceptualise the global as a force obliterating a sense of the local, theorists now consider the relationship between the global and the local in terms of a dialectic, which is incurring change (Beck, 2002; Smith, 2001; Urry, 2002).

Crucially, this meant that rather than interpreting the local as transcended by globalisation, the local was now to be understood through the lens of global relationships. Defining the nature of that 'local', however, has proved difficult for globalisation theorists, as Savage (2005) remarks that "construing the local as concrete in opposition to an abstract universal makes it difficult to avoid an infinite regress in which the local becomes the empirical, so that any concrete instance of anything is 'local'" (P4). Robertson (1995, 1997) attempts to address this difficulty, by conceptualising locality as constructed through the 'interpenetrative' relationship between local and global processes. He argues that globalisation has involved the reconstruction of home, community and 'locality', whereby the 'local' has become an aspect of the global (1995:30). Thus, what is called 'local', is to a large degree constructed on a trans- or super-local basis. To that extent, Robertson asserts that the local should not be viewed as counterpoint or 'dialectically opposite' to the global, as suggested by Giddens (1990, 1991). Rather, as an integral part of globalisation.

However, this argument constructs a similar dichotomy of 'global' as 'trans- or super-local', and 'local' as the empirical 'home'. There is an element of treating the local in terms of historical residue, in its transformation through this interpenetrative relationship, to become truly 'super-local'. This incurs previous criticism of globalisation theory which tends to define the global in terms of an abstract, overarching process which impacts on the micro community.

Instead, it has been postulated here, that the real difficulty lies with treatment of these categories of 'global' and 'local'. These and other dichotomies such as the 'universal' versus the 'particular', are concepts which contain ambiguous connotations in their own right, yet are given meaning through dialogue with process or practice. Departing from Massey's (1994) notion of how the spatial is constructed through social relations, and taking Robertson's concept of 'interpenetration', this research argues that these and other dichotomies must be understood through a framework of a modality of dialectical interaction.

In this instance, the 'global' is situated within the context of the micro 'local' community, as the resident outsider. Assuredly, the presence of the newcomer to an existing community prompts the question of how membership of that community is negotiated by both the new 'outsider' and the 'local' resident. Looking to findings from an examination of this issue in the rural French and Irish contexts, it is shown that in Gireux, membership of the indigenous community is fixed and immobile; whereas in Dúnfarrraig, membership of the indigenous community is subject to negotiation according to the position which the outsider adopts in relation to decisions being made, or according to their level of involvement in community affairs. These quite different responses to the resident outsider, challenge the argument posed by social and cultural impact studies, which essentially view tourism development in terms of a binary of 'good' and 'bad'. It has been suggested that this implies a homogenising tourism effect and a passive local community, neither of which acknowledges the importance of the particular context in which tourism occurs (Robertson, 1992).

Alternatively, how the issue of membership of the community is negotiated, could be explored in terms of concepts of 'resistance' (Reed-Danahay, 1996) and 'hybridisation' of forms (O'Connor, 1993). This involves looking at how residents have assimilated the cultural forms of the outsider, or rejected the same<sup>2</sup>. While the residents in Dúnfarrraig have successfully interpenetrated through the medium of set-dancing and other cultural forms introduced by the outsider, the residents in Gireux project a much more closed attitude towards membership of their community.

Indirectly, Reed-Danahay examines the relationship between the outsider through the nexus of the institution of the primary school, in a small rural village in the south of France, and the construction of community. The primary school is the only remaining institution within this village, as it no longer boasts a bakery, post office or resident priest. Despite the fact that the school is administered from offices in Paris, the institution symbolises Laviolle as community (P52). Reed-Danahay remarks that the

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<sup>2</sup> Although Reed-Danahay warns against the danger of using the concept of 'resistance' exclusively as a way of talking about cultural identity, and this is particularly apt in the case of Gireux, where outsiders Nicole, and Alec and Jess speak about the very small but growing segment of local youth who welcome the outsider to social gatherings. Thus, the notion of resistance is being used here, to encapsulate the attitude of the majority of local residents in Gireux.

important question which remains, is not whether French society is culturally diverse, but how people learn to manage diverse identities – to be both Auvergnat and French. She argues that Laviolle has persisted as viable farming community in a changing French economy, because it has been able to resist aspects of French dominant culture that threatened its existence (1996:207).

However, applying the concept of ‘resistance’ to the Gireuxois attitude towards membership is dangerous, and arguably too simplistic in its analysis. What these findings have shown, is a greater sense of place attachment in the French context which is highlighted through both notions of lineage, but also socially, through an emphasis on the collective spirit of kinship groups and family. Therefore unlike the residents in Dúnfarrraig, the Gireuxois do not need the outsider to provide a sense of community spirit, as this exists through the socialising practices of the local residents. Thus, it could be argued that the issue of membership is negotiated through the question of need of the outsider, for social, cultural or economic input into community life.

These findings attempt to show how social interaction is framed by concerns relating to economic development, the development of the village, the cohesive nature of the residents, and so forth. Within this context, membership becomes quite a complex issue, as it is an expression of alliances, of support for, and an understanding of concerns pertinent to social groups within that community.

#### **12.4 Locating the local in the tourist experience**

The complexities underpinning the issue of membership highlights the rather simplistic and one-dimensional treatment by studies of the impact of tourism. Leiper’s model (1990) adopts a policy focus, in describing how the encounter between tourist and host must be understood holistically, in terms of place, the type of tourist and the tourism industry. This departs from a range of studies which examine either the type of tourist and demands on the host (Smith, 1989; Sutton, 1976; Cohen, 1972); stating how attitudinal changes occur within the host community as a result of these and other demands, paralleled by a change in the emphasis of place from catering to the community, to catering for tourism (Doxey, 1976; Butler, 1980); how different forms of tourism such as the holiday home, has negatively impacted on the social structure

of the local community (Heanue, 1998; Ryan, 1982), and how the search for a qualitatively different holiday experience, has led to the subordination of the local over a relationship with the physical landscape (Boorstin, 1976; MacCannell, 1976). These studies describe, rather than examine the nature of this attitudinal and place change. We are presented with stages, rather than behavioural practices or processes through which we can understand how place is being constructed.

This critique departs from Massey's (1994, 1995) contention that what is of concern is the behaviour or processes which give meaning and shape to space, rather than space as an entity in its own right. She argues that it is the intersecting of flows of people within a spatial node, which gives rise to a geography of spaces. Massey describes how the movement of people in and out of places on a regular and irregular basis, is crucial to an understanding of how people come to perceive their relationship to place. Harvey (1989, 2000) develops this notion of movement, by conceptualising place in terms of 'relative permanences'<sup>3</sup>. What both accounts highlight, is the dialogue between the social body, movement and events occurring across a range of 'local' communities. This quite complex view of how place is produced, demonstrates the need for greater depth of exploration in social and cultural impact studies, of how social change is occurring in places affected by tourism.

More recently, the debate within tourism has moved towards looking at the nature of the tourist experience in order to explicate how this is affecting demands on the host. Urry's (1990, 2002) concept of the tourist 'gaze', theorises two dominant ways in which the tourist will interact with a place and its people: in terms of the 'romantic' and the 'collective' gaze<sup>4</sup>. Both forms of the 'gaze' focus exclusively on the tourist and their differing requirements for connection to a place. Urry's theory follows from Boorstin's notion of the tourist as pilgrim, who is seeking something qualitatively different in his experience of that place. The tourist is no longer satisfied by souvenir shops or a tour of a museum. Instead, the tourist wants to feel as though he is

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<sup>3</sup> This refers to how places become defined in terms of 'discursive activity', informed by events taking place at that particular time in history.

<sup>4</sup> While the 'collective' gaze requires the presence of others in order to provide a social experience of that landscape, the 'romantic' gaze refers to how the tourist will seek a semi-spiritual relationship with the landscape in order to establish a reconnection with Nature.

interacting in a very sensual way with that past or present social history. However, MacCannell (1976, 1989) has remained cynical of how this experience is managed, arguing that instead of just creating a 'front stage region' for the tourist, the tourist is now brought into the 'backstage region' - which refers to the area which is not normally on display to tourism - in order so that they might see how the product or 'history' is being constructed. MacCannell argues however, that this area also assumes a 'staged' quality, as the tour continues to present a product which is constructed in the imagination of the tourist.

This research has attempted to look beyond Urry's (1990, 2002) notion of the 'gaze' in order to explain symbolic and structural changes which are taking place in both villages. Urry's concept of the tourist 'gaze', while innovative in 1990, only conceptualises the experience of the tourist, rather than address the type of landscape with which the tourist or outsider is engaging with; the role of the local resident in this experience; or even the forms which this relationship with the landscape may take. Instead, this research has suggested that the notion of 'gazing' implies a more active involvement on the part of the resident with that landscape which is constructed as a social and physical construct through social practices.

Be it as spectator or as participant, NicEoin (2003) has asserted that this way (Urry, 2002; MacCannell, 1976) of focusing on the tourist experience places too much authority on the gaze of the tourist, rather than of the local. From her study of literary accounts by local residents of tourism in West Kerry, NicEoin (2003) claims that these writings suggest an overemphasis on the nature and power of the tourist gaze, as the local residents are adopting quite an active stance in relation to the tourists. Findings from this research show that the local residents of Gireux and Dúnfarrraig are adopting a similarly active role in relation to the outsider, but in quite different contexts. In Dúnfarrraig, local relations with the outsider are framed by social, cultural, but predominantly economic concerns, as the future economic development of that place is debated within the community. Whereas in Gireux, the local 'gaze' of the outsider, can be conceptualised in terms of a culture of 'viewing'.

In the French context of Gireux, local acceptance of the outsider in their midst, requires the outsider to subordinate his/her normative socialising pattern to that of the

local resident. This involves a process of time whereby the outsider must subject him/herself to the 'panoptic' (Foucault, 1979) gaze of the local resident, in order for their presence to be visually recognised as being part of the village social structure. Foucault's framework of 'visual domination' is particularly pertinent to this idea of local surveillance of the outsider, through a process of 'viewing' which, in line with Urry's argument of the tourist gaze, involves gazing upon the outsider as the 'other' (Peace, 1987).

Foucault postulated that our sense of self is made through the operation of discourse, to which..." there is resistance..." (1979:95). It has been suggested that this conceptualization of resistance as a reaction to 'practice', could be applied to an understanding of the quite problematic interaction between the local and outsider in the French context of Gireux. Those outsiders who have managed to become friendly with the local residents, perceive the problem of communication as one not of language difference, as asserted by some of the local residents, but of a difference in 'spatial practices' (Lefebvre, 1991). They maintain that in order for the presence of the outsider or tourist to be accepted by the local residents, the outsider must subject him/herself to the gaze of the local, and attempt to re-engage with the local population in a more subtle manner of socializing, which recognizes the authority of the local residents living in that place. This discourse of acceptance allows the local resident time to view and consider the outsider through social spaces in the village, while the outsider's quiet presence at public events demonstrates his desire to be part of, and support community events.

"The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognise immediately....He [the outsider] is seen, but he does not see [must be subservient]; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication" (Foucault, 1975:200).

Peillon (2000) considers the way in which the tourism industry has responded to the quest of the tourist for the exotic. By defining what is different as exotic, Peillon remarks that it eases, even suppresses the necessity of relating to it meaningfully. Distance from home becomes measured in cultural, rather than logistical terms where 'exoticism' becomes the criterion of the worth of the tourist experience (2000:166). It is suggested that this sense of the 'exotic' is also a measure of local evaluation of the

'practices' of the outsider. One particular outsider in Gireux, described how local perception of cultural and social differences as insurmountable, has meant local reluctance to engage in any kind of meaningful way with the outsider, beyond this modality of 'gazing'.

This concept takes a different form in its Irish counterpart. Here, the dynamic of interpenetration between local and outsider is based on a *structural* aspect of viewing. The concept of a 'viewing frame' is embodied through architectural features such as bay window, balcony, patio area and large windows on the house structure of the outsider resident, which is encouraging a transformation to the built environment, as other outsider and local residents attempt to replicate this emphasis in varying ways. Interestingly, although the local residents in Dúnfarrraig do exercise a local 'gaze' of the outsider resident<sup>5</sup>, the local has been quick to incorporate the outsider as part of community life – which includes involvement in the school, school runs, the choir and so forth. However the local residents in Gireux have not displayed the same type of reaction, partly because this rural society is underpinned by values of family and kinship, rather than of meeting people outside of this social group. However, similar to the local residents in Dúnfarrraig, the Gireuxois are aware of their structural need of the outsider for support of the national school. Unlike Dúnfarrraig, the outsiders in Gireux do not send their children to the local primary school, and this decision is negatively viewed by the local residents.

Thus, while the concept of the 'gaze' is crucial to local and outsider understanding of the changing landscape, this theory of a 'viewing frame' in its structural respect, has been ignored by Urry. Similarly, this theory of a culture of 'viewing' based on a local 'panoptic' (Foucault, 1977) form of the 'gaze', has also been unanticipated by Urry. It is argued that locating the role of the local resident within the encounter with the tourist or outsider, is vitally important in order to understand why behaviours such as the 'demonstration effect' (Jordan, 1980; Ryan, 1982; Keane and Quinn, 1990; Pearce, 1989) or 'acculturation' (ibid) are occurring, and their impact on how place is being socially constructed.

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<sup>5</sup> Which occurs within the context of interaction in public spaces such as the pub, outside the church, in the shop and so forth. This is qualitatively different from the type of 'gaze' which is described of the local residents in Gireux, in that it describes a passing curiosity in the outsider, or indeed, the local resident, rather than conceptualising a process of surveillance.



## 12.5 The social construction of space

The importance of this viewing culture, lies in terms of how it highlights the different types of relationships between the resident and the landscape. Urry's concept of the tourist 'gaze' provides a framework for understanding one aspect of the tourist experience, but it remains one dimensional in its omission of the role of the local resident as vital part of this experience, or indeed, of the different forms which the 'gaze' can take in its particular context. This culture of 'viewing' is crucially important towards an understanding of the dynamics underpinning the social construction of rural space in Gireux and Dúnfarrraig.

Taking this issue of how rural space is constructed, Urry (1998) examines the practices through which the Lake District in England has been produced – first through the literary endeavour of its visiting writers, then later through flows of tourists. Urry is preoccupied with how the flow of tourists from outside the Lake District, interacts with the landscape through the romantic gaze which takes on an elitest form due to the way in which that place is then produced. Although Dúnfarrraig in Ireland enjoys a similar rhetoric of place myth to that of the Lake District, it has been suggested that Dúnfarrraig is being constructed through the interpenetrative dynamic between residents, and through the dialectical relationship between resident and motorist<sup>6</sup>. While flows of tourists are obviously significant to the business and social requirements of the residents in Dúnfarrraig, as other rural villages<sup>7</sup>, this research is concerned with how rural space is being socially constructed by the *resident* as a result of this interaction with the motorist. The concentration of cultural activities occurring during the winter time and the emergence of committees or local power elites for economic and cultural progress in both Dúnfarrraig and Gireux, would suggest that these villages are being produced from *within*, through the interpenetrative dynamic of interaction between local and outsider, and crucially, between the car<sup>8</sup> and the resident.

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<sup>6</sup> The motorist is being defined here, in very fluid terms as an individual who commutes to neighbouring towns or villages, for purposes of leisure, work, education and food. This may include a resident and/or tourist. A number of outsider residents described how they first came to notice Dúnfarrraig as a potential place for permanent or temporary residency, when camping or staying in a guesthouse in the village.

<sup>7</sup> As noted by Brody (1973) of the local residents of Inishkillane.

<sup>8</sup> It is perhaps interesting to note that most residents in Dúnfarrraig and Gireux, would be identified by their car or tractor, unlike the tourist. Therefore, if the home owner chances to see a car passing on the

This relationship between the motorist and the resident is characterised in terms of a dialectical relationship, as the development of Dúnfarrraig as a social space is as dependent upon its visitors as they are attracted to the place myth which surrounds and constitutes this social space (Urry, 1995:197). Where the Lake District is being socially constructed through the spatial behaviour of walking, boating and other activities, Dúnfarrraig is being constructed by its residents as a 'drive-through' experience<sup>9</sup>. Here, spatial behaviours include 'ensighting' the private landscape for the visual consumption of the passing tourist or resident. In the case of local businesses such as the pub or shop, the purpose of attracting the gazing motorist holds an economic rationale. However, similar attempts to 'focalise' (Ingram, 1991) the gaze of the motorist is evident in the garden of the resident, who has used lights in particular, to ensight the garden as spectacle. It could be argued that residents' construction of their private landscape, to attract the public gaze of the motorist, is an attempt to 'status seek' (Jagose, 2003), inasmuch as it also represents a display of the 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1984) of that resident<sup>10</sup>.

However, this research has pointed out that while this notion of display is important to understanding how rural spaces in Dúnfarrraig are being socially constructed, the underlying dynamic determining the success of this construction, lies in the ability of that home owner to differentiate the way in which he is appropriating that view for private consumption, from other houses. In other words, these findings remind that this idea of appropriating the view, is to continue the relationship between the resident and the landscape into the house. As this relationship is unique to that individual, the

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road, he will speculate on the reason for that resident's journey based on the time of day or the direction in which the car is going.

<sup>9</sup> This theory of a 'drive through' experience, emerges from the notion of a dialectical relationship between the car and the resident. This is the dominant form by which Dúnfarrraig is being constructed, through a visual culture of signs and symbols. The array of signs, businesses and houses which flank the one road through Dúnfarrraig, provide a sense of driving through a heritage centre, where aspects of significance are highlighted for the motorists' information. Although the aim of the The Burren Experience is to subvert or challenge this way of experiencing the landscape through the windscreen of the car, the company has had to recognise how significant the road has become, and similarly use it as a site for advertising. Therefore Matthew has placed signs advertising his tours at various places along the road in order to target the motorist as a potential walker.

<sup>10</sup> The type of 'cultural capital' which is being displayed in this instance, is of the residents' ability to appropriate a view of the coastline. However, as this view represents the residents' relationship with that landscape, the real importance lies in the way in which the architecture of the house demonstrates the individuality of that relationship. What is being attempted here, is the projection of a 'semi-spiritual' relationship with the landscape, on structures of the house.

way in which that view is appropriated, should express a sense of individualism. This has provoked a sense of emulation between home owners and their houses, as noted by one resident, while the construction of two houses with bay windows on an elevated site, has caused considerable disquiet within the community. This spatial behaviour of display which is characteristic of the resident in 'suburbia' (Silverstone, 1997; Jagose, 2003; Slater and Peillon, 2005), indicates that Dúnfarrraig is being constructed in terms of the 'suburban imaginary' and for tourism purposes, through the dialectical relationship between the motorist and the resident.

### **12.6 Mobilising space through the social**

However, the role of the car or motorist in the construction of place, has largely been ignored or dismissed. In Dúnfarrraig, practices such as widening the road, creating clefts or parking spaces for the car in front of the house or business, tarmacadding 'green roads' and front garden spaces, show how car usage is being facilitated. In the case of the 'green road', this means that the spatial practice of walking is now being subordinated to the motorist. Where the car is not being facilitated in Dúnfarrraig however, it has become the cause of tension in the use of rural space. This notion of the landscape as a contested rurality has been aired by Shaw and Williams (1994), who state that commodifying the landscape as an example of one spatial practice, will bring conflict with other spatial requirements for that same space. This is evident in the case of Dúnfarrraig, where car congestion has created frustration and annoyance among residents living on that affected area of the road, who cannot access their own homes during the summer season without some difficulty. In Gireux, this tension is also articulated through restricted parking spaces in the clustered village environs, but the French context moves beyond this focus, to show how the car is enabling the resident to consider spaces in their village in terms of their restructuring possibilities.

In Gireux, the car assumes a more multi-faceted role, primarily through its role as mobile shop or provider of services such as bread, meat and fish. Findings show how the car is affecting a flexible and mobile understanding of spaces in the imagination of residents<sup>11</sup>. The presence of different objects in the one space, at alternative times of

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<sup>11</sup> Residents relate to the same spaces in terms of the activities which occur there, such as the stopping space of the bread van; the place where the local fete takes place; and the parking lot in front of the local school and apartments.

the day, week or year, encourages residents' ability to consider spaces in terms of its use value which can be mobilised or changed according to the type of activity taking place there. An example is of the way in which the space in front of the old primary school - normally used as a car-park - is transformed into a dining and disco space for the fete, then as a space where the various 'shops' pull in, in order to serve the residents. Although these activities take place at different times, they demonstrate how residents understand this and other spaces in the village, as multi-functional.

Undeniably, the car is also the focus of tension in the use of rural space in Gireux. However, the concept of a 'car culture' has been presented as a framework which shows how residents in both villages are responding to, and generating practices in relation to the car. What has emerged are differences in the way in which residents in Dúnfarrraig and Gireux are actually relating to the car. It has been suggested that this difference can be explained through the way in which the car is perceived as mobile 'shop' unit in Gireux, and as part of flow of tourists or commuters in Dúnfarrraig. In Gireux, the 'shop' unit has no structural permanence, unlike in Dúnfarrraig where the same structure has been named as a crucial part of the village 'centre' by Clare County Council. It has been argued that this difference in the spatial and structural characteristics of both villages, has affected residents' understanding of spaces in Gireux in terms of an open construct<sup>12</sup>, unlike their Irish counterpart.

This way of conceptualising space as fluid and porous, made possible through the idea of movement or mobility, brings this discussion to the heart of the debate on fluidification – the debate which regards the question of whether we are experiencing a modification of the balance between mobility and fixity driven by the mobility of people and the circulation of goods, information and ideas (Kaufman, 2002). In this debate, three aspects are under consideration: first, the question of whether spatial mobility is actually increasing, given the uneven development of tourism; secondly, that movement in geographical space can be seen as a constraint on, and not a

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<sup>12</sup> This refers to the use of 'public' spaces in Gireux, which includes the road, in front of houses, in front of the school, beside the café and so forth. The school and the area in front of it (which once operated as a playground for the school children), is protected by planning controls in order to maintain this building as part of the historic village of Gireux. However, by protecting this space, the local residents are actually facilitating its reuse for other activities such as the fete in winter time (when the residents crowd inside the school rooms), while also strategising towards the re-opening of the school.

widening of possibilities to move in social space, and thirdly, that the impact of the growth of flux on social aspects of life leads towards a fluidification and a disappearance of territories (ibid:Pp12-13). Contrary to this last, findings from this research indicate the restructuring of space, rather than its eradication, through mobilising social relations. However, it is acknowledged that this argument may lead to a form of technological determinism, where a sense of mobility is defined through the dialectic between the resident and car, rather than in socio-spatial terms. This poses the quite interesting conundrum then, regarding these findings. Is the car enabling the mobilisation of space through the suggestion of space as temporal? Or is it actively restricting the same through this notion of contested ruralities?

The problem with how the question of mobility is treated in the debate on fluidification, emanates from the central difficulty of explaining what this concept means. Kaufman (2002) agrees with this difficulty, remarking that it is almost impossible to precisely describe phenomena when the concept itself is imprecise. The notion of movement in relation to space-time rather than the actor, as posited within geography, is credible enough, and certainly time is a factor in the re-usability of spaces in Gireux for the various activities. However, it is strongly argued that because space is harnessed through the 'social body' (Turner, 1996), this dismissal of the role of the actor in its social construction is to reiterate past criticisms of the geography of space.

Acknowledging the limitations of this approach, Kaufman presents a model which places spatial mobility as a phenomenon that revolves around four main forms such as migration, residential mobility, travel and daily mobility. This approach has developed from Urry's (2000) perspective, which proposes the replacement of the classic approach to society, with one based on mobility and fixity (P18). Kaufman clarifies that the existence of societies according to his approach, is no longer a presupposition, but a result. Certainly this perspective of mobility and fixity has resonances in Harvey's (2000) notion of 'relative permanences' of space, through 'discursive activities' such as the fete, the mobile 'shop' and car park. However, what is missing in Kaufman's account, is an understanding of what mobilisation does to a people or society, as not merely about mobilising the spatial, but is inherently about mobilising the *cognitive value* of that space.

These findings of how space is constructed through the dialectical relationship between resident and car, particularly in Gireux, show how space is understood as porous and fluid, precisely because of the mobility of the car as a shop unit. As the car is a temporal unit which passes through spaces of the village, it facilitates residents' cognitive approach to those spaces as capable of assuming a number of different social identities, according to the type of activity or discourse occurring there. Interestingly, this perspective on the issue of fluidification does not lend itself to the Irish context of Dúnfarrraig, where space is much more rigidly defined through its structural identity.

This way of framing the dialectical relationship between resident and the car, in terms of 'social relations' (Massey, 1994) as highlighted through the French example, and 'focalising' (Ingram, 1991) the gazing motorist in the Irish example, also shows how these different types of relationships such as the resident and car, provide frameworks through which we can understand how the rural landscape is being socially constructed, or, to refer to Bell's (1995) argument, how the landscape is being framed by these discourses.

### **12.7 The 'suburban imaginary'**

However, the car has also been treated in relation to the development of 'suburbia' in post-war America (Jackson, 1985). In chronicling the emergence of the classic American suburban model, Jackson details how other aspects of society have been oriented around the demands of a car culture, such as the 'drive through' cinema, restaurant and even church. Although the most recent housing developments built within the past two years in Dúnfarrraig do articulate this spatial emphasis on the car in the front garden, the overall topography of both Gireux and Dúnfarrraig does not lend itself towards the classic American model of suburbia, nor towards the French model of suburbia. Paradoxically however, it has been suggested that the social and spatial characteristics associated with the American model of 'suburbia', such as 'social isolation', 'sense of community', 'privatisation of family life' and so forth (Jagose, 2003), and the French equivalent of these characteristics, conceptualized as '*les pavillonnaires*' (Haumont, 2001), can be described of the social practices of the residents of both villages. Although the outsider has been the instigator of changes to

the landscape through social practices, these practices can now be described of *local*, as well as of outsider behaviour. This way of theorising how a process of 'suburbia' is emerging, attempts to provide a relationship between changes to the empirical realities of both rural contexts and yet acknowledge the substantial differences between how these changes are occurring.

This interpretation follows from Silverstone's (1997) discussion of 'suburbia' as a concept or 'a state of mind which is constructed in the imagination and in desire'. Silverstone argues that our understanding of suburbia stems partly from television soaps, where not all the settings are literally suburban in character, but that the morality which informs the narrative and limits its resolution, is grounded in suburban bourgeois experience. Paradoxically, there is a danger in treating 'suburbia' in terms of an attitude which has universal application, as it presents yet another form of globalisation as an abstract and overarching process which impacts on the particular local context. However, findings from this research suggest that although residents are identifying characteristics of 'suburbia' through the spatial behaviours of theirs and other residents, the characteristics are specific to how residents – both local and outsider – are interacting with the local landscape. Thus, how 'suburbia' is being constructed in the imaginary of the resident in Gireux, is completely different to how 'suburbia' is being constructed in Dúnfarrraig. This is crucially important, as it moves the debate from looking at how global changes are affecting the local community, to looking at how the 'global' is being constituted in the 'local' context.

Granted, this process of suburbanisation has been initiated by the global outsider in both villages, whose social practice is being identified by local residents as symbolic of a suburban behaviour. Ironically, although the local resident in Gireux is concerned with the extent to which these practices are now constituting a sense of community as socially isolated and spatially privatised, the local residents in Dúnfarrraig have reacted by openly imitating the spatial practices of the outsider. Thus, the local resident is now suburbanising the rural without ever having to be an 'outsider'.

In Dúnfarrraig, residents are identifying the symbolic construction of 'suburbia' through the spatial proximity of houses which are being built next to each other in order to face the sea; a uniformity of the way in which home owners are appropriating

a view of the sea, leading to a culture of 'viewing'; the demarcation of property as a private space, constructed socially, through the use of the house for family socialising only, and physically, through use of boundary walls and imposing entrance gates. While some residents do acknowledge their behaviour as unsociable and detached from the community, other residents speak of the difficulty of accessing the community outside of public spaces such as the pub. Thus, while it is suggested that 'suburbia' is adopting a predominantly structural form in the Irish rural context, these spatial practices imply a knock-on effect for social practices in the community.

In Gireux, a process of suburbanization is occurring through failed social relations between the outsider and local resident, as either resident is identifying characteristics of 'suburbia' through the social practices of the other. Interestingly, both outsider and local residents are identifying a correlation between each other's use of the house as a 'social spatialization' (Shields, 1991) for private social interaction between family and friends. Similar to Dúnfarrraig, this use of space is adversely affecting the outsiders' ability to access the community. Thus, what emerges from these two separate accounts, is that spaces in the community are being socially constructed in a manner which reflects practices of suburban living. However, what is even more interesting is how these practices - which are essentially symbolic in their construction of suburbia - are appealing to the 'suburban imaginary' of that resident. In other words, it is suggested that in order to identify these practices as representative of something, the resident has been able to call upon an understanding of the characteristics of that process or practice, which is constructed in the 'suburban imaginary' through geography, the media and so forth. This is particularly apt in the case of outsiders Claudine and Nicole in Gireux, and outsiders Cathy and Hazel in Dúnfarrraig, both sets of outsiders who have used the word 'suburban' to describe their own behaviour or of residents living in their village.

This description of 'suburbia' is also emerging from residents' frustration with the use of rural space in their village for activities which are associated with the countryside, such as walking or cycling; or with issues such as housing or the primary school. Notwithstanding these contradictions, each resident does see herself as living in a rural village, but perceives members of that community to be engaging in a suburban lifestyle which is posing a challenge to constructions of this space, as rural.



It should be noted that the process of 'suburbia' is also being generated by social relations in Dúnfarrraig. However this research is concerned with how on the one hand, these relations are being characterised by an *absence* of the 'social'<sup>13</sup> – that is, a 'social isolation' from the 'neighbour' (Jagose, 2003), or through the privatisation of the house as a 'social spatialization' (Shields, 1991), and being replaced by a relationship between the individual and the landscape. The fact that the built landscape of houses in Dúnfarrraig is beginning to assume a sense of sameness through the way in which this relationship is being constructed, shows that there is greater interaction of *ideas*, rather than of individuals.

Common to both villages, has been a culture of gazing, constructed through the structural framework of houses in Dúnfarrraig, and through local surveillance of the 'outsider' in Gireux. The consequences of *not* submitting oneself to the 'gaze' of the local, will result in a social isolation for the outsider, from that community; whereas in Dúnfarrraig, local and outsider attempts to *replicate* this design idea of the viewing frame in the structure of houses, is leading to a sense of sameness or uniformity of the built landscape.

One of the reasons why 'suburbia' has adopted quite separate forms in either rural village, is because of how the development of housing has occurred. While the village of Gireux has emerged from a core of terraced houses with a fringe of detached houses at its periphery, Dúnfarrraig has started from a dispersed pattern of development and is now looking to develop its village core. Local and outsider residents wishing to live in the village of Gireux, must buy existing houses rather than build there, as the land is being used for 'farming' of vineyards. This is in marked contrast to the pattern of development in Dúnfarrraig, where local and outsider residents have *built* houses to use either for holiday purposes, or to live in on a full-time basis. This difference of the way in which development has occurred (as dispersed or clustered), has actually facilitated the emergence of a culture of 'viewing' through house and garden in Dúnfarrraig, while actively restricted the same culture in Gireux. This is a crucial difference between Dúnfarrraig and Gireux, which has influenced how 'suburbia' (Jagose, 2003) is occurring as a process. It also

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<sup>13</sup> This refers to the context of the space of the house, rather than the public spaces of the national school, café, church and pub.

demonstrates that 'suburbia' is not a homogenising force on localities, but rather, that the form which it adopts is particular to conditions or social relations (Massey, 1994) in the local context (Robertson, 1992, 1995).

Thus, although suburban practices of 'social isolation', 'privatisation', the 'neighbour' and 'family', now characterise the social and physical landscape of Gireux and Dúnfarrraig respectively, the catalyst determining this process has been the local resident in Gireux and the outsider resident in Dúnfarrraig. These two case studies demonstrate the importance of looking at the issue of social integration, of community access and membership; and the issue of socialisation practices - all of which have become critical factors in an understanding of how this level of privatisation has occurred.

Therefore, the process through which the rural community is restructuring itself, is being theorised in terms of the 'suburban imaginary', which is underpinned by the relationship between the resident and the landscape.

However, what has also emerged from this research, is that this process is uneven in character. This is explained in the context of Dúnfarrraig, through residents' differing perceptions of the reason for changes to the landscape as underpinned by a conceptual, rather than merely modernising rationale. The importance of these findings, is not only in their identification of how the relationship between the resident and the landscape is affecting the architecture of the built landscape, but critically, of how the landscape is being re-presented for purposes of viewing and display within the house, captured through the notion of 'the view from the inside, out'. This research uses the term 'vernacular', as a way of conceptualising how the landscape or a version of that landscape is being constructed within the house in order to facilitate practices of viewing.

### **12.8 The vernacular landscape: as function or form?**

In Dúnfarrraig, a dichotomy has emerged through residents' understanding of the reason why the landscape has changed, which is manifest on the built landscape of houses. This dichotomy of the 'vernacular' versus 'modernism', is largely realised through a corresponding binary of outsider and local resident, as it is the outsider

resident who is bringing a range of 'tourist images' (O'Connor, 1993) to bear on his relationship with the landscape, and ultimately attempting to display aspects of that relationship for visual consumption, through a symbolic representation of the vernacular.

This model of the 'vernacular' is equally applicable to the French rural context of Gireux, where a much more multi-faceted relationship has been observed. Here, a view of the physical landscape in Gireux is subordinated to a view of the *social*. Appropriating the social landscape involves 'inhabiting the view' which is of the collective body of family and friends. However, this conceptualisation of the landscape as 'social', refers not only to the physical interaction between family and friends, but attempts to incorporate local attachment with objects in the house such as the kitchen cabinet, the table and the armchair, all of which also represent the social body through sentiment and memories. In this setting, the 'vernacular' assumes a symbolic, as well as a practical role within the home, as its value is socially constructed in the imaginary through attachment to the past generation, and through a sense of solidarity with friends and family in the current generation.

While a view of the physical landscape also assumes importance, it is the ideological structures of the vernacular - as encapsulating the community intertwined with the history of Gireux - which is of particular interest in the construction of space. On the one hand, this should mean that a symbolic representation of the 'vernacular' is possible only for the local resident, as the outsider has no attachment to place. Instead, in one house the outsider has resorted to constructing a version of the vernacular either through buying furniture which has been manufactured in the region, or from large department stores where the design of furniture is modelled on 'tourist images' (O'Connor, 1993) of rustic France. Unlike the Brigid's crosses, meat hooks or wooden beams which are displayed in the house of the outsider in Dúnfarrraig, the furniture is deployed in a very practical way throughout the house in Gireux. This is highlighted in an outsider's house, where the 'vernacular' assumes a sentimental (as symbolic) and practical role.

Although the rationale for the construction of the internal space of the local, Portuguese and Spanish residents' house, is based on this view of the 'collective',

family does not assume the same importance for the non-local French, British and Irish nationalities. Similar to the local and outsider resident in Dúnfarrraig, the outsider in Gireux desires a view of the physical landscape which is only possible in the terraced house by converting the attic space into a terrace. However, this view becomes a contested issue of rurality, as the built landscape of the terraced house which has historical importance to the village of Gireux, also assumes a symbolic importance for the local residents. This symbolic value becomes materially evident upon the local committee's rejection of plans submitted by outsiders, to create a 'viewing frame'. Those outsiders who have bought detached houses are more free to convert, but the importance of these findings lie in showing how the vernacular assumes both a symbolic as well as a functional role in the house of the local resident *and* the outsider resident.

The way in which the vernacular is framed, as part of the discursive practices of everyday life, means that its symbolic structures are embedded in notions of inhabiting the social view of place. This differs from the Irish context, where the emphasis is directed at appropriating the view for display purposes only. *Representing* the 'vernacular' in the internal space of the house in Gireux then, should refer to how its ideological structures of community; place attachment; the social past of that house; and the physical view of the landscape; assume a symbolic, rather than functional importance. However, as the 'vernacular' also refers to the *present* social history of Gireux and how it is connected to its past, it has been suggested that the vernacular is also represented through function, as well as form.

Unlike Dúnfarrraig's physical landscape which has witnessed dramatic structural changes even within a time period of five years, the physical landscape of Gireux remains largely untouched. Although this is partly explained through the fact that outsiders have built houses in Dúnfarrraig and bought houses in Gireux, these findings from the French context indicate the very real importance of community which is realised through the symbolic structures of the vernacular, and also in material form. What has emerged from this research, is the quite active stance of the local resident, articulated through the structure of the local committee, who is exercising control over changes to the physical and social landscape of that village. This is unlike Dúnfarrraig, where a selection of both local and outsider residents have articulated

their economic interest in the future development of the village. Undoubtedly, this will incur further changes to the physical landscape. And by extension, to the social landscape through the building of more holiday homes by local residents, or by the sale of land by local residents to outsiders.

What these findings of Dúnfarrraig and Gireux indicate, is the quite different and complex constructions of the 'vernacular' in their practical and symbolic forms. It has been suggested that one way of understanding this difference between the rural contexts, is through the relationship of the resident to the landscape as a social or physical construct, as this emphasises the particular way in which a sense of the vernacular is being constructed in its local setting. This is partly to avoid criticisms of ethnocentrism, as noted by Edensor (1998) of his own position as a western scholar, studying the culture of the Indian street through a contrast with the Western street. He comments that his position may incur the charge of 'othering' (P205). In this instance, the researcher's position as Irish scholar and 'part-local' of the community in Dúnfarrraig, may invite similar criticisms. However, it is contended that this difficulty is countered by examining how rural space is constructed through social relations in the particular context.

Departing from Lefebvre's (1991) theory of how space is produced; through the interrelationship of spatial practices, representation of space and spaces of representation, Davis (1998) suggests separating the trialectic in order to see which of the three most aptly describes the local setting. However, this way of understanding the social in Dúnfarrraig and Gireux, would construct a framework of contrasts or a dichotomy of 'modernism' versus the 'traditional' between either village, which does not acknowledge the specific ideological structures which are at work in either rural setting. Therefore, Lefebvre's theory is useful insofar as it provides a framework for understanding the relationship and simultaneously, the distinction between practice (as use of) and symbolic representation of the vernacular. This enables an interpretation of the Irish context as one which constructs a 'view from the inside, out', as distinct from the French context, where constructing a view involves 'inhabiting' the same.

### **12.9 Private and public space**

Simultaneously, these differences between constructions of the vernacular in the Irish and French rural contexts, highlight the quite complex ways in which space can be theorised. A sense of space as separate entities of public and private, is constituted through the various practices of residents in either village, but articulated through the particular notion of what it means to be a member of that community. This central concern is played out in three different ways: through the theory of the 'suburban imaginary', the notion of the 'vernacular', and through the concept of a 'car culture'.

With the exception of the car culture, this dichotomy of public and private is dialectically opposite in Gireux and Dúnfarrraig. Space is constructed as 'private' through socialising practices between family and kinship in the French context, which takes place in the family home. Socialising in the Irish rural context however, has moved from the home, to the pub. In Dúnfarrraig, family members meet up in the pub or at the shop, as the home is viewed as a place to rest after work, or eat. Brody (1973) noted this change in the use of the house in the Irish rural context, in terms of its privatisation. However, in Dúnfarrraig, it is not merely differences between the location of socialising practices which has facilitated this trend, but emergent practices of demarcation and display of property.

Returning to Gireux, this emphasis on the social as private has quite negatively affected outsider perception of what it means to live in the village and be a part of the local community, as on a practical level, the privatisation of activities means their inaccessibility to the outsider. Attendance and participation in activities such as the gym, scrabble, the café and support for the primary school scheme - activities which exist throughout the year - only provide superficial means of contact with the community, as not all local residents will also participate in these activities. Some residents are tied to the home through demands of family and home, too busy to get involved in other activities. Gaining access to the 'private' social body of local residents is difficult outside of the public event of the fete held biannually. Therefore, the concept of private space encapsulates both socialising practices conducted by the local residents within their home, as it also refers to the problem of accessibility for those residents outside of that social circle.

Departing from the idea of the social as 'private', it is asserted that the 'vernacular' could be viewed as a variation of this construct. Findings have shown that the 'vernacular' is constructed in Gireux through an emphasis on the collective view of family and a connection with its social past. Lineage assumes tremendous importance for the local residents in Gireux, as it provides an attachment to place. Paradoxically however, it is the social character of this attachment that is particular to the local family which is being simultaneously being constructed as 'private'. This explains why the model of appropriating and representing the 'vernacular' in the internal space of the house, does not readily apply to the French context, as notions of what constitutes the 'vernacular' is constructed through the private realm of family ancestry. In a study of place attachment and community sentiment in marginalized neighbourhoods across Europe, Corcoran (2001) discusses how place was constructed through a repository of shared memories and traditions. Further, that a sense of place which was rooted in the past, was deployed as a resource that could be used to mobilise around the challenges of the present (P2). She states that such feelings of place attachment resonated as a marker of identity and community in the changing neighbourhood.

“In other words, our respondents showed us that it is impossible to separate how place is experienced in terms of material social practices, from how it is imagined” (Corcoran, 2001:2).

This explains why the 'vernacular' as a construct of the community, is deployed through both form and function in Gireux.

In Dúnfarrraig, the 'vernacular' is represented by the outsider through the display of meat hooks, wooden beams and other – all of which have been appropriated from the social history of the *house*, rather than of the family. This crucial difference means that these memorabilia remain within the public realm of the house, as they are now represented as artefacts placed on display for the public gaze. While in Gireux, the same memorabilia continue to be used by the current generation, so that its symbolic value as representative of the social past of the family, remains private or particular to that family.

With regard to how a 'car culture' is being theorised here, the concepts of 'private' and 'public' space emerge as dialectically opposite in Dúnfarrraig and Gireux. In Gireux, this refers to the mobilisation of public space for multi-purpose use. Whereas in Dúnfarrraig, these categories which imply a possession of space, exist as interchangeable concepts which are given meaning through the spatial practices of the home owner.

The theory of how the landscape is being symbolically constructed as 'suburban', provides an interpretation of how the built landscape is imposing a uniformity<sup>14</sup> of design on the place of Dúnfarrraig, as residents are incorporating 'viewing frames' into the design of their houses. This is to facilitate a private gaze of the public landscape. The concept of the 'vernacular' develops this notion of the private gaze further, by showing how a view of the public landscape is now dictating the orientation of the internal structure of the house. Simultaneously, a 'car culture' describes a trend towards 'focussing' (Ingram, 1991) the gaze of the motorist towards the house and garden. This involves subverting the focus of the public gaze from the landscape of the mountains and sea, to the private property or the local business.

Despite inviting the public gaze through a myriad of spatial practices, the house and garden is never constructed as a public space. The point of 'ensighting' the private space of the house and garden, is for purposes of display only. This is a display of that home owner's ability to project a sense of individuality of his relationship with the public landscape through architectural features of the house and garden, so that focussing the gaze of the motorist responds to the needs and self interest of the *resident*, rather than the gazing motorist. This provides an interesting difference to Urry's (1990, 2002) theory of the nature of the tourist experience, where the 'romantic' gaze describes how the tourist will engage in a kind of semi-spiritual relationship with the landscape or Nature, in an effort to recapture a sense of self which has been lost in the mundane routine of his everyday existence. Whereas in

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<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, although it is this feature associated with the classic model of 'suburbia' (Jagose, 2003; Haumont, 2000; Jackson, 1985) which is constructing a symbolic version of suburbia in Dúnfarrraig, a recent study which looked at how collective life within four of Dublin's suburbs was generated, states that each of these suburbs operates according to a distinctive dynamic, based on social relations and a sense of connectedness between its local residents (Peillon, 2005). This study attempted to move away from the classic understanding of the uniformity of the suburb, while ironically findings from this research show that residents are identifying aspects of that classic model, in these two rural contexts.



Dúnfarrraig, this type of relationship is being constructed *by* the resident, *for* the resident.

Thus, the concepts of 'public' and 'private' space are of central importance to how processes such as 'suburbia', are being understood by residents within both villages. These descriptions of space, illustrate how residents are negotiating the social practices and attitudes of other residents, and in some cases, how that reasoning of the social is affecting their own attitude towards rural spaces in that village.

Somewhat perversely, it is argued that it is precisely the intimate nature of socialising patterns in Gireux, coupled with local emphasis on "solidarity" between residents, which promotes a sense of a rural society which is high in 'social capital' values (Putnam, 2000). These values are particularly evident through the school scheme, which not only demonstrates local desire to re-open the primary school in Gireux, but promote the future stability of neighbouring rural villages. Whereas in Dúnfarrraig, a sense of self-interest and capitalist values is emerging through local and outsider concern for development in their village. These values have been articulated through the formation of the Dúnfarrraig Development Committee, under the pseudo intention of advancing the interests of that resident population. Resident identification of the real capitalist values underpinning the interests of the Committee, and apathetic attitude towards involvement in the development of Dúnfarrraig, gives a sense of a rural society which is low in 'social capital', where this concept refers to the sense of connectedness and togetherness exercised through everyday community based practices.

On the other hand, local resident and builder Dave, speaks very highly particularly of the local residents in Dúnfarrraig, comparing their ability to work steadily and in co-operation together as the distinguishing and much admired feature of that community. Although Dave claims a position on the Dúnfarrraig Development Committee, he states that its formation demonstrates the willingness and ability of the Dúnfarrraig local residents to work together on an issue. By emphasising the cohesive spirit of the *local* resident body, the responsibility for these capitalist values which signify the individualistic rather than the collective body, falls on the outsider resident, who also claims a position on the Development Committee. It has been argued that this

valorisation of the 'local' when pitted against the outsider, emerges from the larger issue of the holiday home. Thus local attachment to place in Dúnfarrraig, is about the re-enchantment of community.

### **12.10 The holiday home debate**

The holiday home phenomenon has provoked much debate, particularly concerning the increasing unaffordability gap which it has generated for local ability to stay in their home village. The economic discourse maintains that outside interest ('outsiders') in buying or building a home in a scenic rural village in the west of Ireland and globally, has created an increase in property prices in these villages. Critically, this view represents the local residents as passive spectators of this phenomenon, focusing on the spending ability of the outsider and developer. The argument that these villages may lose their indigenous population to an 'absent community' of holiday home owners, has gained much interest and popularity among local residents who now understandably, view the proverbial holiday home with fear.

However, findings from this research strongly indicate that this argument is simplifying quite a complex area, and thus, misrepresenting the issue for debate. While undeniably house prices are rising as a result of holiday homes in these village in the west of Ireland, it is suggested that local landowners also play a crucial role in the contribution towards this unaffordability gap, and that this aspect of the sale process has been overlooked by the economic discourse. Perversely, by focusing on those local residents who are unable to afford either to buy or build a house in their village, the economic argument has neglected to focus on those local residents who *do* own land, and who are selling the same at inflated prices to developers or outside bodies. One outsider's account of buying a property under market value in Dúnfarrraig through internal networking within the local community, would indicate that it is possible at any rate, to buy land or a house through friends in the community. However, the more serious implications of this example, imply that landowners are indeed operating a capitalist economy, ignoring the modest price offered by their local 'neighbour'. While this argument has been acknowledged by Clare County Council in their alteration of planning policy regulations, this aspect of the debate has been ignored by economists and sociologists alike.

In France, the local communal administration sometimes holds the right to acquire property in order to improve certain local amenities. SAFER represents the interests of young farmers and acquires land on behalf of the farmer, in order to improve the land holding that they possess. In addition, SAFER can pre-empt the sale of land and is notified of the sale of property in rural areas, even if they do not fall into the category of agriculture. Tenants also have the right to pre-emption, in order to facilitate them in their purchase of their home<sup>15</sup>. In Gireux, this system for tenants has worked favourably for local business women Perrine and Sara, who have been able to purchase their home from their landlord. The owner of the terraced house (which is a protected historical structure) is obliged to offer her house to the mayor's office at market price, before placing the house on the open market. This system has worked well for the community, where the mayor – through the authority of the local *commune* – has been able to borrow monies from the Department of the Aude to purchase the apartments above the school, in order to rent the same to local residents interested in returning to the village. The 'mortgage' is borrowed against the income of the village, which is earned through local taxation. Therefore, the collective body of the commune gains in wealth as the price of that property increases, as opposed to the individual resident<sup>16</sup>. However, this model of housing is not easily applied to the Irish context of Dúnfarrraig, where the local resident has stated his unwillingness to lower his asking price for his land, for the local resident and neighbour.

As a result of the misrepresentation of this issue of unaffordability in the holiday home debate – as one which has been created through local greed, rather than by outside interest - existing unease regarding the fate of the 'local' community of Dúnfarrraig, has been exacerbated through the involvement of the outsider in the commercial development of the rural village. Thus, while the Irish planning system facilitates values of capitalism rather than of community, the French planning system is based on facilitating the common good.

Corcoran (2000) comments that one of the difficulties with arguments of togetherness (Putman, 2001) and insidersness (Relph, 1976), is that they tend to put a reified version

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<sup>15</sup> For more details on the rights of pre-emption in France, see [www.headdonconsulting.com](http://www.headdonconsulting.com).

<sup>16</sup> The village can also choose to spend borrowed money by improving the aesthetic appeal of that commune by putting down cobble stones, or improving the infrastructure such as maintaining the roads, putting in traffic lights or roundabouts.

of 'community' on a pedestal and pay obsequious homage. As a result, our understanding of what constitutes 'community', has become confused (P6). Various types of interpretations have been advanced, but Corcoran suggests that because none of these offer a workable definition, the term is best approached contextually (ibid). This can mean in terms of concrete places, bounded by geographical boundaries, or in terms of abstract, intangible factors such as 'community spirit' which can feed into a sense of place attachment. However, this research has taken a more indirect approach to the study of these rural communities of Dúnfarrraig and Gireux, as the central question concerns how these places are *restructuring* themselves given the presence of the resident outsider. Thus, the focus of this study, is of the dynamics underpinning processual change in either village, which in itself, provides tremendous insight into how community is being constructed in the rural context. Similar to Corcoran (2002), the issue of community was explored through residents' sense of place (Hummon, 1992), as a way of understanding the practices involved in the construction of rural space.

### **12.11 The photograph as method and analysis**

While these findings have provided an insight into the restructuring of two rural communities, they have also highlighted how these communities have developed two quite different versions of the visual: one which is manifest through a culture of 'viewing', while the other has become apparent through a ritual of being 'viewed' by the local resident before being accepted as a resident living in that community. Problematising these quite separate forms of the visual required a methodology that would capture how this emphasis on the visual has emerged, yet that would be appropriate given the sensitive nature of both rural contexts. Therefore, not only were changes to the physical landscape photographed throughout the duration of this research, but as part of the methodology, residents were also asked to take photographs. This was particularly significant as an approach to understanding the visual, as these two rural villages have a clear relationship to tourism and are normally the subject of the photograph, rather than the photographer.

Because the photograph assumed an important role as an analytical tool, it has been assigned a value of much significance, almost independent of the text which it accompanies. While the body of the text contains the general argument, the

photograph provides a specific analysis of an issue. This manner of presentation allows the photograph to frame ideas raised in the main text, but not interfere with the flow of the general argument. This is quite an unusual exposition of findings as normally the photographs are placed at the end of the text, and by implication, provide secondary importance to the text. The photograph has provided a particularly rich form of data which this research has been able to draw upon, and has enabled a dialogic approach; theoretically, between narratives, and methodologically, between sources of information.

### **12.12 Is this the rise of 'suburbia', and the decline of rurality?**

Although conceptually comparable, these two case studies highlight the quite different ways in which the rural community is restructuring itself, given the influx of the resident outsider. These theories of how change is occurring - in terms of the social construction of what it means to be a member of that community; through the 'suburban imaginary' of the residents who are identifying a symbolic construction of the landscape in terms of the same; the discursive reasoning of space through a car culture, and the ideological construction of the 'vernacular' - must be understood through the conceptual lens of a modality of dialectical interaction between the resident and the landscape, as the form which each of these processes is taking, is specific to that rural setting. Most importantly however, these theories - particularly of how a process of 'suburbia' is occurring - present a new way of understanding the evolving relationship between the resident and the social construction of rural space, and confirm Massey's (1994, 1995) insistence on the significance of processes or practices to lend space a social identity.

These findings have made a significant contribution to current understanding not only of how the rural community is restructuring itself, but to the very question of 'rurality'. This work follows from the seminal work of anthropologists, Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball (1940), who presented what is considered to be the classical account of family and community in rural Ireland; and from the seminal work of renowned sociologist, Hugh Brody (1973), who wrote of changes to the rural community occurring through social anomie and alienation. His conclusion was to show the demise of the rural community. This research has shown the rise of 'suburbia' in the rural Irish and French community, alongside a decline of rurality.

This central finding of two quite different forms of 'suburbia', identified through the 'suburban imaginary', challenges the scholar to critically appraise theory through the empirical realities with which we are faced. Our understanding of the social world, as indeed our interactions, are largely informed by theory – both representational and non-representational – so that it is vitally important that theory would heighten that understanding, drawing insights from research. What this research has shown, is the inadequacies of current studies within tourism, which provide superficial and generalised understanding of the nature of the tourist experience. These findings have challenged Urry's (1990, 2002) concept of the tourist 'gaze', through applying a framework of interaction between the resident and the landscape, which seeks to recognise its dialectical nature and in so doing, provide a more sophisticated and multi-faceted approach to understanding practices and processes emerging from this interaction. Concurrently, it has sought to redefine these categories of 'local' and 'global', and 'modernity' and the 'vernacular', previously constructed as binary opposites but approached here in terms of concepts which gain their meaning through this dialectical relationship.

The dialogue between the narratives and theory have provided tremendous insights and possible explanations of why and how change is occurring. Crucially, while these findings attempt to make sense of the social practices and structural changes, they have also sought to highlight the levels of complexity surrounding these practices, which continue to evolve in their empirical contexts.

This research concludes with the question that as these theories of how 'suburbia' is occurring is being determined by the relationship between the social and the spatial in two different countries, what other forms of 'suburbia' exist? Similarly, where does the decline of rurality leave the farmer? The metaphor advanced here, of farming with bricks rather than with animals, poses a serious question as to what will become of the landscape and the environment? Or is this really a question of how our lifestyles are changing? What does this emphasis on visual consumption mean for the class structure of rural Ireland? Does it mean the emergence of a class elite based on this notion of 'cultural capital', or will this notion of individuality be replaced by another form of post-modernity? Or have globalisation theorists merely stoked fears for the

'fate' of community, rather than addressing the empirical reality of how some communities like Gireux, is handling phenomena such as the holiday home, quite capably?

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